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Međunarodni naučni skup
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FAKTORI NEUSPEHA DAROVITIH: KAKO IH PREVAZIĆI?

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**ВИСОКА СТРУКОВНА ВАСПИТАЧКА И МЕДИЦИНСКА
ШКОЛА у Вршцу, Србија
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FAKTORI NEUSPEHA DAROVITIH: KAKO IH PREVAZIĆI?

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FAKTORI KOJI UTIČU NA ODLUKU MEĐUNARODNIH STUDENATA IZ SRBIJE DA SE VRATE³

Rezime: Trend ka internacionalizaciji uslovljava povećanje broja međunarodnih studenata koji se opredeljuju za školovanje izvan matične zemlje. Ova praksa je zabeležena i u Republici Srbiji, pa je poslednjih godina sve veći broj srpskih studenata koji participiraju na međunarodnom obrazovnom tržištu. Zbog velike konkurentnosti, mnoge male i nerazvijene zemlje širom sveta tragaju za modelima koji bi uticali na povratak visokoobrazovanih (mladih) talenata i stručnjaka koji se školuju u inostranstvu. Oslanjajući se na teoriju *push-pull* faktora, ovo istraživanje ispituje faktore koji utiču na odluku studenata državljana Republike Srbije koji se trenutno školuju u inostranstvu da se vrate u zemlju (potencijalni povratnici), kao i realizovanoj odluci naših studenata koji su se posle školovanja u inostranstvu vratili u Srbiju (povratnici). Uzorak (N=122) obuhvata studente svih nivoa akademskih studija (osnovne, master i doktorske studije). Istraživanje je sprovedeno upitnikom od novembra 2023. do januara 2024. godine. Prikupljeni su socio-demografski podaci (11 pitanja) i ispitivani su stavovi i iskustva studenata o akademskoj mobilnosti (33 pitanja). Ovom prilikom fokusirale smo se na rezultate o faktorima koji utiču na proces donošenja odluke naših međunarodnih studenata da se vrate u Srbiju s obzirom na socio-demografske varijable (kao što su: pol, socio-ekonomski status porodice studenta i nivo studija u inostranstvu). Pokazalo se da je za najveći broj naših međunarodnih studenata za odluku da se vrate u Srbiju najvažniji faktor vezan za profesiju, pre svega, za obezbeđen dobro plaćen posao u struci i, u nešto manjoj meri, za povoljne uslove za započinjanje sopstvenog biznisa – podrška države (ukupno 40,1%), kao i za faktore koji se odnose na porodični aspekt (21,3%).

Ključne reči: međunarodno školovanje, visokoobrazovani talenti, studenti državljan RS, akademske migracije Srbije.

Uvod

Sa globalnom tranzicijom došlo je do porasta i broja međunarodnih studenata u globalizovanom svetu, jer je znanje osnova meke moći jedne nacije, a visoko obrazovanje je često centralni faktor (McMahon, 1992, prema Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025). U ovom kontekstu, studenti koji studiraju izvan granica matične zemlje ili zemlje boravka postali su važan ljudski resurs i izvor talenata za zemlju destinaciju, tj. za zemlju domaćina. Tačnije, populacija studenata koja je prethodni nivo obrazovanja stekla u matičnoj zemlji ili nekoj drugoj zemlji u kojoj su studenti imali status rezidenta (OECD, 2017; Vasojević, 2024a; Vasojević, 2025) definiše se kao međunarodna populacija tj. međunarodni studenti. Međutim, ne treba zanemariti činjenicu da su međunarodni studenti važan resurs, tj. kapital i svoje zemlje (rođenja ili boravka). Poslednjih decenija, čak i zemlje koje nisu bile popularne i poznate na međunarodnom tržištu, osvajaju svoje pozicije u ovom prostoru. Kretanje međunarodne populacije na globalnom nivou, uglavnom se može posmatrati u odnosu na „popularne” studentske destinacije – Globalni sever (Evropa, Japan, Australija, Novi Zeland i Angloamerika) (Ćorović, 2006; Vasojević, 2025: 191; Petrić, 2025), i druge destinacije „od

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Juga do Severa, od Severa do Juga, ili unutar Juga” (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Petrić, 2025; Vasojević, 2025: 191–192). Tako je, na primer, Kina doživela rapidan rast na međunarodnom studentskom tržištu (Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025). Ona je postala najveći „dobavljač” međunarodnih studenata, često šaljući akademske talente u razvijene zemlje, što je uticalo i na brzinu razvoja sopstvenog društveno-ekonomskog sektora, ali i sektora visokog obrazovanja gde se privlači sve veći broj međunarodnih studenata koji studiraju u ovoj zemlji (Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025). Na ovaj način, Kina se postepeno pretvorila u „primaoca” međunarodnih studenata koliko i „pošiljaoca” (Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025). Republika Srbija, kao mala zemlja pored duge tradicije školovanja darovitih studenata na prestižnim univerzitetima u inostranstvu, u jednom periodu bila je zemlja domaćin stranim studentima. U 21. veku u strateškim dokumentima u Srbiji ljudski kapital i daroviti studenti posmatraju se kao jedan od faktora koji može uticati na internacionalizaciju univerziteta, kao i na jačanje međunarodnih i kulturnih krugova. Od 2005. godine Vlada Republike Srbije obnovila je tradiciju školovanja najboljih tj. talentovanih studenata na prestižnim međunarodnim fakultetima. Osnivanjem Fonda za mlade talente Republike Srbije „Dositeja” (Fond) pružena je šansa najboljim studentima (akademske master i doktorske studije) državljanima Republike Srbije da se školuju kao stipendisti Vlade Republike Srbije u prepoznatom globalnom međunarodnom akademskom prostoru (Vasojević, 2024a; Vasojević, 2024b). Od 2008. do 2023. godine Vlada Republike Srbije svake godine opredeljuje sredstva za školovanje 500 najboljih studenata definisane populacije u inostranstvu (Vasojević, 2024b). U periodu od 2015. do 2022. godine na školovanju je bilo 5.443 studenta (Vasojević, 2024a, 2024; Vesković Anđelković i Vasojević, 2023), koji se školuju u 42 zemlje (Vasojević, 2024b). Stipendisti Fonda u obavezi su „da po završetku studija zasnaju radni odnos u Republici Srbiji u trajanju od najmanje 5 godina (Vasojević & Filipović, 2017) ili „budu u sistemu evidencija u Nacionalnoj službi za zapošljavanje u trajanju od tri godine po završetku školovanja, ili investiraju kroz program za razvoj ‘start-up’ preduzeća u okviru naučno-tehnoloških parkova” (Fond za mlade talente Republike Srbije; Vasojević, 2024a). Pored ovog najvećeg domaćeg donatora tj. Vlade Republike Srbije, dostupne su i brojne inostrane stipendije koji su ponuđene kroz bilateralne sporazume (Vasojević, 2024a) od strane stranih vlada i fondacija. Takođe, ne sme se zanemariti ni značajan broj međunarodnih studenata državljana Republike Srbije koji se školuje u inostranstvu sopstvenim sredstvima ili korišćenjem sredstava stranih donatora.

Faktori međunarodne migracije studenata

U ranijim istraživanjima, autori poput Perkinsa i Neumaiera (Perkins & Neumaier, 2014) ukazuju da migracija međunarodnih studenata ima neujednačen obrazac, kada se posmatra kretanje od zemalja u razvoju do razvijenih zemalja. Relevantna literatura ukazuje da faktori pritiska i povlačenja utiču na odluke međunarodnih studenata o njihovom daljem profesionalnom i društvenom životu, kao i prirodnom okruženju (Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025) i prostornoj integraciji (Petrić, 2025). Teorija pritiska i povlačenja (*push-pull*) „ima ‘korene’ u proučavanju migracije ljudi koja (u)kazuje na tokove migracije između regiona porekla i regiona odredišta” (King, Gomes, Shannon, & Lu, 2024, prema: Vasojević, 2025). Sve ovo ukazuje da matičnu zemlju ili trenutnu zemlju boravka, kao i zemlju odredišta obeležavaju pozitivni i negativni faktori od kojih zavisi da li će doći do migracije (Vasojević, 2025: 43). Tako su, na primer, imigracione politike snažno povezane sa težnjom ostanka u zemlji boravka tj. domaćina (Toma & Villares-Varela, 2019), a određeni profesionalni faktori mogu uticati na međunarodne studente da ostanu u zemljama domaćinima jer imaju ostvarene kontakte i lične veze (Alberts & Hazen, 2005). Da li se međunarodni diplomci vraćaju u svoje matične zemlje ili zemlju boravka gde su živeli pre migracije, zavisi od faktora kao što su: mogućnosti zapošljavanja, ekonomski razvoj pa čak i prirodno okruženje (Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025). Indikativni su rezultati prethodnog istraživanja na populaciji međunarodnih studenata, imajući

u vidu kontekst Srbije, tj. studenata državljana Republike Srbije, koje je urađeno na uzorku od 122 ispitanika. Ovo istraživanje je pokazalo da se sa datom tvrdnjom – *Planiram da se vratim u matičnu zemlju čim završim studije*, složilo 29,4% ispitanika (Vasojević, 2025: 202). Takođe, 42,7% međunarodnih studenata koji se školuju u inostranstvu vide sebe u Srbiji posle završenog akademskog obrazovanja (ibid., 2025: 202). Kao glavne razloge povratka prepoznali su mogućnost da se zaposle u svojoj zemlji (ibid., 2025: 203) čime nastavljaju sa daljim profesionalnim razvojem. Međutim, odluka o ostanku ili povratku složen je proces (Wu & Wilkes, 2017), koji uključuje i spoljašnje uslove i unutrašnje karakteristike koje dodatno treba istražiti. Osim toga, treba uzeti u obzir i uzrast, kao i rodne razlike kada se govori o namerama povratka međunarodnih studenata u zemlju porekla (Gao, Tang, & Huang, 2025).

Ovaj rad ima za cilj osvetljavanje i identifikovanje primarnih faktora, kao i osnovnih motiva za povratak međunarodnih studenata u matičnu zemlju tj. Republiku Srbiju. Stoga, očekujemo da rezultati doprinesu proširenju teorije migracija na osnovu istraživanja faktora i motiva koji utiču na odluku međunarodnih studenata da se vrate u matičnu zemlju ili zemlju boravka.

Podaci i metodologija istraživanja

Podaci na kojima se zasniva ovaj rad su iz upitnika koji je bio konstruisan za potrebe realizovanja istraživanja u okviru projekta „Međunarodne migracije studenata u kontekstu Srbije i (re)konstrukcija identiteta: Ključna pitanja i elementi za javne politike (IS-MIGaIN)”. Istraživanje je sprovedeno upitnikom od novembra 2023. do januara 2024. godine. Pripremljen je elektronski upitnik u dva oblika: upitnik za studente koji se trenutno nalaze na školovanju u inostranstvu i upitnik za studente koji su se vratili u zemlju porekla nakon završenih studija (Stojšin, 2025), u našem slučaju – u Republiku Srbiju. Upitnik za studente koji se nalaze u inostranstvu na školovanju sadržao je 32 pitanja, a upitnik za povratnike imao je jedno pitanje više (Stojšin, 2025). Sva pitanja su bila zatvorenog tipa sa ponuđenom opcijom dopisivanja odgovora, a deset pitanja na kraju upitnika odnosila su se na socio-demografske varijable (ibid., 2025: 178). Onlajn upitnik je bio kreiran na *open-source* platformi *LimeSurvey* (<https://www.limesurvey.org>), koja je instalirana na IDN serveru. Popunjavanje upitnika je u proseku trajalo oko 30-ak minuta, što je relativno dugačak upitnik za ovaj metod anketiranja. Instrument je podeljen putem različitih kanala: distribuirali smo kreirani link preko ovlašćenih lica ispred resornih ministarstava; preko udruženja međunarodnih studenata; ličnih kontakata; a korišćena je i baza koja je kreirana tokom rada na prethodnim istraživanjima međunarodne populacije (Vasojević, 2019; Vasojević, 2022). Prikupljeni podaci su distribuirani u dva osnovna formata: Excel tabela, i SPSS format, a za obradu podataka je korišćen IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.0.0.(241). Od prikupljenih i u prvom talasu 127 validnih upitnika (populacije – državljani Republike Srbije) nakon odrađene statističke kontrole izdvojeno je 122 validna upitnika koji su u celosti bili ispunjeni (sadržali su sve socio-demografske varijable) (Vasojević, 2025: 196). S obzirom da prikupljeni podaci jesu rezultat velike naučne studije, u ovom radu posmatraju se samo rezultati, za populaciju studenata državljanina Republike Srbije koji se školuju ili su se školovali u inostranstvu, za definisan cilj istraživanja.

Uzorak je činilo 32,8% muškaraca i 67,2% žena. Kriterijum za odabir ove grupe ispitanika jeste da su boravili u inostranstvu minimum godinu dana, bilo da su koristili stipendiju domaćeg donatora za školovanje (18,1%), inostranog donatora (37,6) ili da su ličnim sredstvima finansirali školovanje u inostranstvu (44,3) (Vasojević, 2025: 196–197). Najveći broj ispitanika bio je starosti između 21 i 30 godina – njih 56,6% (Vasojević, 2015: 196). Ustanovljeno je da se najveći broj ispitanika za školovanje u inostranstvo odlučivao nakon završenih osnovnih akademskih studija, pa su upisivali osnovne akademske master studije (53,5), potom slede ispitanici koji su upisivali doktorske studije (28,1) i na kraju oni koji su

otišli u inostranstvo nakon srednje škole i koji su se upisali na osnovne akademske studije (18,4) (Vasojević, 2025: 197).

Rezultati

Pokazalo se da je za najveći broj naših međunarodnih studenata za odluku da se vrate u Srbiju najvažniji faktor vezan za profesiju (ukupno 40,1%), pre svega, za obezbeđen dobro plaćen posao u struci (30,3%) i u nešto manjoj meri za povoljne uslove za započinjanje sopstvenog biznisa – uz podršku države (9,8%). Ovo govori da je za najveći broj naših međunarodnih studenata najvažnije za povratak da mogu da rade posao za koji su se školovali i od kojeg mogu da obezbede egzistenciju. Ovaj faktor se očekivano pokazao kao stabilan kada je reč o stavovima vezanim za život i karijeru visokoobrazovanih; podsećamo da su priliku za stručno usavršavanje kao najvažniji motiv za odlazak u inostranstvo navodili naši stipendisti akademski uspešni studenti, potencijalni migranti, i u ranijim istraživanjima (Krnjaić, 2002). Ovo je važno pitanje jer u našoj zemlji postoji neusklađenost između obrazovanja i mogućnosti zapošljavanja pogotovo kada govorimo o mladima (Krnjaić i Vuletić Joksimović, 2025) Istraživanja pokazuju da u Srbiji u odnosu na ostale zemlje jugoistočne Evrope u tom pogledu postoji najizraženiji nesklad i da je procenat mladih koji rade na poslovima za koje su se i školovali sa 29,1% u 2018. godini opao na 20,7% u 2024. godini (Hasanović, 2024). Pritom za oko 10% ispitanika iz našeg uzorka motivišući faktor koji utiče na odluku o povratku u zemlju odnosi se na mogućnost pokretanja sopstvenog biznisa, uz pomoć države (što može da govori i o slabijem preduzetničkom duhu ispitanika). Oko 70% naših međunarodnih studenata smatra da treba da doprinese svojoj zemlji znanjima i kontaktima koje su stekli i ostvarili u inostranstvu, a ujedno procenjuju da će, kad se vrate u zemlju, imati potpuno isti tretman pri zapošljavanju kao i ostali državljani Republike Srbije na tržištu radu (38%). Sve ovo ukazuje da, iako naši ispitanici – međunarodni studenti, smatraju da povratnici treba da doprinesu svojoj zemlji značajan broj njih ne vidi da njihova matična zemlja prepoznaje „stečeni” kapital znanja, veština i kontakata kao prednost pri zapošljavanju.

Sledeći važan motiv za povratak u zemlju odnosi se na porodični aspekt (21,3%). Kada su procenjivali stepen slaganja, oko 38% ispitanika složilo se sa tim da ne može bez svoje porodice, a 33,8% da može dok za 28,1% porodične veze nisu određujuće.

Zaključak

S obzirom da su jako retke studije koje se bave ovom populacijom, analizirani rezultati su osvetlili neka pitanja koja se odnose na faktore i motive koji utiču na odluku međunarodnih studenata, državljana Republike Srbije, da se vrate u maticu. Takođe, otvorila su se i brojna pitanja o fenomenu privremenih migracija i „korišćenju” ljudskog kapitala koji međunarodni studenti „(do)nose” sa sobom. Treba imati u vidu da su ovim istraživanjem bili obuhvaćeni ispitanici koji su se nakon školovanja vratili u maticu, ali i oni koji se još uvek nalaze na školovanju izvan granica matične zemlje. Pored metodoloških ograničenja koja sa sobom nosi ova studija, treba imati u vidu da međunarodni studenti, državljani Republike Srbije, svoje znanje posmatraju kao vrednost, ali da bi uticali na razvoj društva, radne zajednice, potrebno je da ih zemlja prepozna kao značajan ljudski kapital.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM SERBIA TO RETURN⁴

Summary: The trend towards internationalization is driven by an increase in the number of international students choosing to study abroad. This practice has also been observed in the Republic of Serbia, where in recent years, the number of Serbian students participating in the international educational market has been growing. Due to high competition, many small and underdeveloped countries around the world are searching for models that would encourage the return of highly educated (young) talents and professionals who study abroad. Relying on the push-pull theory, this research examines the factors that influence the decision of Serbian citizens who are currently studying abroad to return to their home country (potential returnees), as well as the actual decision of Serbian students who, after studying abroad, returned to Serbia (returnees). The sample (N=122) includes students at all levels of academic studies (undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies). The research was conducted through a questionnaire from November 2023 to January 2024. Socio-demographic data (11 questions) were collected, and students' attitudes and experiences regarding academic mobility were examined (33 questions). This time, we focused on the results concerning the factors that influence the decision-making process of our international students to return to Serbia, considering socio-demographic variables (such as gender, socio-economic status of the student's family, and the level of studies abroad). It was found that the most important factor for the majority of our international students in deciding to return to Serbia is related to their profession, primarily securing a well-paid job in their field, and to a lesser extent, favorable conditions for starting their own business – support from the state (a total of 40.1%), as well as factors related to the family aspect (21.3%).

Keywords: international education, highly educated talents, students citizens of the RS, academic migrations, Serbia.

Introduction

With global transition, there has been an increase in the number of international students in a globalized world, as knowledge is the foundation of a nation's soft power, and higher education is often a central factor (McMahon, 1992, as cited in Gao, Tang & Huang, 2025). In this context, students studying outside the borders of their home country or country of residence have become an important human resource and source of talent for the destination country, i.e., for the host country. More precisely, the population of students who obtained their previous level of education in their home country or in another country where they had resident status (OECD, 2017; Vasojević, 2024a; Vasojević, 2025) is defined as the international population, i.e., international students. However, one should not overlook the fact that international students are an important resource, that is, capital for their countries (of birth or residence). In recent decades, even countries that were not popular or well-known in the international market are claiming their positions in this space. The movement of the international population on a global level can mainly be observed in relation to "popular" student destinations - the Global North (Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Anglo-America) (Ćorović, 2006; Vasojević, 2025: 191; Petrić, 2025) and other destinations "from South to North, from North to South, or within the South" (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Petrić, 2025; Vasojević, 2025: 191-192). For example, China has experienced rapid growth in the international student market (Gao, Tang & Huang, 2025). She has become the largest "supplier" of international students, often sending academic talents to developed countries, which has impacted both

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the pace of development of its own socio-economic sector and the higher education sector, where an increasing number of international students are attracted to study in this country (Gao, Tang & Huang, 20). 25). In this way, China has gradually transformed into a "recipient" of international students as much as a "sender" (Gao, Tang & Huang, 20). 25). The Republic of Serbia, as a small country with a long tradition of educating gifted students at prestigious universities abroad, was at one time a host country for foreign students. In the 21st century, in strategic documents in Serbia, human capital and gifted students are viewed as one of the factors that can influence the internationalization of universities, as well as the strengthening of international and cultural circles. Since 2005, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has revived the tradition of educating the best, that is, talented students at prestigious international universities. With the establishment of the Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia "Dositeja" (the Fund), an opportunity has been provided for the best students (of academic master's and doctoral studies) who are citizens of the Republic of Serbia to study as scholarship holders of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in the recognized global international academic space (Vasojević, 2024a; Vasojević, 2024b). From 2008 to 2023, the Government of the Republic of Serbia allocates funds each year for the education of 500 of the best students from the defined population abroad (Vasojević, 2024b). In the period from 2015 to 2022, there were 5,443 students enrolled (Vasojević, 2024a, 2024; Veskočić Andelković & Vasojević, 2023), studying in 42 countries (Vasojević, 2024b). Scholarship recipients are required "to establish an employment relationship in the Republic of Serbia for a minimum duration of 5 years (Vasojević & Filipović, 2017) or to be registered in the National Employment Service for a period of three years after completing their education or to invest through a program for the development of 'start-up' companies within science and technology parks" (Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia; Vasojević, 2024a). In addition to this largest domestic donor, i.e., the Government of the Republic of Serbia, there are also numerous foreign scholarships offered through bilateral agreements (Vasojević, 2024a) by foreign governments and foundations. It should also not be overlooked that a significant number of international students who are citizens of the Republic of Serbia are studying abroad using their own resources or with the help of foreign donations now.

Factors of international student migration

In earlier research, authors such as Perkins and Neumaier (Perkins & Neumaier, 2014) indicate that the migration of international students exhibits an uneven pattern when observing the movement from developing countries to developed countries. Relevant literature indicates that pressure and withdrawal factors influence international students' decisions regarding their future professional and social lives, as well as their natural environment (Gao, Tang & Huang, 2025) and spatial integration (Petricić, 2025). The push-pull theory "has its 'roots' in the study of human migration, which indicates the flows of migration between regions of origin and destination" (King, Gomes, Shannon, & Lu, 2024, as cited in Vasojević, 2025). All of this indicates that the country of origin or the current country of residence, as well as the destination country, are marked by positive and negative factors that determine whether migration will occur (Vasojević, 2025: 43). For example, immigration policies are strongly linked to the desire to remain in the host country (Toma & Villares-Varela, 2019), and certain professional factors can influence international students to stay in host countries because they have established contacts and personal connections (Alberts & Hazen, 2005). Whether international graduates return to their home countries or the country of residence where they lived before migration depends on factors such as employment opportunities, economic development, and even the natural environment (Gao, Tang & Huang, 2025). The indicative results of the previous research on the population of international students, considering the context of Serbia, i.e., students who are citizens of the Republic of Serbia, were conducted on a sample of 122 respondents. This research showed that 29.4% of respondents agreed with the statement - I plan to return to my home country as soon as I finish my studies (Vasojević, 2025: 202). Additionally, 42.7% of international students studying abroad see themselves in Serbia after completing their academic education (Ibid, 2025: 202). They identified the main reasons for returning as the possibility of finding employment in their own country (Ibid, 2025: 203), thereby continuing their professional development. However, the decision to stay or return is a complex process (Wu & Wilkes, 2017), which involves both external conditions and internal characteristics that need further investigation. Yes. Additionally, age and gender differences should also be considered when discussing the intentions of international students to return to their home country (Gao, Tang & Huang, 2025).

This paper aims to illuminate and identify the primary factors, as well as the fundamental motives for the return of international students to their home country, namely the Republic of Serbia. Therefore, we expect that the results will contribute to the expansion of migration theory based on research into the factors and motivations that influence the decision of international students to return to their home country or the country of residence.

Data and research methodology

The data on which this paper is based comes from a questionnaire that was designed for the purpose of conducting research within the project "International Student Migration in the Context of Serbia and (Re)construction of Identity: Key Issues and Elements for Public Policy" (IS-MIGaIN). The research was conducted using a questionnaire from November 2023 to January 2024. An electronic questionnaire has been prepared in two forms: a questionnaire for students who are currently studying abroad and a questionnaire for students who have returned to their home country after completing their studies (Stojšin, 2025), in our case, the Republic of Serbia. The questionnaire for students

studying abroad contained 32 questions, while the questionnaire for returnees had one more question (Stojšin, 2025). All questions were closed-ended with an option to provide additional written responses, and the last ten questions of the questionnaire pertained to socio-demographic variables (Ibid, 2025: 178). The online questionnaire was created on the open-source platform LimeSurvey (<https://www.limesurvey.org>), which is installed on the IDN server. Filling out the questionnaire took an average of about 30 minutes, which is relatively long for this method of surveying. The instrument was distributed through various channels: we shared the created link through authorized representatives from relevant ministries; through associations of international students; personal contacts; and through a database that was created during previous research on the international population was also used (Vasojević, 2019; Vasojević, 2022). The collected data is distributed in two main formats: Excel table and SPSS format, and IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.0.0.(241) was used for data processing. From the collected data and the first wave of 127 valid questionnaires (population - citizens of the Republic of Serbia), after conducting statistical control, 122 valid questionnaires were identified that were fully completed (containing all socio-demographic variables) (Vasojević, 2025: 196). Considering that the collected data is the result of a large scientific study, this paper focuses only on the results for the population of students who are citizens of the Republic of Serbia and who are studying or have studied abroad for the defined research objective.

The sample consisted of 32.8% men and 67.2% women. The criterion for selecting this group of respondents is that they have spent a minimum of one year abroad, whether they used a scholarship from a domestic donor for their education (18.1%), a foreign donor (37.6%), or financed their education abroad with personal funds (44.3%) (Vasojević, 2025: 196-197). The largest number of respondents were aged between 21 and 30 years, accounting for 56.6% (Vasojević: 196). It has been established that the largest number of respondents decided to study abroad after completing their undergraduate studies, with 53.5% enrolling in master's programs, followed by 28.1% who pursued doctoral studies, and finally, those who went abroad after high school and enrolled in undergraduate programs, accounting for 18.4% (Vasojević, 2025: 197).

Results

It has been shown that for the majority of our international students, the most important factor in deciding to return to Serbia is related to their profession (a total of 40.1%), primarily the availability of a well-paid job in their field (30.3%) and, to a lesser extent, favorable conditions for starting their own business—with government support (9.8%). This indicates that for the majority of our international students, the most important factor for returning is the ability to work in the field they studied and from which they can secure a livelihood. This factor has proven to be stable when it comes to attitudes related to life and career among the highly educated. Let us recall that the opportunity for professional development was cited as the most important motivation for going abroad by our scholarship recipients, academically successful students, and potential migrants in earlier studies (Krnjaić, 2002). This is an important issue because in our country there is a mismatch between education and employment opportunities, especially when we talk about young people (Krnjaić & Vuletić Joksimović, 2025). Research shows that in Serbia, compared to other countries in Southeast Europe, there is the most pronounced discrepancy in this regard, with the percentage of young people working in jobs for which they were educated dropping from 29.1% in 2018 to 20.7% in 2024 (Hasanović, 2024). However, for about 10% of the respondents in our sample, the motivating factor that influences the decision to return to the country relates to the possibility of starting their own business with the help of the state (which may also indicate a weaker entrepreneurial spirit among the respondents). About 70% of our international students believe that they should contribute to their country with the knowledge and contacts they have gained abroad, while at the same time, they estimate that when they return home, they will receive the same treatment in employment as other citizens of the Republic of Serbia in the job market (38%). All of this indicates that although our respondents, international students, believe that returnees should contribute to their country, a significant number of them do not see that their home country recognizes the "acquired" capital of knowledge, skills, and contacts as an advantage in employment.

The next important reason for returning to the country relates to the family aspect (21.3%). When assessing the level of agreement, about 38% of respondents agreed that they cannot live without their family, while 33.8% said they can, and for 28.1%, family ties are not decisive.

Conclusion

Considering that there are very few studies addressing this population, the analyzed results shed light on certain issues related to the factors and motives influencing the decision of international students, citizens of the Republic of Serbia, to return to their home country. Additionally, numerous questions have arisen regarding the phenomenon of temporary migration and the "utilization" of human capital that international students "(they) bring/wear" with them. It should be noted that this research included respondents who returned to their home country after their education, as well as those who are still studying abroad. In addition to the methodological limitations that this study carries, it should be noted that international students, citizens of the Republic of Serbia, view their knowledge as a value. However, in order to influence the development of society and the workforce, it is necessary for the country to recognize them as significant human capital.