

# PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS OF SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION TO REMOTE WORK IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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## ABSTRACT

*In this study, psychosocial adaptation to remote work was examined on a representative sample of subjects from Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). The research was conducted using a questionnaire adapted from the Psychosocial Adaptation Scale. The research goals were to describe the positive and negative aspects of psychosocial adaptation to working from home, and then to examine the country specific behavioral patterns, as well as to validate the psychometric properties of the used scale. The results showed that the psychosocial adaptation of the respondents was generally good. However, the respondents in all four countries were most affected by the lack of time for socializing with close people and the feeling of social isolation due to working from/at home. The authors see one of the reasons for the difficulty of enduring social isolation and loneliness in the more pronounced collectivist patterns of sociability in the countries of the Western Balkans than in Western countries. The respondents from Montenegro show significantly weaker psychosocial adaptation in a number of aspects compared to respondents from the other three countries. In this respect, the respondents from North Macedonia are similar to them only to a lesser extent, while the respondents from BiH and Serbia are the most similar to each other. The authors have offered possible explanations for these similarities and differences.*

**Keywords:** work from (at) home, psychosocial adaptation, BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

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## INTRODUCTION

According to a series of studies on remote working, numerous positive economic contributions are highlighted – higher productivity, significant reduction of office space, time savings and a number of utility and transportation costs [1,2,3,4,5,6,7]. In contrast to economic ones, researchers are significantly less in agreement about the positive and negative psychosocial aspects of working from home, because, among other things, they are more difficult to operationalize and measure. Among the positive psychosocial factors, greater autonomy and freedom in business and work process planning stand out [8] as well as greater efficiency in fulfilling work tasks and greater self-confidence [9,10,11,12,13,14] greater commitment to work and job [15], more balanced fulfilment of work and non-work obligations [16] and improvement of communication skills [17]. It is considered that for the successful performance of work (from home) the most important thing is flexible working hours [18,19], systematic social support from family and managers [20] and a good work-life balance [21].

The negative consequences of working from home and remotely vary depending on demographic, social-psychological and cultural factors, but the most important thing is whether the research was conducted before or during the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost without exception, the more negative social-psychological consequences of working from home are more numerous, more severe if working from home was also practiced during the pandemic, and especially if working from home starts due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Uncertainty about the duration of the Pandemic, the preservation of work and income induces loss of self-confidence, anxiety and depression [22]. According to another survey on remote work from 2019, 49% of workers had mental health problems [23]. Similarly, in a survey of 2.500 remote workers, 66% of those under the age of 25 suffered from one or more symptoms of mental disorders [22]. Investigating the psychosocial problems of working from home, American social psychologists highlight the feelings of loneliness, social isolation, anxiety, stress and depression due to the loss of direct social interactions, and they especially emphasize the importance of the support of the social network (family, friends and employers [24]). Psychological responses to job uncertainty, salary reductions, productivity declines, layoffs, etc. during the Pandemic may include low mood, low motivation, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, burnout and suicidal thoughts, but also numerous physical health disorders such as digestive problems, changes in appetite and weight, dermatological reactions, fatigue, cardiovascular disorders and diseases, muscle-skeletal disorders, headaches and other unexplained pains [24,25] as well as addiction diseases.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Bearing in mind the aforementioned positive and negative effects of psychosocial factors on business when working from home, we set three research goals:

- describe the prevalence of the most common psychosocial factors.
- examine the structural characteristics of the factors.
- describe similarities and differences in psychosocial profiles in four Western Balkans countries.

## RESEARCH SAMPLE

Our sample included 1031 respondent from four countries of the Western Balkans: 201 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 201 from Montenegro, 221 from North Macedonia, and 408 from Serbia. The sample has a convenient character because they include everyone who works from home and who agreed to fill out the questionnaire in electronic form.

## RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

For the purposes of this research, we have specially constructed a questionnaire that, based on a thorough review of the literature [26], is most often found among the negative and positive psychosocial aspects of home business. Answers were given on a five-point Likert-type scale, where 1 means "I completely disagree" and 5 means "I completely agree." The scale contains 14 statements, only 10 of which are given in binary form (See below).

## SCALE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTATION TO WORKING FROM HOME

Since I have started my own business, I have much less time for myself and my hobbies.

Working from home does not prevent me from taking enough time and motivation to engage in physical activities (exercise/sports).

Working from home negatively affected the quantity and quality of sleep.

Since I work from home, I pay less attention to my family or my partner.

Since I work from home, I have more time to spend with friends.

The business I'm currently running fulfils me.

My current income is enough to cover all my basic needs.

I am sure of the future success of the business I am currently running

I have trouble separating my work from my personal life

Is your work area separate from the area where you spend your free time or sleep (a separate room, or a bedroom, living room, etc.)

I would like to have more contact with other people during my work

Since I work from home, I feel more tense and anxious

My family and close friends are mostly supportive of me in my current job.

While working from home, others (family, friends, neighbors) do not disturb me, and I can fully devote myself to work.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, statistical analysis was first performed in the SPSS program, followed by qualitative analysis. In addition to descriptive statistics, ANOVA and Varimax factor analysis were also used. Qualitative analysis was performed by categorizing quantified data into certain qualitative categories. By integrating those categories, we obtained social-psychological profiles of those who work from home. As shown in the Table 1 below, in the case of the first item (Since I started my own business, I have much less time for myself and my hobbies.), there are significant differences among the countries. We applied ANOVA ( $F=9.881$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). The respondents from Montenegro actually have much less time for their hobbies and activities than the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina ( $I-J= -0.62189$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), the respondents from North Macedonia ( $I-J= -0.61165$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and the respondents from Serbia ( $I-J= -0.58224$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). On the second item (Working from home does not prevent me from taking enough time and motivation to engage in physical activities (exercise/sports)), the respondents from Montenegro gave negative answers significantly more often than the respondents from North Macedonia ( $I-J= -0.3224$ ;  $p=0.012$ ). Other differences are not significant.

**Table 1.** Distribution of items from the Psychosocial Adaptation Scale in four countries of the Western Balkans (negative statements on this Scale were recoded).

Claims*	Bosnia and Herzegovina			Montenegro			North Macedonia			Serbia			Overall:		
	No	Yes	Indec.	No	Yes	Indec.	No	Yes	Indec.	No	Indec.	Yes	No	Yes	Indec.
1.	19.4	37.8	42.8	64.3	27.4	28.4	37.1	9.5	53.4	34.3	17.2	48.6			
2.	15.5	20.4	64.2	17.9	27.9	54.3	19.0	11.8	69.3	23.3	13.5	63.2			
3.	15.0	18.9	65.1	25.3	22.4	52.3	14.9	15.4	69.7	16.2	11.8	72.1	17.5	16.0	66.6
4.	9.5	15.9	74.7	24.9	23.4	51.6	20.4	11.8	67.9	16.9	17.2	65.4	17.8	17.0	65.3
5.	15.5	31.8	52.8	17.4	30.3	52.3	22.6	24.0	53.4	26.0	24.5	49.5	21.5	27.0	51.5
6.	7.5	17.9	74.6	3.5	29.4	67.2	20.8	13.1	66.1	9.0	18.4	72.5	10.2	19.3	70.5
7.	14.9	25.4	59.7	11.0	30.3	58.7	17.2	17.1	65.6	16.7	22.3	60.1	15.3	23.4	61.2
8.	10.0	28.4	61.7	9.5	24.9	65.7	22.2	19.0	58.9	16.4	26.5	57.2	15.0	24.9	60.1
9.	20.9	25.4	53.7	33.8	28.9	37.3	23.1	19.9	57.1	16.4	20.8	62.7	22.1	23.1	54.8
10.	38.3	27.4	34.3	54.7	18.4	26.8	40.8	27.1	32.2	33.8	28.4	37.8	40.2	26.0	33.8
11.	10.0	20.9	69.2	21.9	28.4	49.8	17.2	17.6	65.2	12.3	14.5	73.3	14.7	19.1	66.1
12.	3.5	14.4	82.1	4.0	21.9	74.1	17.6	13.6	68.8	5.9	11.8	82.4	7.15	14.6	77.8
13.	9.5	20.4	70.2	14.5	18.4	67.2	21.2	15.8	62.9	9.6	13.5	77.0	13.0	16.3	70.7

Table 1 shows that the respondents from Montenegro were relatively more faced with reduced and poor-quality sleep due to working from home; almost a quarter (22.4%) reported that they had problems sleeping. This was also confirmed by the results of the ANOVA ( $F=10.038$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Moreover, the respondents from Montenegro had significantly more problems with sleep due to working at (from)

home than those from Bosnia and Herzegovina (I-J= -0.35821;  $p=0.004$ ) than those from North Macedonia (I-J= -0.52509;  $p=0.000$ ) and those from Serbia (I-J= -0.56940;  $p=0.000$ ).

Regarding the item 4 (*Since I work from home, I pay less attention to my family or my partner.*), the respondents from Montenegro again manifested significantly more agreement ( $F=8.243$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) than the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina (I-J= -0.60697;  $p=0.000$ ), North Macedonia (I-J= -0.35814) and Serbia (I-J= -0.43638). According to the fifth item (*Since I work from home, I have more time to spend with friends*) no statistically significant differences among the participants from different countries were found ( $F=1.182$ ;  $p=0.316$ ). The sixth item (*The business I'm currently running fulfils me*) shows that the respondents are generally satisfied with the work they do from home. The percentage of dissatisfied people ranges from 3.5% (Montenegro) to 9% (Serbia). The only exception is the respondents from North Macedonia, where the percentage of those dissatisfied with their jobs who work from home reaches as much as 20.8% (Table 1). ANOVA also showed that the respondents from North Macedonia are significantly less satisfied with their current work from home than all others ( $F=4.542$ ;  $p=0.004$ ). They are less satisfied than the respondents from BiH (I-J= -0.2982;  $p=0.005$ ), Montenegro (I-J= -0.2683;  $p=0.012$ ) and Serbia (I-J= -0.3220;  $p=0.000$ ). Three-fifths of the respondents from all four countries are very satisfied or satisfied with their current income, while the percentage of those who are dissatisfied amounts to only about one-sixth (Table 1). Although on the whole the respondents are more satisfied with work than income, the differences in satisfaction with income do not reach the level of statistical significance ( $F=0.122$ ;  $p=0.947$ ).

The respondents in all four countries are confident in the future success of their current job in about three-fifths of cases and ANOVA revealed no significant differences. The respondents from Montenegro have more problems separating their work from home from their private life than all others; a third stated that they had problems, and much less in the other countries (see Table 2). Those relative differences are the biggest compared to Serbia, where twice as many respondents had these problems (Table 2). The differences are statistically highly significant ( $F=14.023$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, they are (I-J= -0.48259;  $p=0.000$ ), North Macedonia (I-J= -0.46386;  $p=0.000$ ) and Serbia (I-J= -0.73101;  $p=0.000$ ). The respondents from Montenegro less than all the others want to have contact with other people while working from home; it should be noted that more than half did not express that wish (Table 2). The differences are statistically significant compared to the other three countries; in relation to BiH (I-J= -0.35821;  $p=0.000$ ), North Macedonia (I-J= -0.32516;  $p=0.015$ ) and Serbia (I-J= -0.50578;  $p=0.000$ ). Due to working from home, the respondents from Montenegro are the most tense and anxious of all (Table 1). It is interesting to note that the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the highest percentage said that they do not feel tense and anxious while working from home (around 70%) and similarly those from North Macedonia, while the respondents from Serbia in almost three quarters of cases expressed confusion and ambivalence of feelings about working from home. The differences are statistically significant when it comes to Montenegro and others, as well as between Serbia and Macedonia ( $F=12.672$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). The respondents from Montenegro are significantly more tense and anxious while working from home than those from Bosnia and Herzegovina (I-J= -0.50746;  $p=0.000$ ), North Macedonia (I-J= -0.36402;  $p=0.000$ ) and Serbia (I-J= -0.62533;  $p=0.000$ ). The respondents from Serbia are less tense and anxious than the respondents from North Macedonia (I-J= 0.26131;  $p=0.009$ ). Relatives and friends supported the respondents in their work from home in very similar percentages, while relatives and friends supported them relatively least in North Macedonia, followed by Montenegro (see Table 2). The respondents from BiH were significantly more supported in working from home than the respondents in North Macedonia and Montenegro, and also the respondents from Serbia compared to Macedonia and Montenegro ( $F=10.718$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Relatives and friends were supportive significantly more in Bosnia and Herzegovina than in North Macedonia (I-J= 0.4053;  $p=0.000$ ) and Montenegro (I-J= 0.2189;  $p=0.033$ ). They were also more supportive more in Serbia than in North Macedonia (I-J= 0.4495;  $p=0.000$ ) and Montenegro (I-J= 0.2631;  $p=0.003$ ). Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia do not differ significantly from each other.

Finally, family and friends of our respondents do not interfere with their work from home and allow them to fully devote themselves to work in large percentages ranging from slightly more than two fifths (North Macedonia) to over three quarters (Serbia, see Table 1). In this respect, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most similar. However, the differences are still statistically significant ( $F=7.138$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Family, friends and neighbors hinder the respondents from Serbia from fully dedicating themselves to work at home than the respondents from North Macedonia (I-J= 0.4342;  $p=0.000$ ) and from Montenegro (I-J= 0.3029;  $p=0.003$ ). The respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina are also less

disturbed than those from Macedonia ( $I-J=0.025$ ,  $p=0.025$ ). No statistically significant differences were found between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## STRUCTURE OF THE SCALE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL ADAPTABILITY TO BUSINESS FROM HOME

The first goal of our research was to examine whether the 13 items on the Scale are structured in such a way that they represent special dimensions of the psychosocial problems of respondents who work from home. We subjected the items to exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation. Due to the limited space in this study, only the most important results of factor analysis are presented. First, Cronbach's Alpha is at a good level and is 0.884. All utilities are generally high and only the answers to the question about engaging in sports and physical activities have the low saturations (probably due to the fact that a solid percentage of people are not physically active at all). The scale has good psychometric properties and is suitable for factorization. Two factors were singled out that together explain 44.508 variances. Conventionally, we singled out those above 0.400 as significant saturations. A clean, easily interpretable structure was obtained. The first, strongest factor explains 32.220 of the variances.

*Table 2. The matrix of rotated components*

	Component	
	1	2
Since I work from home, I feel more tense and anxious	.728	.276
I have trouble separating my work from my personal life	.726	.113
Working from home negatively affected the quantity and quality of sleep.	.723	.222
Since I've been working from home, I pay less attention to my family or my partner.	.708	.265
Since I have started my own business, I have much less time for myself and my hobbies	.616	.157
I would like to have more contact with other people during my work	.483	-.008
I am sure of the stability and future success of the work I am currently doing	.011	.764
My current income is enough to cover all my basic needs.	-.042	.750
The business I'm currently running fulfils me.	.206	.656
My family and close friends are mostly supportive of me in my current job.	.290	.586
While working from home, others (family, friends, neighbours) do not disturb me and I can fully devote myself to work.	.256	.498
Since I work from home, I have more time to spend with friends.	.274	.452
Working from home does not prevent me from taking enough time and motivation to engage in physical activities (exercise/sports).	.120	.418

The following items stood out:

<i>Since I work from home, I feel more tense and anxious.</i>	0.728
<i>I have trouble separating my work from my personal life.</i>	0.726
<i>Working from home negatively affected the quantity and quality of sleep.</i>	0.723
<i>Since I've been working from home, I pay less attention to my family or my partner.</i>	0.708
<i>Since I have started my own business, I have much less time for myself and my hobbies.</i>	0.616
<i>I would like to have more contact with other people during my work.</i>	0.483

**We called this first factor the factor of protective effects of working from home on physical and psychological health and social relationships.** The second factor explained 12.288 of the variances. On it, the following items stood out with saturations above 0.400:

<i>I am sure of the stability and future success of the work I am currently doing.</i>	0.764
<i>My current income is enough to cover all my basic needs.</i>	0.750
<i>The business I'm currently running fulfils me.</i>	0.656
<i>My family and close friends are mostly supportive of me in my current job</i>	0.586
<i>While working from home, others (family, friends, neighbors) do not disturb me and I can fully devote myself to work.</i>	0.498

<i>Since I work from home, I have more time to spend with friends to engage in physical activities (exercise/sports)</i>	0.452
<i>Working from home does not prevent me from taking enough time and motivation.</i>	0.418

**We called the second factor the factor of satisfaction with professional aspirations and social needs.** We were particularly interested in whether there were statistically significant differences in factors among countries. To that end, we performed ANOVA by the factor scores and in both cases, differences were found – for the first factor ( $F=22.924$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and for the second factor ( $F=2.905$ ;  $p=0.034$ ). According to the first factor, the respondents from Montenegro, due to working from home, are significantly more exposed to stressful effects on mental and physical health than the respondents from *Bosnia and Herzegovina* ( $I-J= -0.55725326$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and North Macedonia ( $I-J= -0.52736686$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and Serbia ( $I-J= -0.68283202$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). According to the second factor, the respondents from North Macedonia are significantly less satisfied with working from home and fulfilling the needs that arise from such work than the respondents from Montenegro ( $I-J= -0.25974146$ ;  $p=0.008$ ) and Bosnia and Herzegovina ( $I-J= -0.23027956$ ;  $p=0.018$ ) while they are not significantly different from Serbia.

## SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILES FOR EACH COUNTRY

### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

The respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina are the youngest population by age. They have a significantly lower educational level than all the others. According to the type of activity, significantly more than all others work in the IT sector as developers. According to a series of features, the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina are relatively well adapted to work from home; they have enough time for their leisure activities and hobbies, although they sometimes lack time for physical activities. They have no problems with the quantity and quality of sleep. Because of working from home, they do not neglect their family, partner, but to some extent they neglect their friends. The work they do from home fulfills them. They maintain good contacts with other people while working from home and successfully separate their work from home from their personal life. They do not feel tense and anxious while working from home, and relatives and friends support and help them in working from home.

### *Montenegro*

As in other countries, gender differences have not been established, and the respondents from Montenegro are on average relatively younger, following Bosnia and Herzegovina. In contrast to Bosnia and Herzegovina, they are significantly more likely to have high and university education because close to half have a university degree. The type of activity in working from home is mostly trade and education (almost half of the total number). They work from home relatively the longest. In many respects, respondents from Montenegro who work from home are specific [27]. Since they work from home, they have much less time for their activities and hobbies, including engaging in sports and recreational activities, they have shorter and poorer quality sleep, and they pay less attention to their family and partner than everyone else, and they also have a little less time for friends. However, they are more satisfied with their jobs than the respondents from North Macedonia. They have more trouble separating their work from home from their private life than everyone else, but they also want social contact with others while working from home less than everyone else. Due to working from home, they are more tense and anxious than the respondents from the other countries, and their relatives and friends support and help them in their work from home less than the majority of respondents from other countries. The respondents from Montenegro in working from home are faced with more problems than all the others, which is why they show a series of inconsistencies in psychosocial behavior, including confusion.

## *North Macedonia*

In addition to the fact that there are no significant differences according to gender, the respondents from North Macedonia come right after Serbia in terms of average age. In terms of level of education, they are second, right after Montenegro, with almost a third of those who have a high school education. Like the respondents in Montenegro, they work in trade and education in similar percentages. In terms of length of work from home, they are second, right after Montenegro.

Despite these similarities in social profiles, more differences than similarities with Montenegro were found in psychosocial adjustment. The similarity with the respondents from Montenegro is that, due to working from home, they do not have the desired time for sports and recreational activities. In particular, it should be pointed out that the respondents from North Macedonia were the most dissatisfied with the work they currently do from home, although in this respect the differences between the countries do not reach the level of statistical significance. Probably as a result of dissatisfaction with their current job, they are the most skeptical about the prospects of the job they are currently working in the future. They are significantly less tense and anxious about the work they do from home than the respondents from Montenegro. However, following Montenegro, they are still the most tense and anxious, and those differences with Serbia reach the level of statistical significance.

The respondents from North Macedonia, as well as from Montenegro, are less supported by family, relatives and friends and are more hindered in doing work from home than in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is known that the more educated have a slightly more negative perception of working from home than the less educated [26]. It is hard to say whether the more educated both in Montenegro and North Macedonia are more inclined to perceive relatives and friends more negatively, or do relatives and friends really help them less and hinder them more in their work from home.

The respondents from North Macedonia differ significantly from those from Montenegro when they work from home in that:

- they have more time for various activities and hobbies.
- they have a little more time to engage in sports and recreational activities.
- they have longer and better-quality sleep.
- while working from home they pay more attention to their family and friends.
- they more successfully separate business from private life.
- they socialize more while working from home with other people.
- they are less tense and anxious while working from home.

## *Serbia*

The respondents from Serbia are on average the oldest. In terms of educational structure, they are very similar to those from Macedonia, and in terms of higher education, to the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. They have significantly fewer highly educated people who work from home than Montenegro, and more than Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are similar to Montenegro in terms of the length of working from home.

In all the previously mentioned aspects, Serbia is consistently different from Montenegro, and in all others, it is similar to North Macedonia, with the fact that they are significantly more satisfied with the work they currently do from home and look more optimistically at the future of that work and that they have more help and support from friends. On the whole, the respondents from Serbia provide a relatively most optimistic picture of working from home and seem to be the best psychosocially adapted to that work.

## **DISCUSSION**

The most significant and numerous differences are between those who work from home in Montenegro and the others, especially those in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. They are the least optimistic about working at home and 'the gig' economy; they have more psychosocial problems than all the others, they don't have enough free time for recreational activities, and they also complain about excessive work and the inability to separate work from private life. In addition, they are worse connected

to primary groups while working from home than the respondents from the other countries researched. Despite this, they believe that informal contacts can contribute the most to a successful business from home. They try to further distance themselves from the primary groups while working, and at the same time they are frustrated by this. Because of all this, the respondents from Montenegro in working from home are faced with more problems than all others, which is why they show a series of inconsistencies in psychosocial behavior, and even confusion. The lack of development and mismatch of economic activities, the relatively low level of consumerism, especially at the time of the Covid 19 pandemic, should be considered as possible factors. Almost a third is engaged in online trade. Along with the very unfavorable economic situation, one should not lose sight of the turbulent political context, which makes the otherwise confused social situation even more complicated. However, it seems that the most significant factor is the feeling of frustration because they are doing jobs that are often significantly below their educational level, which is why relatives and friends have an ambivalent and even dismissive attitude towards them.

According to some psychosocial patterns of behavior, the respondents from North Macedonia are the most similar to them. In terms of level of education and type of activity, they are the most similar to the respondents from Montenegro. They are also similar to them in terms of dissatisfaction with current work from home, especially due to the demotivation and routinization of work given their high school education and because of this frustration, as in Montenegro. Due to current dissatisfaction, they are not too optimistic about working from home or the "gig" economy [27,28]. Although they have fewer psychosocial problems due to working from home, in this respect they are more similar to the respondents from Montenegro than to those from BiH and Serbia. All these aspects of similarity with Montenegro at the same time significantly differentiate them from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia generally differ the most from Montenegro and Macedonia. According to numerous features, the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina are the opposite of the respondents from Montenegro. Unlike the respondents from Montenegro, they are the youngest, with the lowest education and mostly employed in the IT sector. They have no psychosocial problems, they have a good balance between work and private life, and they have the support of family and friends in their work. They are satisfied with their work and income and maintain good social communication while working from home. They are optimistic about their job prospects. They strive to jealously preserve all this social and cultural capital, and therefore for the success of their work, the most important thing for them is to preserve the boundaries between business and private life, for which they need flexible working hours. It is obvious that the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina are well adapted to working from home. In our opinion, several factors are important for this adaptation. First, we are talking about a young population that is highly motivated for work because they are involved in professional life relatively early. Second, they are above average motivated because they are over proportionally represented in the IT sector. The mere fact that their education is below average does not diminish it, but probably favors their above-average motivation for the IT sector and programming because they obviously acquired knowledge and skills in those areas outside the usual institutional framework. In this regard, this population is particularly interesting for monitoring the possible directions of development of working from home, partly outside the usual institutional frameworks, given the rather pronounced skepticism that the improvement and development of freelancing is possible mainly or only in institutional educational frameworks. [29].

Although the respondents from Serbia have some formal similarities with those from Montenegro (in terms of length of service) and North Macedonia (in terms of education), they differ significantly from the respondents from Montenegro in a number of other characteristics, in which they are more similar to the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have no pronounced psychosocial problems. They are satisfied with working from home and are optimistic about the future of work. Like the respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, they maintain good social ties with primary groups and the closest social environment to which they eventually turn for help due to business problems, which they generally do not have.

The respondents in four countries show a significant degree of satisfaction with working at (from) home and psychosocial adjustment, with certain exceptions of those who work at (from) home in Montenegro. In this, they are similar to the previous finding [9,10,11,12,13,14,16]. However, one gets the impression that our respondents report a more optimistic picture than it actually is, especially when one considers the poor social protection by state authorities, especially in Serbia. Regardless of



the fact that certain groups are frustrated by working at jobs that are below their qualification level, they still feel privileged due to professional autonomy, higher employment and better incomes. Montenegro is somewhat of an exception for reasons that were discussed earlier.

The results of the factor analysis generally confirm the findings of the item analysis. However, they show that the picture is even more positive than the analysis of individual claims shows, and particularly than the results of the series of studies mentioned so far show, especially when it comes to the first factor.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this research showed that a similar sociocultural context can have a lot of different psychosocial implications for successful performance of business from home. While in Serbia, BiH, and in part and northern Macedonia it has had a positive role because traditional forms of socialism and patriarchal solidarity influenced a business-free psychosocial climate, in Montenegro, the protective traditional patterns were muted by strong collective narcissism, as a kind of the reverse of the same or similar sociocultural context.

Finally, the results of this research showed that a similar sociocultural context can affect both the positive and negative psychosocial environment for running a business from home, depending on the specific sociopsychological factors operating in that context, which was not the subject of special research. No less important is the knowledge, supported by the results of this research, that, contrary to expectations, good psychosocial conditions for running a business from home can occur in less developed societies with anachronistic cultural patterns. Moreover, these patterns can have a more positive psychosocial effect on the successful conduct of business at home than those established in modern developed societies, whose positive effect is not questioned.

In conclusion, it should be especially emphasized that socio-economic crisis for decades has drastically shaken all these anachronistic patterns of male domination, because the women from the lower and middle layers of Montenegrin society showed far more successful in overcoming the most difficult socio-economic consequences of this crisis, from the 90-ies to date. All the negative phenomena were intensified by a chronic political crisis, in which all transitional social processes were blocked and whose outcome remains uncertain.

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