Attitudes towards Immigration in Hungary in Light of the Migration and Refugee Crisis in 2015

Master Thesis

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Abstract

In 2015 the inflow of immigrants to Europe has increased significantly. More than one million people fled from wars and conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Most migrants tried to reach Western Europe, which made countries along the Western Balkans route the most affected. The current thesis focuses on Hungary an important transit country which became known by its harsh measures towards immigrants and its hostile political environment. During 2015 the Hungarian government launched several anti-immigration campaigns, built a wall to the Serbian and Croatian border and often framed immigration as a threat to national safety. In this extreme migratory situation and hostile political context the investigation of attitudes towards immigration is of special interest. In 2015 the contact between immigrants and Hungarians increased significantly hence the influence of intergroup contact on attitudes towards immigration have a leading role in my analysis. As a theoretical base of this study the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1963) and the perceived threat theory (Blumer, 1958) will be applied and contrasted. By analysing quantitative survey data in SPSS I try to explore the determinants of attitudes towards immigration in Hungarian society and the effect of contact with immigrants on attitudes. According to my results education and financial background are important predictors of attitudes towards immigration while strong and weak contact proved to have reverse effect on attitudes. Weak contact with immigrants has a negative effect while strong contact (personal relationship) has a positive effect on attitudes towards immigration. Moreover, personal relationship with immigrants proved to have a moderating effect between education, financial background, place of residence and attitudes towards immigration. The findings of this thesis imply that the Hungarian government should support immigrants to learn the Hungarian language and create opportunities for Hungarians to build personal relationship with immigrants, which could facilitate positive attitudes towards immigration.

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1. Introduction

Recently, Europe has experienced the greatest migration and refugee inflow since the Second World War. The phenomenon of migration in Europe is nothing new, people have always been moving across borders for various reasons (Stern, 2016). However due to recent wars and conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, the number of forcibly displaced people has increased significantly. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2015 more than one million people reached Europe by sea (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). Although European countries were affected by the mass immigration flows to different extents, they all had to provide fast responses to the challenging situation.

Since most migrants attempted to reach Western Europe through the so called Western Balkans route, countries located along the way were exposed to the mass immigration the most (Anderson et al., 2016). Among these, Hungary is especially interesting as a transit country and as an entrance to the European Union, where around 390,000 migrants crossed over and more than 177,000 applied for asylum in 2015 (Simonovits, Bernát, Sik, & Szeitl, 2016). Besides its unique position Hungary became known by its unprecedented strict actions and inhumane treatment of refugees. Even families with small children were provided with insufficient shelter and the police frequently resorted to violence against refugees (Kingsley, 2015; Kingsley & Traynor, 2015). Although Hungary continued to remain a transit country, the communication and policy responses of the government could have led the public to believe that immigrants crossing the country are intending to stay(Juhász & Molnár, 2015).

While some European governments such as the German or Swedish promoted a "refugees welcome" attitude, the Hungarian government demonstrated its aversion against immigration in various ways. In 2015 they initiated a "National consultation" on migration, launched an anti-immigration billboard campaign and were the first in Europe to build a fence at the borders to keep immigrants away (Simonovits et al., 2016). Additionally, in January 2015, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban gave a speech following the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris. He emphasised how threatening immigration is to Europe, which facilitated the emergence of a 'moral panic' meaning a large amount of people believe they are threatened by the appearance or actions of another group (Hall, 2003). In these situations people require immediate actions by the authorities, which gave legitimacy to the government to take harsh measures (Bernáth & Messing, 2015).

Intolerance towards minorities has a longer history in Hungarian society (Balogi & Feischmidt, 2009; Juhász, Hunyadi, & Zgut, 2015; Nyíri, 2003). Negative attitudes were measured even towards the so called "Pirezians", a fictive nationality made up by Hungarian researchers (Juhász et al., 2015). Negative attitudes towards immigrants such as prejudice leads to discrimination, which could cause

harm to both the immigrant group and the host society by having economic, political and social effects (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). However immigration has only recently become a central issue in Hungary. During the summer of 2015 the migration crisis reached its peak and the presence of immigrants became visible for everyone in the country, especially in the capital city of Budapest (Simonovits et al., 2016). By the emerged situation the contact between immigrants and Hungarians has increased, which makes it relevant to investigate the society's attitudes towards immigration and the impact of intergroup contact on attitudes. While most studies concerning attitudes towards immigrants focus on the United States, a country with a substantial immigrant population, there is a great need to research other countries as well, particularly such important transit countries like Hungary. In contribution to existing knowledge, this thesis will examine the determinants of attitudes towards immigration and the impact of contact with immigrants on attitudes in Hungarian society in an extreme migratory situation and in a hostile political and policy context.

2. Theoretical exploration

2.1. The Hungarian context

While this thesis aims to explore the determinants of attitudes towards immigration and the impact of contact with immigrants on attitudes towards immigration, it also pays special attention to the political and policy context where these attitudes take place. In the case of Hungary in 2015 the political and policy context was constituted by new immigration policies, political speeches and campaigns and representation of immigration in the media. Although the impact of context on attitudes will not be statistically measured in the current study, in order to fully understand individual attitudes towards immigration and the impact of personal contact on attitudes, the examination of these contextual factors is essential (Karreth, Singh, & Stojek, 2015; Markaki & Longhi, 2012).

Although the level of immigration to Hungary already started to rise in 2013 it had not become a central issue until the beginning of 2015. Then, due to Hungary's geographical position, the mass immigration to Europe changed the country's situation. The significance of the change is well illustrated by the number of submitted asylum applications in 2015, since in this year more were counted than in the previous 23 years taken together (Juhász & Molnár, 2015). In spite of the large number of asylum applicants most of them only aimed to cross Hungary on their way to other Western European countries such as Germany or Sweden (Török, 2015).

The government often referred to asylum seekers as economic migrants who could take the jobs of Hungarian people, which strengthened the fear of unemployment in society. While in 2013 Hungarian citizens saw unemployment as the most serious issue the EU and its member states had to face, in 2015 immigration and terrorism were seen as the most serious problems (Juhász, Hunyadi, & Zgut, 2015).

During 2015 all interventions of the government regarding migration aimed at controlling the rights of incoming immigrants and asylum seekers. Asylum laws in 2015 enabled authorities to put immigrants into detention for up to 12 months until they receive a decision about their asylum application. Conditions in detention centers have been widely criticized by human rights organizations, since they were originally built for criminals (Juhász, Hunyadi, & Zgut, 2015).

In May 2015 the government initiated a "National consultation", which aimed to explore public attitudes towards immigration and terrorism by sending questionnaires to all Hungarian households. In the title of the consultation and further in the questions immigration and terrorism were presented as closely related terms, which could have influenced individuals' attitudes towards immigration in a negative way (Juhász et al., 2015). One of the questions included a proposal of a policy regarding asylum seekers putting forward the possibility that 'economic migrants' should pay all their living expenses while they are staying in Hungary (Hungarian Government, 2015). However while economic migrants imply those migrants who leave their countries in order to improve their living conditions by finding better paying jobs, the Hungarian government tend to use the term 'economic migrant' to all immigrants including refugees and asylum seekers as well (Semmelroggen, 2015).

Accompanied by the National consultation, in June 2015 the government launched a billboard campaign with anti-immigration messages. "If you come to Hungary you can't take the jobs of Hungarian people!" and "If you come to Hungary you have to respect our culture!" were only some of the many messages posted nation-wide. These messages framed immigration as an economic threat, a threat to national safety and to Hungarian culture. Since all messages were in Hungarian, immigrants with no or little knowledge of the Hungarian language could not understand them. Accordingly it is likely that they aimed to reach the Hungarian public rather than immigrants (Nolan, 2015).

In August 2015 an amendment of the asylum law entered into force which included an international list of countries that the Hungarian authorities considered safe. According to the amendment the applications of those asylum seekers who crossed any of these countries on their way to Hungary and not being able to demonstrate that they could not apply for asylum there, will be rejected (Juhász, Hunyadi, & Zgut, 2015). The negative rhetoric of the Hungarian government about refugees and asylum seekers continued with the statement of Prime Minister Viktor Orban at the press conference of the European Council at the beginning of September 2015, where he declared that a fence will be built at the Hungarian border to keep immigrants away. Moreover he said that all European citizens felt threatened by immigration flows and addressed his criticism to all European leaders who are not able to provide alternatives to tackle the evolved migratory situation in Europe (European Commission, 2015). After the fence had been set up on the Hungarian-Serbian border in September 2015 an extension was built to the Hungarian-Croatian border in October 2015, thus forcing

immigrants on the Western Balkans route to avoid Hungary on their way to Western Europe (Simonovits et al., 2016).

Although due to the fence the number of asylum seekers decreased significantly, the government continued its actions against immigration. As an opposition to the EU's proposal about the mandatory redistribution quota system, the government initiated a referendum (Harris, 2016). For this occasion a new campaign was set up, spreading anti-immigration messages through booklets, bill-boards and even the media (Juhász et al., 2015). People were exposed to messages such as "Did you know that since the beginning of the immigration crisis the harassment of women has risen sharply in Europe?" and "Did you know that the Paris terror attacks were carried out by immigrants?" (Gall, 2016). These messages framed immigration as threats to national safety and identified immigrants with terrorists once again, which could affect society's attitudes towards immigrants. Moreover according to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee - a non-governmental organization for human rights, during 2015 immigrants were represented as dangerous and threatening people in the public broadcast media which greatly fit into the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the government (Juhász et al., 2015). In sum, these policy actions and framing of immigration by the government have created a hostile environment, which might affect individual attitudes towards immigration.

2.2. Theories regarding attitudes towards immigration

Two of the most important theoretical approaches to understand attitudes towards immigration are theories that emphasize the role of intergroup contact and others that focus on the perceived threat that could be a leading factor in attitude formation. Since the role of intergroup contact is essential in my thesis as a theoretical base of this study the intergroup contact theory will be applied (Allport, 1963). In addition, using the perceived threat theory (Blumer, 1958) will enable me to properly interpret and understand the findings of my empirical analysis.

Perceived threat theory

According to the threat hypothesis, since individuals identify themselves with groups, prejudice towards an out-group arise from the perceived threat to the in-group (Blumer, 1958; Stephan et al., 2005). In order to better understand the causes of prejudice Stephan and his colleagues developed an integrated threat theory which grouped threats into four categories based on their sources, such as realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes (Stephan, Ybarra, Martinez, Schwarzwald, & Tur-Kaspa, 1998). Threats concerning the economic position, material goods as well as the political power of the in-group falls under the category of realistic threats, while symbolic threats are related to beliefs and values which could threaten the in-group's worldview (Stephan et al., 2005). Intergroup anxiety arises from individual's fear of rejection or negative outcomes of interaction, however negative out-group stereotypes also proved to have an effect on

prejudice, since they embody threats to the in-group (Stephan et al., 1998). Intergroup threat theory has been widely applied in studies concerning attitudes towards immigrants since Quillian (1995) proved that attitudes towards immigrants such as racial prejudice can be also seen as perceived threats by the in-group (Bohman, 2014). Furthermore Quillian suggests that the perceived threat is mainly affected by the economic situation of the majority society and the relative size of the out-group. When economic conditions are worse, the competition for scarce resources or the blaming of the out-group for the economic problems can lead to prejudicial attitudes. In addition, when the size of the out-group is relatively big, competition for either scarce resources or for political power can result prejudicial attitudes (Quillian, 1995).

Intergroup contact theory

According to the widely known contact theory established by the social psychologist Gordon Allport (1963), interaction between different groups decreases the level of prejudice and facilitates individuals to appreciate intergroup similarities (Jolly & Digiusto, 2014). However, conditions should be optimal to achieve the positive effect on attitudes. The optimal conditions are as follows: the status of the groups should be equal in the given situation, they should have common goals and should enjoy the support of the authorities or law. Moreover cooperation between the two groups is essential (Pettigrew, 1998). Nevertheless, later in their meta-analytical analysis Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) concluded that without Allport's optimal conditions it is still possible to achieve positive outcome with intergroup contact, however the decrease in prejudicial attitudes will be smaller. Various researchers investigated the question whether the quality of intergroup contact matters. Friendship between members of in- and out-groups proved to be the best way of intergroup contact, since it creates the opportunity to learn about the out-group's values, which decreases prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). Additionally the extended contact hypothesis suggests that the knowledge of a close relationship between an in-group and an out-group member has a positive effect on intergroup attitudes (Wright et al., 1997). Wright and his colleagues proposed three potential mechanisms which are able to explain this positive effect. First, the positive interaction and caring behaviour of the in-group member towards the out-group member stands as an example to all other in-group members. Second, the negative expectations are disconfirmed by the positive behaviour of the out-group member, and lastly that through the knowledge of any cross-group friendship the in-group member will feel himself closer to the out-group (Wright et al., 1997).

Additional factors affecting attitudes towards immigrants

Although most studies concerning attitudes towards immigration are based on the intergroup threat theory and contact theory, several other factors can also be of importance. For example one's position on the labour market determines the economic threat one perceives, hence it is correlates with one's attitudes towards immigrants (Larsen, Krumov, Van Le, Ommundsen, & van der Veer, 2009; Scheve,

2001). Since most immigrants in Europe occupy low-skilled jobs, individuals in the majority society with similar skills could feel the most threatened in their position, therefore they often develop negative attitudes towards immigrants (Larsen et al., 2009; Schneider, 2008). A study by Schneider (2008), further suggests that more ethnic threat is perceived when someone has lower socioeconomic status. These individual level predictors are occupational status, income and education. Education is not only an important indicator for one's position on the labour market, it also facilitates individuals to become more socially open, hence people with more formal education tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigrants (Larsen et al., 2009; Schneider, 2008).

Besides one's economic status and educational level the place of residence also has an effect on individual attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. Since immigrants mostly live in urban areas the competition for jobs are higher for majority people living there, which could promote anti-immigrant attitudes. However the opportunities to meet immigrants are also better, hence overwriting the negative effect (Schneider, 2008).

3. Empirical research question and hypotheses

In order to explore the determinants of attitudes towards immigration in Hungarian society based on the above mentioned theories and contextual factors the following research question will be investigated: *Which factors determine attitudes towards immigration in Hungary and to what extent does contact with immigrants have an impact on attitudes?*

As it is presented in the theoretical model below the analysis will aim to explore the influence of education, financial background, the place of residence and contact with immigrants on attitudes towards immigration. Furthermore it aims to find out whether personal relationship with immigrants moderates the relationship between these factors and attitudes towards immigration.

Figure 1: Theoretical Model
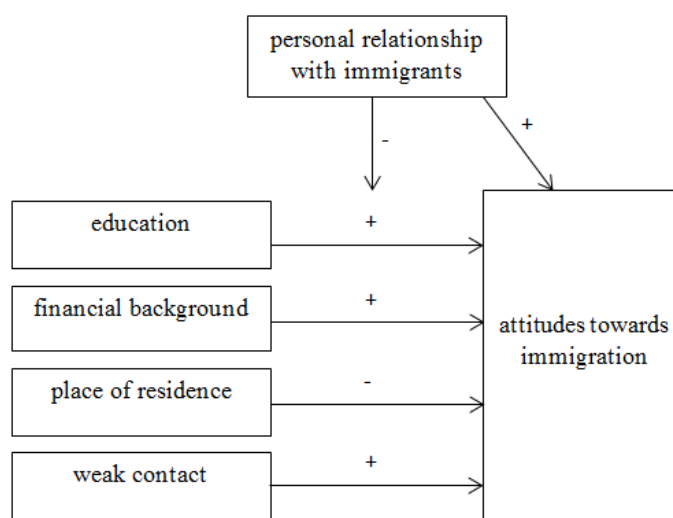
Based on the theoretical exploration of this study the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H1: Individuals with higher educational level will have more positive attitudes towards immigrants than individuals with lower educational level.

- H2: Individuals who have met immigrants will have more positive attitudes towards immigration than those who haven't met any.

- H3/a: Personal relationship with immigrants is expected to decrease the effect of education on attitudes towards immigrants.

- H3/b: Personal relationship with immigrants is expected to decrease the effect of financial background on attitudes towards immigrants.

- H3/c: Personal relationship with immigrants is expected to decrease the effect of the place of residence on attitudes towards immigrants.

4. Research design

4.1. Data and Respondents

The research question stated above will be answered by using survey data from TÁRKI Social Research Institute. TÁRKI frequently collects data about the attitudes of the Hungarian society concerning different issues. The current dataset involves a broad range of questions about attitudes towards immigration. Since this data is originally private it was requested from the TÁRKI Data Bank for educational purposes. The dataset includes cross-sectional data gathered face-to-face through computer supported questionnaires in October 2015. Since the inflow of immigrants in Hungary reached its peak during the summer of 2015, the analysis of the data collected in October 2015 will enable us to gain relevant information about individual attitudes towards immigration in an extreme migratory situation.

The units of analysis for this study are individuals and the sampling procedure was multi-staged national probability sampling. This implies that more than one single-stage sampling technique had been applied, every unit of the population had equal probability of being sampled and that the sampling procedure involved random selection (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The sample is proportionately stratified hence each subgroup (strata) of the population is present in proportion to their size in the population. The sample is representative of the adult Hungarian population and was weighted by gender, age, educational level and place of residence. It contains 1003 respondents between the age of 18 and 92 of which 468 were men and 535 were women. The largest group of the respondents (31.3%) had finished secondary education, while the second largest group (29.1%) enjoyed vocational training. More than half of the respondents reported to have financial problems (56.9%), while 43.1% have no financial problems at all. Only a small percentage of the respondents live in the capital city of Budapest (18.1%), while 81.9% live somewhere else in the country.

4.2. Statistical methods

In order to find answers to my research question as well as to test my hypotheses multiple regression analysis and moderated multiple regression analysis will be conducted in SPSS. By multiple regression analysis we are not only able to understand the overall variance explained by the model but also the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (Barna & Székelyi, 2002). In my analysis I aim to explore the relationship between 5 independent variables and one dependent variable, hence multiple regression analysis is the most appropriate method to apply (Field, 2009). Then, to be able to test whether personal relationship with immigrants moderates the relationship between attitudes towards immigration and all independent variables, a moderated multiple regression analysis will be applied. By this method a second model will be created which will either strengthen or weaken the overall variance explained by the first model. In case the model enhances the explained variance the moderator effect of contact is confirmed (Hayes, 2009).

In order to get the most reliable results and to avoid bias some assumptions have to be met. In this study, two-dimensional correlation analyses will be conducted in order to explore whether certain independent variables significantly predict the dependent variable and to detect multicollinearity. In case of multicollinearity two or more independent variables are highly correlated with each other, which could undermine the statistical significance of these variables (Field, 2009). Osborne and Waters (2002) suggest four other important assumptions researchers have to check for before conducting multiple regression analysis. First, the variables have to be normally distributed then there need to be linear relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Furthermore all variables have to be reliable, which means that they should be measured without an error. Lastly, it is important to test for homoscedasticity, which implies that the variance of errors should be the same across all values of the independent variables (Osborne & Waters, 2002).
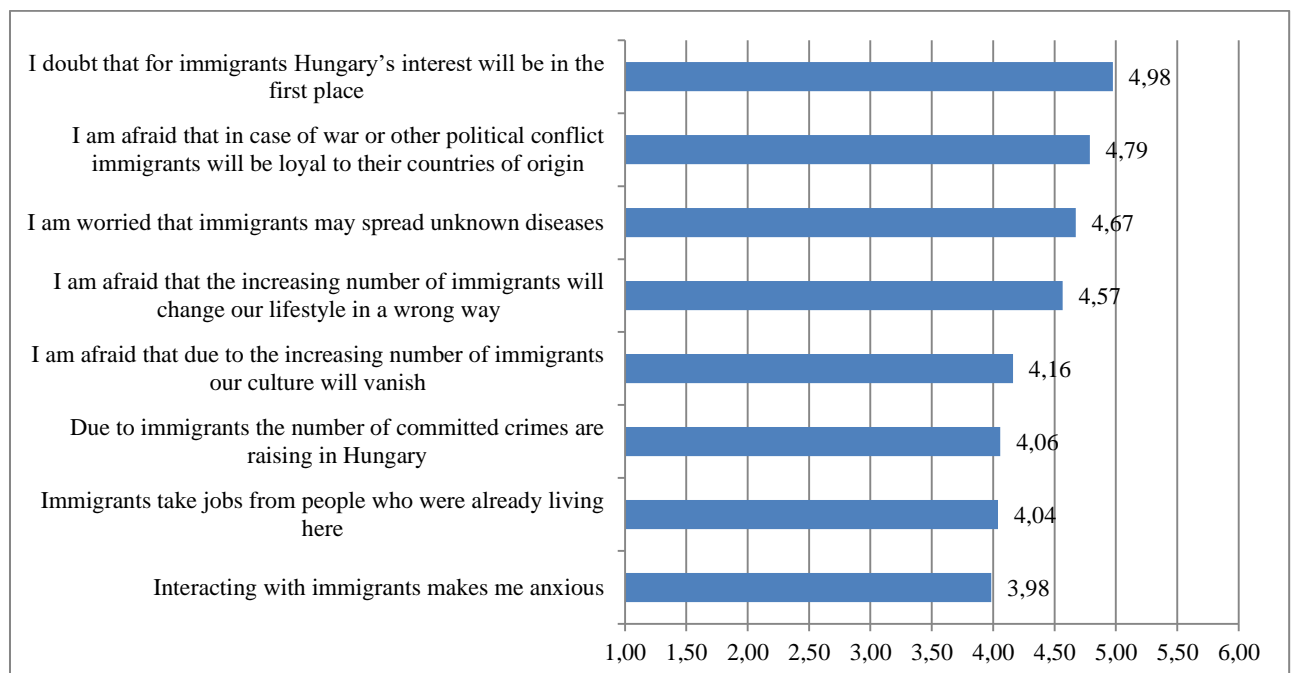
4.3. Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study is *individual attitudes towards immigration*. In order to get the most reliable dependent variable, a principle component analysis was conducted by using nine questions about attitudes contained in the dataset. This method is widely used in studies regarding attitudes towards immigration and prejudice, either to create the dependent variable or to explore the connectedness of certain items (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Paas & Halapuu, 2012; Simonovits et al., 2016). The nine items of the principle component analysis were the following: 1. "Immigration in Hungary is out of control" 2. "Due to immigrants the number of committed crimes are raising in Hungary." 3. "Immigrants take jobs from people who were already living here." 4. "Contact with immigrants makes me anxious." 5. "I am worried that immigrants may spread unknown diseases." 6. "I am afraid that in case of war or other political conflict immigrants will be loyal to their countries of origin." 7. "I am afraid that the increasing number of immigrants will change our lifestyle in a wrong way." 8. "I doubt that Hungary's interest will be prior to immigrants." 9. "I am afraid that due to the

increasing number of immigrants our culture will vanish.". All nine questions measured the extent to which the respondent agreed with certain statements on a Likert scale from 1 through 6 where 1 refers to "I totally disagree" and 6 refers to "I totally agree". The "I don't know" and "No answer" categories were excluded from further analysis by recoding them to user missing values.

Conducting principle component analysis on these items enabled me to reduce the number of variables while maintaining the most of their original variance (Conway, J. M., & Huffcutt, 2003). Initially nine questions were involved in the analysis, however the first question was removed because its communalities did not reach 0.25 hence it did not fit into the structure of the component to measure attitudes towards immigration (Barna & Székelyi, 2002). The total variance which is explained by the principle component is 49.7 %. Usually a principle component is acceptable when the explained variance reaches 50%, however the rule relaxes when the number of included variables increase. Hence in the case of the current study the explained variance of 49.7% of the principle component is acceptable to use as a dependent variable (Barna & Székelyi, 2002). The new variable measures attitudes towards immigration on a scale between -3 and +3.5 where the higher rates imply more positive attitudes. The distribution of the answers to the eight items involved is presented in the figure below.

Figure 2: Eight Variables of the Principle Component Analysis

4.4. Independent variables

Independent variables in this study are the following: *place of residence, education level, financial background, weak contact* and *strong contact with immigrants*. In order to be able to conduct multiple regression analysis, variables with nominal or ordinal measurement levels were recoded into dummy

or interval scale level variables. Place of residence was transformed into a variable with two categories where 0=not Budapest and 1=Budapest. Budapest is not only the capital but also the biggest city in Hungary which was the most affected by the inflow of immigrants in 2015 (Simonovits et al., 2016). Therefore the distinction between Budapest and all other smaller cities in Hungary will provide sufficient information and will enable me to involve the dichotomous variable in the linear regression analysis. In order to create an interval variable from the originally ordinal educational level to be able to involve in the regression analysis, a scale was created where the numbers stand for the years finished in school 0=less than 8 years of primary education, 8=primary education, 10=vocational school, 12=secondary education, 14=accredited higher educational vocational school, 17=university (Barna & Székelyi, 2002). Financial background was measured with both objective and subjective variables in the sample. The objective variable meant to find out the monthly income of the respondents while the subjective variable referred to the possible financial problems one can face. However, two-thirds of the respondents refused to answer the question concerning their income. As the inclusion of such variable would create bias in the analysis the subjective variable will be included which measures the financial background in two categories where 0=they have financial problems 1=they have no financial problems (Field, 2009).

Moderator variable

Since several studies found that different type of contact might have different effects on attitudes (Pettigrew, 1998; Wright et al., 1997) there will be two types of contact variables involved in this analysis. The first question asked whether the respondent has met any immigrant or refugee in Hungary during the past 12 months while the other question meant to find out whether the respondent knows personally any immigrant or refugee. Respondents could answer with "Yes", "No" or "I don't know" to both of the questions. In order to be able to involve these variables in my model dummy variables were created from both of them, where 0 refers to "No" and 1 refers to "Yes". For easier interpretation further on this thesis I will refer to the first contact variable as weak contact (has met any immigrant or refugee in Hungary during the past 12 months) and the second contact variable as strong contact (the respondent knows personally any immigrant or refugee). In all cases "I don't know" and "No answer" categories were recoded as user missing values and were excluded from further analysis. Since the number of missing is very low they are not expected to affect the validity of the analysis.

Control variables

While age and gender are not central factors to my analysis they might still play a role in predicting attitudes towards immigration, hence they will be included in the analysis as control variables. Since age is an interval variable it can be put into the analysis without transformation. For easier interpretation gender was recoded into a dummy variable where 0=male and 1=female.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

Independent variables	N (Valid)	N (Missing)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Finanical background	987	16	3,30	0,812
Weak contact	1001	2	0,24	0,429
Strong contact	1003	0	0,03	0,174
Education	1003	0	2,45	1,020
Place of residence	1003	0	2,22	1,066
Age	1003	0	48,07	17,471
Gender	1003	0	1,53	0,499

4.5. Results

To begin with bivariate Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between each of the predictors and the dependent variable. As it can be seen by the results (Appendix A.) gender, education, financial background and strong contact are significantly correlated with attitudes towards immigration. There is a negative correlation between gender and attitudes towards immigration $r= -0.063$, $p=0.047$, which means that women have less positive attitudes than men. A strong positive correlation was found between education and attitudes towards immigration $r=0.164$, $p=0.000$ which implies that individuals with more formal education have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Strong positive correlation can be observed between financial background and attitudes towards immigration as well $r=0.134$, $p=0.000$ which leads to the conclusion that individuals with better financial background have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Strong contact and attitudes towards immigration found to be positively correlated $r=0.146$, $p=0.000$ thus those individuals who personally know immigrants tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. However no significant correlation was found between age, place of residence, weak contact and the dependent variable. Although no significant correlation was found between these three variables and attitudes towards immigration, place of residence and weak contact have a central role in my thesis. Hence I decided to involve them in the multiple regression analysis to explore whether they are significant predictors of attitudes towards immigration, once all other variables are held constant. Age and gender will be involved in the analysis as control variables.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between attitudes towards immigration and place of residence, educational level, financial background, weak contact and strong contact with immigrants. A significant regression equation was found ($F(7.977)=12.068$, $p < 0.000$), with an R^2 of 0.080.

The statistical significance of the independent variables can be found in the table below.

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Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Gender	-,122	,063	-,060	-1,950	,051
Place of residence	-,087	,088	-,033	-,994	,321
Education	,053**	,010	,175	5,156	,000
Financial background	,217**	,067	,106	3,222	,001
Age	,004*	,002	,077	2,396	,017
Weak contact	-,317**	,081	-,135	-3,935	,000
Strong contact	,930**	,183	,162	5,087	,000

Source: Tárki, 2015

* $p < 0,05$ ** $p < 0,01$

As can be seen in Table 2., education, financial background, weak contact and strong contact are significant predictors of attitudes towards immigration, while the place of residence does not significantly predict attitudes in this model. Individuals with higher educational level and better financial background have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Furthermore those who have personal relationship with immigrants tend to have more positive attitudes towards immigration. According to these findings my first hypothesis (H1) which suggested that individuals with higher educational level will have more positive attitudes towards immigrants can be confirmed. While there was no significant correlation between weak contact with immigrants and the dependent variable in the bivariate correlation analysis, after controlling for the other variables in the model it gained significance. However individuals who have met immigrants in the past 12 months (weak contact) seem to have more negative attitudes towards immigrants, which is in contrast with the attitudes of those who have personal relationship with immigrants (strong contact). According to these result my second hypothesis (H2) which suggested that those individuals who have met immigrants have more positive attitudes towards immigration has to be rejected.

Since based on the theory I assumed that personal relationship with immigrants might not only be a simple predictor of attitudes towards immigration but also a moderator between the independent variables and attitudes towards immigration, a moderated multiple regression analysis was conducted (Hayes, 2009). Because testing the moderating effect of strong contact on weak contact would be pointless, weak contact was removed from the moderated regression analysis. As can be seen by the results, by the addition of the interaction term (strong contact) an increase of 18% (R^2 change=0.018)

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can be observed in the explained variance of the model, which increase is statistically significant p=0.000. Moreover in the second model all of the predictors significantly predict attitudes towards immigration. According to the results the effect size of education and financial background slightly decreased while the effect size of the place of residence slightly increased by the addition of the interaction term. By these findings we can conclude that personal relationship with immigrants moderate the relationship between education, financial background, place of residence, and the dependent variable, attitudes towards immigration, however to different extents. Based on the results my hypotheses which suggested that personal relationship with immigrants (strong contact) is expected to decrease the effect of education and financial background (H3/a, H3/b) can be confirmed. While the hypothesis which suggested that personal relationship is expected to decrease the effect of the place of residence (H3/c) has to be rejected. The statistical significance of the independent variables can be found in the table below.

Table 3: Moderated Regression Analysis

Model	Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	Financial background	,205**	,068	,100	3,009	,003
	Gender	-,124	,064	-,061	-1,948	,052
	Education	,051**	,010	,170	4,965	,000
	Age	,004*	,002	,076	2,347	,019
	Place of residence	-,178*	,085	-,068	-2,085	,037
2	Financial background	,199**	,068	,097	2,940	,003
	Gender	-,127*	,063	-,063	-2,015	,044
	Education	,048**	,010	,158	4,654	,000
	Age	,005**	,002	,085	2,658	,008
	Place of residence	-,185*	,085	-,071	-2,184	,029
	Strong contact	,773**	,180	,134	4,301	,000

Source: Tárki, 2015

* p < 0,05 ** p < 0,01

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The extreme migratory situation in 2015, the hostile political context and the general intolerance of the Hungarian society gave relevance to investigate attitudes towards immigration. The current study aimed at exploring the main determinants of attitudes and the impact of contact on attitudes towards immigration. Some of the findings of this study confirmed while others contradicted existing knowledge of the topic, which might provide new insights for a better understanding of the issue. According to the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1963) contact between in- and out-group reduces prejudice, however the current research found that weak contact with immigrants does not facilitate positive attitudes towards immigration but it enhances negative attitudes instead. Still, personal relationship with immigrants proved to have a positive effect on attitudes, which support the theories regarding the importance of the quality of the contact (Pettigrew, 1998; Wright et al., 1997).

While the role of context could not be statistically measured in this thesis, as a possible explanation of these findings the role of the political and policy context has to be taken into account. Since most of the Hungarians do not have personal relationship with immigrants for those who have only seen or quickly met an immigrant the anti-immigration campaigns and false representation of immigrants in the media could raise the feeling of threat or danger which could be a leading factor in attitude formation. As it is suggested by the threat hypothesis (Blumer, 1958) the perceived threat by the in-group could lead to prejudicial attitudes towards the out-group. Individuals perceive threat in different ways, for instance people with lower educational level and economic status could feel more threatened by immigrants which lead to more negative attitudes (Larsen et al., 2009; Schneider, 2008). The findings of the current research support these theories, as education and financial background proved to be important predictors of attitudes towards immigration. Hence individuals with higher educational level and better financial background have more positive attitudes towards immigration. This thesis also aimed to find out whether personal relationship moderates the relationship between attitudes and certain predictors. Based on the findings it can be concluded that personal relationship proved to have a significant moderating effect. It slightly decreases the effect size of education and financial background, while it slightly increases the effect size of the place of residence.

Returning to the initial research question of this study we can conclude that education, financial background as well as strong and weak contact with immigrants all determine attitudes towards immigration, while the place of residence does not. Moreover weak contact with immigrants proved to affect attitudes towards immigration in a negative way while strong contact has a positive effect on attitudes.

5.1. Limitations and Recommendations

Although this thesis aimed to produce the most reliable information some limitations have to be discussed. One of the limitations arises from the nature of the analysed data, since only one cross-sectional dataset was used. This indicates that the current thesis could not explore possible changes in attitudes towards immigration across time. Another limitation concerns the robustness of the regression models. While both of the regression models proved to be significant neither of them have a high degree of explained variance. This indicates that there might be some other important factors influencing attitudes towards immigration which were not involved in the current research. As a third limitation the role of context has to be mentioned. While these contextual factors presumably have an effect on attitudes, since there was no data available on the impact of anti-immigration campaigns and other actions of the Hungarian government during the researched period, it was not possible to measure them. Hence the extent to which the political and policy context has an impact on attitudes remains unknown for now.

Despite these limitations the current study revealed important information regarding attitudes towards immigration in Hungarian society, which could serve as a good base for future research in the topic. Building on the findings of this thesis some future research should be done to shed light on the reasons of the contrast between the impact of weak contact and strong contact on attitudes towards immigrants, which could be done by organizing focus groups. As for policy recommendations, instead of spreading anti-immigration messages throughout the country, which could affect the attitudes of Hungarians toward immigration in a negative way, accurate information about the migratory situation should be provided. Moreover, it is important to create opportunities for Hungarian citizens to build personal relationships with immigrants, since it proved to be an important factor which facilitates positive attitudes towards immigration. Integrated schools and supporting immigrants to learn the Hungarian language would open up possibilities to reach this goal.

Reflection

The writing of this thesis has been a great learning process for me. I was able to explore my limitations and to cope with arising problems I have never dealt with before. One of the most important things I have learnt during this process is the ability to let an idea go in order to move forward. My initial idea about my thesis has changed a lot since the beginning because I had to realize the limitations and possibilities of the current research. At the beginning my plan was to compare two datasets to be able to measure possible changes in attitudes across time. However later on I had to realize that comparing two cross-sectional datasets would not give a real picture of the changes in attitudes. Also, while my initial plan was to focus a little bit more on the role of context, as I have already mentioned it among the limitations, the impact of context could not be statistically measured in this thesis. After all I believe that reviewing the contextual factors greatly contributed to the understanding of attitudes towards immigration in Hungarian society. Since I was not familiar with quantitative data analysis before I encountered some difficulties during conducting my analysis. However with the help of my supervisor and thesis group I was always able to move forward. I have learnt how to give and how to take feedback, which helped me a lot to improve my work, as well as to look at it from a different perspective when it was needed. While I am not totally satisfied with the final product, I could say that I enjoyed going through this learning process during which I gained important experience and confidence that I will be able to apply in the future.

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Appendix:

Correlation Analysis Between the Independent Variables and Attitudes Towards Immigration

Independent variables	Attitudes towards immigration
Gender	-,063*
Age	,027
Weak contact	-,052
Strong contact	,146**
Education	,164**
Place of residence	-,001
Financial background	,134**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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