Minority Romani Pupils and Exclusion from Education

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Abstract

Building on a small body of research, this study investigates the circumstances that create barriers for Romani pupils’ participation in education therefore increasing the risk of exclusion in a school under the study. With the aim of achieving in-depth understanding, purposeful sampling was applied in selecting cases for the current study. To answer the questions of the study a qualitative design was elaborated, with qualitative semi-structured interview as a main method of data collection. Findings derived from two informant groups—Romani pupils and educational staff, support much of the literature used as a conceptual ground of the study, and are interpreted accordingly to the theoretical framework.

The study identified lack of continuity in schooling due to different family and socioeconomic factors, as well as low level of competence in language of instruction, and racism and name-calling as influencing forces on schooling experience. Current findings have additionally revealed high incidence of non-reporting of ethnocentric name-calling by Romani pupils. Development of good trusting relationships with Romani parents as well as liaison with different services, and acknowledging and promoting diversity have showed to be crucial elements of good school practice, aimed for securing access and promoting good levels of school attendance of Romani pupils. The need for further research and implications for practice are considered.

Key words: Romani, minority, education, exclusion, barriers
Dedication

For everyone experiencing discrimination.
I would like to express my genuine gratitude to Stefan Popovici for his guidance and patience through my work with this thesis, and his insight and knowledge about the topic.

My sincere thanks go to Skjalg and Ketevan for the encouragement and understanding throughout this process.

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Acronyms

**BCS** – Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian

**B&H** – Bosnia and Herzegovina

**NGO** - Non-Governmental Organization

**NSD** – Norwegian Social Science Data Services

**PPCT**- Process-Person-Context-Time

**PISA** - Programme for International Student Assessment

**TA**- Thematic Analysis

**UNICEF**- The United Nations Children’s Fund

**USAID** - The United States Agency for International Development
1 Introduction to the Study

1.1 General introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore issues faced by Roma pupils in one Bosnian-Herzegovinian school in Sarajevo which is known for its inclusive approach in working with students with difficulties and barriers to participation in education, and particularly for the large number of Roma pupils who successfully attend classes and achieve noticeable results in extracurricular activities.

This chapter will introduce Bosnian-Herzegovinian educational system, the status of Roma as a minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, as well as status of Roma children involved. Furthermore, the chapter will introduce the topic and the goal of the research, the question and the need for exploring the issue faced by Roma children in Bosnian-Herzegovinian educational system. The language of the study utilizes the terms Roma and Romani interchangeably through the study report.

1.2 Background

Some groups of children and young people are at the greater risk of exclusion than others (Wright, Weekes, McGlaughlin, 2000). Although elementary education is obligatory by law, the right to education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is realized by 94% of children (Non-enrolment and school dropout in Bosnia and Herzegovina study, 2011). Given that fact, there is a question why some children do not attend school. According to Ofsted (2003, in Derrington and Kendall, 2008) Romani pupils are regarded as the most vulnerable minority group in terms of attendance, engagement and attainment in school. Romani children in Bosnia and Herzegovina are at special risk as they don’t attend school for several reasons; according to sources from the study only 15% of Romani children are included in education. According to UNICEF (2011) lack of quality early childhood educational services, poverty, social exclusion and segregation and educational financing are just some of the reasons why Romani children do not attend school. Lack of birth registration is also the risk factor; as far as the state is concerned, they are invisible since a lot of them do not own birth certificate or any other identification document, for that matter. This is mostly because the parents do not feel the need to register their birth, as Romani population are often moving and changing the
place of residence, according to the Non-enrolment and school dropout in Bosnia and Herzegovina study (2011). Additional reason might be illiteracy; parents are not aware of the importance of schooling and the important role it has in the development. Furthermore, the opportunity of Roma children to learn in their mother tongue might be the reason for poor achievement; only at the very beginning of schooling Romani pupils start to learn Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language which is the language of three constitutive nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which in return affects their success in learning.

Thousands of Romani children do not attend school in Bosnia and Herzegovina; however the situation is not notably different for minority pupils who attend school. The complexity of the issue is seen in their exclusion from educational system, poor educational achievement and low school attendance and dropout rate which I am going to illustrate in this thesis. Since “exclusion in education” shows itself in various ways, we can grasp that there are many occasions when exclusion can occur in education (UNESCO, 2012).

1.3 Romani throughout history

Throughout the world there are groups of people that refer themselves as Roma, and who use a language and practice culture with which they stand out from the rest. Even though they refer to themselves as Romani, other people consider them by many other names: Gypsies, Gitanos, Tzigane etc. However, most widely and inaccurately used term “Gypsies” is created by mistaken assumptions on their true identity and supposed Egyptian origin. In Bosnia and Herzegovina they are pejoratively referred to as Cigani, a name derived from Byzantine Greek “atsingani”, the nickname that followed their remote and “untouchable” attitude towards other non-Romani (Hancock, 2002). However, Travellers (or Gypsy Travellers) is a name widely used in the UK due to their nomadic character (Derrington and Kendall, 2003). Depending on the context, gypsy and travellers can have different meaning, however, there are common cultural characteristics among European nomadic groups, respectively Rom—Roma, Gypsy and Travellers (Liégeois, 1987 in Lloyd and Norris, 1998).

According to Hancock (2002) Romani arrived in Europe by the end of thirteenth century during the times when Ottoman Turks were taking over Byzantine Empire; for that reason Europeans believed they were Turks too. However, examination of the Romani language revealed their true place of origin, what now seems to be northern India, which they left at the
beginning of the 10th century (Hancock, 2002). It took them another two and a half centuries to reach Europe; as the Ottoman Turks were gradually taking over Byzantium (Constantinople, now Istanbul) from 1071 onwards, it is believed that Romani entered Europe through engagement with Turkish battalions in 1300’s.

The presence of Roma in the Balkans, however, is documented in late 1200’s appearing in tax-collecting documents in which they were referred as “Tsigan” (Hancock, 2002). In the Ottoman-occupied Balkans they did not have an equal status; as they were non-Muslims, they were treated as property and were enslaved for over 500 years. By the mid-eighteen century, when slavery was seen as more inhumane and primitive, the movements calling for elimination of slavery rose in the West. It was not until 1864 when the first Romanian leader of historic-geographical region of Moldavia and Wallachia passed a law annulling Roma slavery. Nonetheless, even after the liberation nothing was done to educate the freed slaves and integrate them into society.

Newer Romani history was gloomy; they were considered as “outsiders”, and treated with suspicion and animosity by other Europeans. During World War II, as a part of great Nazi plan for extermination of Jewish population, Romani were also pointed for extinction in a “Gypsy-free Europe” (Hancock, 2002). However, as Haberer (2001, in Hancock, 2002) suggests: “Wrapped up in the Holocaust per se, the genocide of the Roma in the East is still very much an untold story.”

1.4 Romani population in Bosnia and Herzegovina

One of the issues that are still unresolved in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the issue of Romani inclusion in the society. The last census in Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in 1991 and only about 8,000 inhabitants declared themselves as Romani, 0.2% of the population. The most recent census held in 2013, 22 years after the previous one, however, has yet to be published. Up to this time the final results had still not been released, due to a dispute between the statistical agencies in two Bosnian-Herzegovinian entities, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska.

Today, the number of Romani in the country is based only on assumptions. All reports from the field indicate a significant number of Romani in Bosnia and Herzegovina, taking into account the fact that Romani are the largest ethnic minority in the country. For this reason,
2010, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted the registration process on Roma minority and their needs. The process of registration is left opened for each Romani returnee or Romani who missed the chance to be registered during this process. According to Special report on Romani status in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2012), total of about 17,000 Romani are registered and, if we take into account those who are not registered because they were away, it is estimated that Bosnia and Herzegovina has between 30-40 000 Romani inhabitants. However, the data produced by the census held in 2013 will significantly contribute to clarifying information regarding the actual number of the Romani living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

1.5 Legislative framework

The educational reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina has started in 2002, and that also meant the promotion of inclusive education in the country. The ratification of relevant international documents has led to introducing the national policy framework and procedures for inclusive education, but the harmonization of laws was slow and difficult due to the complexity of the structure of decision-making in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The laws regarding education of children with needs should be harmonized with the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education. It is this law’s Article 3 that provides the right for education for students with special educational needs.

General objectives of education are:

b) Ensuring optimum development for every person, including those with special needs, according to their age, possibilities, and mental and physical abilities;

e) Ensuring equal possibilities for education and the possibility to choose in all levels of education, regardless of gender, race, nationality, social and cultural background and status, family status, religion, psycho-physical and other personal characteristics;

All laws on the lower government levels (Republic of Srpska, cantonal laws and legislation of the Brcko District) also undoubtedly provide equal rights on education for children with special educational needs, at all levels of education, prohibiting any form of discrimination on any grounds.
In a series of international legal acts on human rights, Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified the major international human rights treaties to be applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specified in Annex I of the Constitution (Constitution of entities and cantons). It is important to note that according to the explicit constitutional provision (Article II.2. of the Constitution) European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is applied and has a priority in relation to other laws in B&H, which is unusual for a legal system (Guidelines for educating high-school children with special needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013).

All existing laws, regulations and bylaws, as well as the practice itself, should be unified and harmonized with a number of international regulations and conventions, which Bosnia and Herzegovina also ratified. First of all, this refers to Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) as well as the 1994 Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education and the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995).

Document relating to the importance of inclusive education is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989. This Convention was signed and ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on September 1st, 1993.

Salamanca Statement and framework for action on special needs education (UNESCO, 1994) was the first international document focused exclusively towards inclusive education, encouraging governments to improve their educational policies with regard to children with special needs, both in primary and in secondary education.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006, goes even a step further than Salamanca Statement, emphasizing the importance of including children in risk in the general education system, making no distinction between primary and secondary schools (Celebicic, Lepic and Soldo, 2013).

Bosnia and Herzegovina has signed this Convention (and Optional Protocol, in addition to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) on July 29th 2009 and officially ratified it in March 2010. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees is responsible for its implementation.
Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted a number of laws and policies providing every child the right to quality education and equal opportunities, but the manner and quality of implementation remains questionable.

*The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, 1995) is one of the most important international legal instruments which intend to protect and improve the legal position of national minorities, and fight discrimination, preserve the identity of national minorities and promote equality.

Article 12 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) explicitly states: “*The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.*” Furthermore, Article 14 states: “*The Parties undertake to recognize that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.*” Ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2002, Bosnia and Herzegovina committed to active engagement for achieving the principles defined by the Convention. By passing the Law on the Protection of National Minorities in 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina granted the national minority status for 17 minority communities, including Roma minority, in addition to *UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (1992) which also grants the right to education of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Despite numerous programs and projects aimed at strengthening and improvement of school facilities and resources, inclusive education in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still facing a number of problems that prevent and complicate its proper implementation. More than ten years after the introduction of inclusive education it is still evident that there is a large gap between legislation and actual practice in schools and preschools.

The term “children with special needs” in Bosnian – Herzegovinian educational context, although not legally defined, is most often associated with students with disabilities in mental and physical development, hearing and visual impairments, speech and learning difficulties, behavioral disorders and chronic diseases. The language used in practice, but also in official documents, implies that the inclusion in Bosnia and Herzegovina is primarily understood in “*defectological*” terms. Children with needs less commonly imply children who are members
of national minorities, returnees and refugees. Therefore, in the words of Lloyd and McCluskey (2008) there is much less support for inclusion of those pupils with low socio-economic status and recognition for minority cultures in general (Thrupp and Tomlinson 2005, in Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008).

1.5.1 Decade of Roma inclusion

The overall political and economical situation in B&H has very negatively reflected on Roma population. A common problem for Romani in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the lack of rights, discrimination and marginalization. To address this issue, Bosnia and Herzegovina has joined “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015” initiative in 2008, along with other European countries with significant Romani minority. The program was intended to resolve the problems of participation of Romani minority in state bodies and structures; to resolve issues in area of housing, health care, employment and education as well to combat discrimination and prejudice against the Romani. In order to eliminate barriers and improve inclusion, agreement was reached on target action in four critical spheres: provision of integrated early education, completion of segregation and the promotion of inclusion, creating incentive environment in schools and classrooms and public financing of inclusive education.

As part of activities held in Decade of Roma Inclusion, an “Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma and Members of Other National Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina” was established, which also serves as a national action plan for education. This Decade Action Plan was based on the fact that the disadvantaged position of Romani in Bosnia and Herzegovina could not be overcome if Romani are not guaranteed equal opportunities in education and it is consistent with the provisions of the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Action Plan defines the overall objective, which is intended to improve access to mainstream education system of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina through addressing the variety of obstacles currently faced while enhancing the participation of Romani communities and the full inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education (Revised Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Roma Educational Needs, 2010). This document defines the objectives and measures for equal opportunities to participation without discrimination on any grounds, in order to help children of lower social status to achieve better results in education.
in accordance with international human rights standards on the right of ethnic minorities to education.

There are following four objectives of Action Plan (Revised Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Romani Educational Needs, 2010):

Objective 1: Ensuring that children of Romani minority are involved in the system of compulsory education.

Objective 2: Encouraging the Romani population to continue secondary education, higher education and training for the initial occupation.

Objective 3: Preservation and promotion of the Romani language, culture and history

Objective 4: Meeting educational needs of Romani minority by forming systemic solutions.

Since the question of Romani is a question of discrimination and human rights which is deeply rooted in the society I come from, I have personal motivation to address and explore this problem and find out what are the circumstances that lead to exclusion from school, regarding their own personal experience.

1.6 Research problem

Children from socially and economically deprived communities, from which is the majority of Romani pupils in Bosnia and Herzegovina, experience barriers in their lives which make successful development and expressing their full developmental potential significantly difficult. Since children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds are often seen as children who do not have equal starting conditions as others, this study will investigate what kind of barriers Romani pupils experience in regards to full participation in education in one elementary school in Sarajevo for pupils aged 11-14.

To get the overall knowledge about the experiences of exclusion in the site of the study, the research pursued subsequent questions:

1. Do Romani pupils have experience of exclusion from education and what kind of experiences?
2. Do they experience social barriers regarding school and after-school activities?

3. What are the parents’ attitudes towards schooling (Do they have support from their families)?

The early studies by Derrington and Kendall (2008), Lloyd and McCluskey (2008), Brucker (2008) have pointed to factors that influence creating the barriers, including language, racism, and institutional factors as well as segregation, all of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The research questions were theory driven, and the overall goal was to obtain different perspectives with different informants with focus on education and to investigate circumstances that generate barriers to participation, therefore increasing the risk of exclusion. In addition, the aim was to reflect on society and social background (friends, social network, after school activities) and how they influence exclusion from school.
2 Theoretical background and Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The chapter will consist of review of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development overview chosen as a framework for the study, with the intention to find immediate and extended factors in a child’s environment that influence exclusion from education. The literature review is intended to establish context for a qualitative research study (Savin- Baden and Major, 2012) and it provides conceptual ground for the study.

According to Savin- Baden and Major (2012) a theory framework is a structure which intends to guide a research topic, but also interpretation through which a researcher views the findings. The term “theoretical frame” assumes the conceptual ground of a study, and is created in a combination of tacit, experience-based, theory and formal, literature based, theory with the intention to describe assumptions of a researcher in relation to the research study (Marshall and Rossman, 1989 in Savin- Baden and Major, 2012).

The chapter consist of two segments; first, a review of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development, and second, related literature on the study topic. The search for the literature was driven by field of inquiry in order to find evidence on barriers Romani pupils experience in everyday schooling in Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

2.2 Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory of human development was first introduced in the 1970s, and it was, until Bronfenbrenner died in 2005, in a continual state of development (Tudge et al, 2009). To construe the theory he proposed a basic rationale: “The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, s this process is affected by relations between these
settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.21).

The old theory “Ecological model” was revised in 1990’s and renamed to “Bio - Ecological Model”. Tudge et al. (2009) suggest that a researcher may ground a study on an earlier version of the theory, but also choose to base the study on some of the main concepts; however, this needs to be stated clearly since the fully developed theory refers to Process-Person-Context-Time model (Tudge et al., 2009). Even when 1979 theory was revised and broadened, Bronfenbrenner’s theory was always undoubtedly ecological, underlining person-context interrelatedness (Tudge, Gray & Hogan, 1997 in Tudge et al. 2009).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory is significant for the background framework as it was used for building an instrument for the study; the interview guide was built in regards of environment systems and subjective experience of those living in that environment.

2.2.1 Main concepts of the theory

**Process** – as the first defining concept of the theory, the process is the construct which encloses distinctive models of interaction between the growing person and the environment; a construct called proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). As Bronfennbrenner and Morris state, proximal processes are considered primary mechanisms of human development and vary as a function of the characteristics of the developing Person, immediate and more remote environmental Contexts and the Time periods in which they take place (1998, p. 795). Proximal processes, however, are fundamental for the theory; but the nature ranges depending on the individual and contextual aspects.

**Person**—Bronfenrenner dedicated more attention to the person’s characteristics which can be brought in any social situation and distinguished three types of characteristics which could influence the course of development: demand, resource and force characteristics (Tudge et al, 2009).

Demand characteristics (which were referred as personal stimulus in earlier works), act as a direct incentive to another person (e.g. skin color, and physical appearance or gender). These types of features may influence initial interactions due to expectations established immediately (Tudge et al, 2009). Furthermore, resource characteristics are more eventual;
they partly relate to previous experiences and other social, material, mental or emotional resources (e.g. housing, food, educational circumstances etc.) In addition, force characteristics relate more with differences of temperament, motivation, persistence etc. (Tudge et al., 2009) These forms of characteristics had further influence in shaping the theory, which will be introduced through context systems ranging from micro to macro system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Context**— should refer to environment or a setting where people engage in face to face interaction. According to Bronfenbrenner, environment is not limited to a single setting but it is extended to incorporate interconnections between settings, as well as external influences from the larger surroundings (1979, p.22). The environment is formed as a concentric structure organization, each system contained in the next one, namely: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem, and changes in one of the systems may lead to changes in the others. For the purpose of the theoretical background I will provide brief explanation of all four environment systems. However, throughout the study regarding Roma pupils I will mainly refer to micro and mesosystem as contexts that influence overall educational experience, yet reflect on exosystem and macrosystem in the discussion.

*Microsystem* attributes to a pattern of activities, social roles and interrelations experienced by a person in a setting (where one can engage in interaction) with particular physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: p.22). Early critical aspect of the model is *experience*, indicating that beside objective properties of the environment, the subjective experiences of the persons living in that environment are also relevant. The environment, or the microsystem, implies home, school, day-care, peer- group, basically any kind of activity in which a person engages and interacts throughout the day. The number of settings gradually increases from infancy and requires adaption in a range of situations developing person can find herself in. The study will look at Romani pupils in a school setting, but also consider family factors and peer- groups as other microsystems that might influence the overall experience of schooling.

As individuals spend time in more than one system, Bronfenbrenner explored the interrelations among two or more settings, a structure he named *mesosystem*. This ecological system is formed when individual moves into a new setting (e.g. relations between home, school, peer- group, and others that actively participate in more than one setting). The interaction between the individual and the setting is viewed as two directional, which is
characterized by reciprocity. As already mentioned, it is inevitable to consider influences from other microsystems and how they intertwine in forming meaningful educational experience itself, as, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the most critical direct link is the one that creates mesosystem in the first place.

Additionally, there are other contexts which have important yet indirect influence on the development of a person we are considering; the exosystem that affects a setting containing a developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this study, the lack of life prospects needed for learning, and living in conditions unsuitable for pupils’ overall welfare will be considered affecting and indirectly influencing the learning environment. However, it is not only poverty that can affect education; social inequality in goods and services, along with status characteristics could also be traces as influencing educational experiences.

Lastly, Bronfenbrenner described the macrosystem as a context surrounding any group (culture, subculture, or other extended social structure) whose members share beliefs or value systems, “resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange” (1993, p. 25 in Tudge et al., 2009). The belief system of the culture influences growing person directly, even though individuals do not have the control over it. The stereotypical image of Romani, deeply rooted in discrimination, and the strong cultural differences are some of the major challenges Romani pupils face. Especially dominant myth of nomadic culture, often adds to the wrong belief of their criminal behavior, distrust and overall presumption and view of Romani people as a threat to society (Catto, 2012) which also affects how others view the pupils in educational context.

As Bronfenbrenner’s focus on the environment was predominant in his previous works, later self-criticism for disregarding the role of the person in that context, lead to full theory of interrelations among Process- Person- Context-Time (PPCT) concepts.

Time—final property of bioecological model, which has an exceptional place on three levels, according to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998): micro; meso and macro level, events that can be spread across broader time intervals or refer to changes in larger society within generations and over a life span.
2.3 Review of related literature

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998 in Flick, 2014) concepts from the literature can give accurate descriptions of reality helpful to understand researcher’s own material. Furthermore, existing knowledge can inspire researchers and give them orientation in the field of inquiry. As none study on obstacles in education for Romani pupils in Bosnian and Herzegovinian context has been conducted, I will mainly review international studies, in addition to Non-Enrolment and School Dropout in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The studies will present obstacles Romani pupils face in educational context.

International studies (Brucker, 2008; Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe, 2003; Derrington and Kendall, 2008) identified major obstacles in terms of education, both attitudinal and institutional. Previous research revealed that low level of enrolment linked to lack of proper documentation, language barriers, disrupted educational experience, and low educational participation are just some barriers in a complex web of difficulties pupils face in education.

For the purpose of understanding the standpoint of traditional Romani education in regards to mainstream education, next subchapter will present the differences and contrasts of learning experiences, as found by Smith (1997). As traditional Romani education is community based, Smith (1997) argues that poverty, racism and lack of services create considerable barriers to participation in mainstream educational process.

2.3.1 Differences between traditional Romani and mainstream educational process

Smith (1997) argues that Romani education considerably differs from mainstream education, where children learn in daily activities by watching, listening and observing adults in their community, as opposed to mainstream systems where environment is structured and regulated by specific learning in formal settings. Consequently, knowledge in traditional Romani community is transferred in verbal way. “People-oriented” learning environment is a recognizable feature of Romani educational system; active participation in the adult world of the Roma community teaches children about the importance of contributing to real-life activities and reinforces child’s sense of autonomy.

The most important difference, according to Smith (1997) is a structural one; Romani children learn about their own history, culture and customs through everyday activities, and
participating in mainstream schools only teaches them about mainstream practices and fashions. Therefore, Romani child is highly unlikely to develop skills affiliated with their role in their society. In addition, other structural barriers, such as poverty and racism have to be overcome in order for a Romani child to participate in the mainstream school systems.

Nevertheless, families do recognize the importance of mainstream education as the only possible way of literacy (Smith, 1997). According to her, family is a dominant influence in a child’s life in the most Romani communities, and they strongly believe that they have the right to make educational decisions which should not be put upon them by an external authority. Parental resistance, as Liégeois (1999) puts it, is a testimony of the strength of Romani culture, as they may feel the impact that school may alienate children from their own community.

2.3.2 Barriers to education for Romani pupils

This subchapter will explore factors that influence barriers to quality education found in previous studies. In the studies on Roma minority throughout the world it can easily be seen that the pattern of social inequality is followed by educational inequality; the findings are presented in the following paragraphs.

*Language barriers*

Romani language is the primary language for most Romani children and they, traditionally, acquire Romani language through everyday contact, rather than direct instruction (Smith, 2007).

Many Romani in the Balkans (Brucker, 2008) are mostly bilingual and the language of instruction in school is offered in countries main language (in case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language). However, there is no emphasis on training and teaching in Romani language other than self initiated programs by schools, which in addition receive little or no funds for such projects.

According to UNESCO (1953) mother-tongue instruction is “the best medium for teaching a child” (p.11) but also the right under the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992). Non-Enrolment and School Dropout study (2011) by UNICEF recognized the mother tongue issues
as the reason for high percentage of elementary school dropout in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since Romani children do not have the possibility of schooling in their mother language and they have very poor knowledge of languages of other three constitutive nations when starting elementary school.

**Family expectations**

According to UNICEF (2011) study, one of the reasons for discontinuation of education of Romani children is lack of support of parents who do not prioritize education, early involvement in various forms of contributing to family life, and lack of awareness about the purpose and need of education. In traditional communities, as mentioned, children are brought up to be independent from early years and encouraged to contribute to family life. As Smith (1997) underlined in her study, this prepares children for responsibilities brought upon them in adulthood when they are expected to marry, work and raise their own family. Furthermore, they are expected to adopt responsibilities as caring for other children, and helping and accompanying family members to their jobs in order to adopt working skills from an early age. Number of Romani girls interviewed in this study support this notion and inform that caring for younger children in the family is their daily responsibility.

Jordan (2001 in Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe, 2003) finds that Romani boys are involved in economic activity from a very early age, travelling with their fathers and helping as required. This results in disrupted educational experience, which will be thoroughly discussed in upcoming chapters. The same study additionally explores that Romani girls experience similar problems, although they are affected by domestic responsibilities and caring duties.

The roles of young Romani boys and girls are strongly gender influenced. Marriage and family plays an important role in Romani culture; both boys and girls are prepared for family life, and the choice of a spouse is family influenced. Romani girls are raised more strictly when they reach puberty; family becomes more protective and the relationships with the opposite gender are firmly restricted. The relevant skills for a Romani girl, as stated before, include taking care of children and her courtesy towards others (Smith, 1997).

As for the boys, their role in the community increases after they are married. Other findings by Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe (2003) show the fact that adolescents begin serious relationships and preparations for marriage at much younger age than non-Romani
counterparts; in Romani culture it is not uncommon fact to be married at an age of 14-16 years.

*Racism and negative experiences*

Kendall and Derrington study (2008) on Gypsy Travellers discovered high percentage of pupils who were exposed to racist name calling and bullying. This usually took place outside of the classroom and during the breaks. In most cases, this behavior was described as occasional. However, the same study also revealed the prevalence of non-reporting the racist bullying to school staff.

In spite of non-reporting of harassment of Romani pupils the teachers were usually aware of these events when acquainted with Romani pupils’ verbal or physical retaliation. Similar findings will be presented in a discussion part of this study, where findings of non-reporting of bullying and racial name calling on school site were discovered. Generally, despite the efforts to fight racism within the schools, prejudice within the society presents a force which is difficult to overlook.

Lloyd and McCluskey (2008) suggest there is much more to negative educational experiences than mere racism. The complexity of Romani culture and lack of awareness is often overlooked as a factor that might influence the experiences of pupils. Abajo and Carrasco (2005 in Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008) suggest a lack of recognition of cultural features and “denial of difference” in schools can assist to continuous neglect of Romani pupils’ needs.

*Institutional factors*

The study by Brucker (2008), although implemented in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, prompted institutional barriers that could be easily applied to any south-eastern European country, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this sub-chapter I will refer to educational costs and legal identification barriers to schooling of Roma pupils.

Even with primary education being free, the costs of education might be the most important institutional factor given the poverty in Romani communities. Parents are still expected to pay for books, supplies and other school necessities, which poses an economic challenge for the families.
Many Romani lack any form of documentation, which results in difficulties exercising their basic rights, including the right to education. Obtaining these certificates is hard for Roma minority given their limited access to social, health and other services (OSI, 2007 in Brucker, 2008). UNICEF’s Non-Enrolment and School Dropout study (2011) carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed similar issues; Roma children do not enroll to elementary school because they are “non-existent” as far as the state is concerned. Since a number of Romani does not own a birth certificate or any identification document whatsoever, they are not registered and, therefore, invisible for local and state institutions. As Romani move frequently changing place of residence, they, in consequence, do not feel the need to obtain any documents linked to a specific area, UNICEF study (2011) concludes.

**Segregation**

Even though there are no strong evidences on how many Romani children are affected by segregation and special schools, it is clear, however, that there is contrast between the educational experience of Romani and non-Romani children in Europe (Catto, 2012).

The majority of Romani children are forced into Romani-only schools, or if they attend schools with non-Romani, they are often taught in separate classrooms. Not only are these pupils segregated, according to Petrova (2004 in Catto, 2012) but Romani school facilities and learning tools are also inadequate when compared to those of non-Romani schools. Furthermore, according to the same study, teachers often have lower expectations and, as a result, many Romani children remain illiterate or leave school significantly early (European Roma Rights Centre, 2008 in Catto, 2012).

Additionally, Romani parents may prefer segregated schools in order to protect their children from racism and bullying, unaware of negative consequences of segregation. Ultimately, segregation and placement in special schools has led to a serious problem of absenteeism among Romani children in Europe, according to Catto (2012). This has been linked to several factors, all described previously, which include family attitudes towards education and family responsibilities, as well as school access and economic difficulties.
2.3.3 Involuntary minority theory

Ogbu and Simons (1998) define minority status based on the power relations between groups, and not in respect of numeric representations. He classifies minority groups as *autonomous*, being groups that are small in number but usually not oppressed and dominated, *voluntary* and *involuntary*. Minority group’s experiences in school are shaped by experiences in a society in which they are assimilated; therefore Gibson and Ogbu (1991), in order to clear the difference between migrant groups, distinguishes two types of minorities depending on the types of incorporation in the society. *Immigrant minorities*, according to Gibson and Ogbu (1991) are the ones incorporated voluntarily, looking for better opportunities or political freedom; however, Romani people, regarded as involuntary minority in this study, are, according to the theory, brought into their present society throughout slavery, colonization or a conquest, where they resent their loss of freedom and perceive the current status as oppressive in social, political or economic terms.

Unlike immigrants who treat their social, economic or other barriers in a society as a current, temporary issue that can be overcome and, generally, have positive dual frame of reference which allows them to cultivate positive view on the future prospects, involuntary minorities tend to interpret these barriers as institutionalized and permanent (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991).

In order to respond to the instrumental discrimination, involuntary minority developed a theory of “making it” in the face of economic discrimination (Ogbu and Simons, 1998). *The folk theory of getting ahead* discusses involuntary minority’s belief that it requires more than education or effort and hard work to overcome the barriers of the society; the theory tends to put importance on a collective effort for providing the best odds for defeating the opportunity barriers. Involuntary minorities consider education as a way of getting ahead; however, they are also aware it will take more to achieve success, which is unlikely for the members of a dominant group. Education as a strategy of getting ahead can sometimes be inhibited by non-academic means, especially as involuntary minority children become aware how other adults in their community “get ahead” without mainstream education.

Involuntary minorities characterized by *secondary cultural systems* (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991) tend to develop particular practices and beliefs as forms of coping mechanisms. They perceive their cultural framework opposing the frame of reference of the dominant group, and therefore, unlike immigrants, they do not tend to look at the differences as barriers in a society.
needed to overcome. With the strong sense of identity, they tend to interpret differences as symbols to be preserved, as they serve them both as a sense of collective identity and sense of self-worth (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991).

Involuntary minorities’ sense of social identity, which they develop after the incorporation in a new society, is based on their experiences and their perception of discriminative treatment in the society they now live.

Skepticism towards education and general distrust involuntary minorities have for the school system can add to difficulties children face in school. According to Gibson and Ogbu (1991) involuntary minorities tend to compare their schools to ones of the dominant group and, subsequently, conclude inferiority in education for no other reason than minority. This skeptical attitude is usually communicated from early age through family, community or even school employees, directly to children. Furthermore, Gibson and Ogbu (1991) claim that the school rules and practices are, again observed as imposing the cultural practice of the dominant group.
3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce methodology used to investigate the phenomenon in question—Romani minority experiences, focusing on viewpoints of marginal groups and exclusion from education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The chapter will be consisting of the topics including: research design and hypothesis, description of the participants of the study and sampling, methods of data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability question, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.2 Research question

Formulating research question implies defining the main guiding question, rather than developing specific question which is going to be used when collecting data (Flick, 2014). The main research question of this study is *what kind of barriers Romani pupils experience in regards to full participation in education?* The purpose of the study is to explore the issues and investigate circumstances that generate barriers to participation, therefore increasing the risk of exclusion. My personal experience leads me to investigate the effects of the exclusion of Roma pupils from education, since the question of discrimination of Romani minority is deeply rooted in the society I come from.

3.3 Research design

Research design proposed in the thesis helps to answer the main research question on the barriers minority Romani pupils experience as excluding factors in one elementary school at the site of the study located in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As constructivist position assumes that social reality is constructed by the individuals who are part of it (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007), this qualitative research has an aim of studying social reality, and interpret and ascribe meanings Romani pupils directly experience in their environment.

There are many reasons for conducting qualitative research; one reason being the nature of the research problem and the other being personal choice of the researcher itself. The main reason for using qualitative research, however, should be the research question: the question should
require the use of this approach (Flick, 2014). The design I am proposing is suitable for answering the research question, as qualitative research is of a specific importance to the study of social relations, concepts and perspectives individuals link to experiences concerning the phenomenon of interest of the researcher; it is focused on meanings the people assign to the social phenomena which is directly experienced by them (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Furthermore, my choice of design will best explore the inner experiences of participants, investigate circumstances which create limitations to participation, examine areas not yet thoroughly researched, and take the holistic comprehensive approach to the study of the phenomena, as Strauss and Corbin (2015) proposed.

Qualitative research is a form of research in which data is collected and interpreted, where the researcher is involved in the process as much as participants and the data they provide (Strauss and Corbin, 2015). According to them, in order to perform qualitative research, a researcher should be able to critically analyze and avoid being biased and subjective, but also to think abstractly and to maintain analytical distance. However, it also requires drawing upon the previous experience and knowledge, since the research is more or less essentially subjective (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Since the researcher presents an instrument of investigation and influences its direction and the outcome, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995 in Maxwell, 2013) claim that it is not possible to eliminate the actual personal influence; instead a researcher should understand it and use it productively.

Exploring human experience and the nature of experience itself has been topic of interest for many researchers; phenomenology as a research approach allows for investigating the human experience at a fundamental level, seeking the essence of lived experience as it is, for several individuals. Phenomenology is a research approach that attempts to uncover what number of participants who experience a phenomenon have in common (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenologists seek not only to uncover what individuals experience but also how they experience the phenomenon. Furthermore, it assumes that knowledge is rooted in experience and allows for investigation of topics usually regarded as subjective; the notion which my proposed design will follow throughout the study.

The study on Romani pupils experience is a study that calls for in-depth investigation with a detailed contextual analysis with a focus on a particular instance-school in which I conducted my study. According to Yin (2014) a case study is an “empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context” (p.16).
Creswell and Merriam (1998; 1988; 2009 in Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) identified a “case” as an “instance or situation that the researcher will investigate”, where De Vaus (2001) referred to it as a “unit which we seek to understand as a whole”. The proposed approach is appropriate for my study as the major strength of a case study is using multiple methods of data collection in the data gathering process, but also presenting the data with thick and rich description.

I have chosen the aforementioned design because it was lead by a research question, addressing the particular experience and focused on specific situations of a particular minority group. I was focused on understanding the meaning of the events, experiences and actions the participants in the study are engaged with, which Maxwell (2013) often referred as “participants perspective” as a part of reality I was devoted to understand. In a qualitative study, us as researchers are not only interested in the physical events, but also the interpretation of these events with the focus on meaning.

3.4 Sampling, Participants and Site of the Study

3.4.1 Sampling

Preparation of data collection depends upon identifying participants who might provide with the best answer to the research question. When selecting a sample, qualitative research is more flexible than quantitative sampling. The goal of sampling is to select participants that are likely to be “information- rich” with respect to the purpose of the phenomena in question (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007). Thus, the purpose of selecting a sample (or a case) is to develop deeper understanding of the phenomena a researcher wants to study.

The number of cases in a research study is entirely dependent on a researcher and whether he/or she seeks for breadth or depth. Patton (in Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007, p. 185) suggested: “…a researcher could study a specific set of experiences for a larger number of people (seeking breadth) or a more open range of experiences for a smaller number of people (seeking depth)”.

Therefore, the type of sampling will depend upon the question and the best approach for gaining the answer for it, but, typically, a qualitative study will include a small number of individuals or situations, and maintain individuality of each participant in the analysis.
(Maxwell, 2013). However, time, population and accessibility of the sample could be considered limiting factors, as suggested by Savin-Baden and Major (2013).

With the aim of achieving in-depth understanding, purposeful sampling was applied in selecting cases for the current study. Maxwell (2013) refers to the purposeful sampling as “a strategy in which “...particular settings, persons or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to (your) questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p.97). The participants of the study were most likely to provide the best information about the barriers Romani pupils experience in schooling, both pupils directly experiencing it, and educational staff with their views on the same phenomena. However, the selection of the sample was partly limited to informants in the case under the study. The school and the type of informants found in that school led to my sample, and the time and accessibility factors were a challenge for my choice of the participants.

3.4.2 Study participants

The participants of the study were six Romani pupils and three school staff individuals, namely two pedagogues and one school psychologist. All pupil participants were from the same primary school in Sarajevo, four female and two male, as well as staff employed in the school. All of the pupils were the only Romani in their classes. For the potentially sensitive information, identity of the participants will not be revealed. Instead, in order to follow the findings of the study, pupil participants will be labeled as Case (1-6) and school staff as Staff (1-3). Small number of participants considers this study not generalizable to wider population. Romani pupils were all in higher grades, from 5th grade to 9th grade of elementary school. They all live in a majority Romani settlement in Sarajevo, in vicinity of the elementary school in question. Participating pupils were four girls (Case 1-4) aged 11, 12, 13 and 14 years, and two boys (Case 5 and 6) aged 12 and 13. Participants come from big families and majority of the Romani pupils were also siblings; two participating girls were sisters (Case 1 and 2), but also Case 4 and 5 were brother and sister. Other participants have siblings in lower grades in the same school. Previously, the school counted about 80 Romani pupils, however in 2015, when the study was conducted it counted only twelve. For the purpose of the study only older pupils (5th grade and higher) were chosen to participate.
Table 3.1. Information about the study participants - Pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE №</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Information about the study participants – Educational Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAFF №</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff 1</td>
<td>Pedagogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff 2</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff 3</td>
<td>Pedagogue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.3 Site of the study

A site of the study is a space where the topic under the study takes place (Savin- Baden and Major, 2013). A study-site, along with time, participants and the research question, are critical components of meaning and, therefore, crucial for gaining the knowledge about the phenomenon under the investigation.

The study took place at the elementary school in Sarajevo. It is situated in off-centre area of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian capital. The school is recognized by its inclusive approach and efforts to include Romani pupils to regularly attend schooling. Rather than focusing mainly on education of children with disabilities, as suggested by Kugelmass (2004), this school follows the philosophy of inclusion, celebrating diversity and promoting active participation among all pupils. The principle on which the school operates is the quality education for all; therefore, starting from 2002 the school self-initiatively organizes and carries out external examinations for obtaining elementary education, which also includes the implementation of instructional teaching. For these programs for children and adults who had not finished elementary school and are older than 15 years old the school does not receive any kind of financial support. The pupils who use this kind of external examination are mostly Romani,
and according to interviewed school staff just in 2015 twelve Romani students used this
guaranteed right to elementary education.

During the 2015/16 school year the school also organized peer-education, where the
extraordinary pupils volunteered after school hours to help the pupils with learning disabilities
and pupils experiencing difficulties in following the classes; the impact of the project was
positive, and improving the means of working with children with difficulties in learning is
planned in the future.

Furthermore, the school work and success was recognized by many international and local
institutions, including UNICEF, and resulted in awards including “Freedom” award for
extraordinary contribution in educating Romani children by International Peace Centre.
Additionally, the school is a part of “Education for a Just Society” project financed by USAID
and “Open Society Fund” of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project which supports sustainable
and innovative school practices for improvement of quality education in Bosnia and
Herzegovina. School project “Support to adults to complete primary education-subsequent
acquisition of elementary education (emphasis on the female population)” was supported by
Federal Ministry of Science and Education, as well as other projects, eg. “Living the
diversity”, “Cognitive-behavioral treatment of violent behavior in school children”, “School
Tailored for Children” etc., in which the Romani pupils take part, as it will be shown in the
findings section of the study.

3.5 Gaining entry to the field of study

According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) necessary permission in getting the access to the site
of the study are of critical importance. The relationships with the participants and other
“gatekeepers” in the study require ongoing negotiation, but rarely involve total access
according to Maxwell (2013). Therefore, building the relationships that will allow us to gain
the required data in an ethical way is a necessity for the successful study. Along these lines,
gaining entry to the field includes identifying people with whom to make initial contact,
selecting the best method of communication phrasing the request and being prepared to
answer questions about the concerns before the permission is granted.

The following steps were taken in order to gain access to the field of my study:
Application for the project to Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD): NSD assists researchers and students in Norway and abroad with regards to data gathering, data analysis, and issues of methodology, privacy and research ethics. Therefore, the approval for the study was gained in July 2015 (Appendix 1), in addition with the request for participation in research project aimed for the informants (Appendix 2).

Application for the approval to access the elementary school in question to the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Canton Sarajevo (Appendix 3) was handed in at the end of July 2015. Due to slow bureaucratic system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it took almost two months for the access to be allowed. However, the permission to conduct the study was gained at the beginning of September (Appendix 4).

After receiving permission from the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth, I contacted the school principal, who previously allowed the study to be carried out in this elementary school. After the meeting and getting consent from the school, we made unison agreement for a school to distribute the letters of consent to parents/legal guardians of the Romani pupils included in the study, along with the information about the study (Appendix 5). Therefore, initial contact with pupils was facilitated through the school as a gatekeeper.

After receiving the letters of consent, all parents (except for one male pupil) agreed for their children to be part of the research study. The interviews were scheduled for the end of September in a school setting.

### 3.6 Methods of data collection

Decision about research methods depends on the topic of the study and the data, according to Maxwell (2013) can include everything a researcher sees, hears and whatever is communicated while conducting the study. For the purpose of explaining what data actually is, Maxwell cites Glaser (2001 in Maxwell, 2013) stating that it is “not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told.” (p.87) Therefore, in addition to the interview as a central method of data collection, additional methods as familiarization with school document materials, observation during the school breaks, visiting the study setting prior to the interviews to familiarize with the site, conversations with staff about Romani pupils’ possibilities in school etc., were used. According to Maxwell (2013) additional information can broaden contextual information,
help gaining perspective and check on the data gathered by interviews, which is why I found the use of supplementary methods suitable for answering the research question.

Qualitative interview represents the main formal method applied within the study. Essential subject matter of the research interview is the meaningful perspectives brought by the informant (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). As views of marginal groups in schooling offer special knowledge to the researcher and offer detailed insights from individual participants that experience it, obtaining data through interviews was considered the most suitable one. How Romani pupils experience barriers in school is a matter of their reality and perspective, hence, the interviews were appropriate for probing into pupils’ subjective matters and knowledge on the matter of study.

The purpose of the research interview is to explore the views on understanding, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters that people have in common (Gubrium and Holstein 1995, 2001 in Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Qualitative interview is, therefore, a method that, through face-to-face interaction with the participants, creates the possibility to obtain their unique views and opinions (Creswell, 2014, p.190). Thus, the main task of interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. Qualitative methods such as interviews are believed to provide a “deeper” understanding of a phenomenon of interest, (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007); therefore, the purpose and the objectives of this study determined the nature of the interview.

Qualitative interview is a mean of inquiry which creates the possibility to obtain the unique views and opinions through face-to-face interaction with participants (Creswell, 2014). The researcher (interviewer) is largely in control over the response situation, scheduling the time of the interview and controlling the pace and sequence to fit the circumstances of the situation (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007). According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) most significant advantage of the interview is the adaptability, in which the researcher builds trust with the informant, therefore making possible learning the information that could not be obtained by other methods. The study about Romani experiences of exclusion from education is exploration of sensitive matter and it requires an in-depth information around the topic of research. Therefore, it was important to ask questions that are likely to yield as much information about the phenomenon, but also to address the aims and objectives of the study.
Special knowledge on the research question is a perspective offered by informants through direct oral questions and responses; the knowledge that provided me with deeper understanding of the barriers Romani pupils experience in this particular school in Sarajevo. In this type of *key-informant interview* (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007) individuals who had special knowledge about the phenomenon I was interested in provided special perceptions otherwise not available to me as a researcher. Key-informant interview was, therefore, a suitable choice as special information provided by informants allowed me to gain insight in experiences I was interested regarding barriers in education of Romani pupils. As it is usually the case in this type of interviews, I identified key informants which could provide direct knowledge in relation to the questions of the study.

The qualitative interview was semi-structured, meaning that the design had a preset of questions to follow but also included additional questions in response to pupils’ and educational staff statements (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). The semi-structured interview covered topics in order, but shifted direction when it was appropriate. Open-ended questions allowed my informants to express their notions on the topic of the study, but also, allowed me to compare the data across both groups of participants, which is, according to Savin-Baden and Major (2013) the advantage of semi-structured, open-ended interview.

### 3.7 Interview guide

Since the interviewing as a method of collecting the data requires preparation of the interview guideline for how to start and end the interview, this study’s interview guide was developed and based on the Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development as the framework for the present inquiry. The guide was built in regards of environment systems and subjective experience of people living those systems. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) “the use of an interview guide is based on the assumption that there is common information to be obtained from each respondent, but no set of standardized questions is written in advance” (p.247). During the interview, the themes were developed without being previously defined and they were flexible for both me as a researcher and the informants. The questions that are not included in the interview guide, as suggested by Bryman (2012) may be asked as the researcher “picks up” on the statements participants make.
The guide was developed for two informant groups—pupils and school staff (Appendix 6). It included a set of themes for each group involved; there were joint questions to be asked, but the order of the questions was not predetermined, as the interview had semi-structured design. Interview guide covered areas that were significant for answering the study question from the perspective of participants.

However, since this study involves series of subject-matters which were to be investigated, common data about Romani pupils’ barriers was specific for both groups of informants as the interview strived to figure out participants’ perspectives on factors that from barriers to education. Thus, the main questions were oriented on systems (as explained by Bronfennbrener) that shape barriers, from the perspective of both pupils and school staff, but also included introducing questions on background information.

### 3.8 Data collection

The participants of the study were six Romani pupils and three school staff individuals from one primary school in Sarajevo. The main phase of the data collection was conducting qualitative interviews, which were carried out in the school as it was more adequate and advised by the school principal. The interviews took place in September 2015. One follow-up interview with the school pedagogue was carried out in October 2015.

However, preparatory phase of data collection was carried out from July until end of August 2015, and it included the following: reading the theory behind the study, as it was the basis for the interview guide; reading relevant reports on Romani education in Bosnia and Herzegovina; visiting the school and having informational meeting with the principal and the pedagogue after which the letters of approval were sent to different authorities in order to gain permissions for obtaining participants of the study. The phases of data collection are presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Data Collection</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Phase</td>
<td>July- August 2015</td>
<td>Gaining access to the site; familiarizing with background framework and developing interview guides; familiarizing with the site of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main phase</td>
<td>September- October 2015</td>
<td>Interviews with the study participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The approval for gaining entry in school from Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Canton Sarajevo was obtained after almost two months; during this time the interview guide for pupils was developed, which was later revised with the school pedagogue in order to ensure the questions were comprehensible and appropriate for the pupils. Some of the questions were reformulated and simplified, and other questions were added after this informal meeting.

The interview guide for the school staff did not require any major modifications, as the pilot interview with the substitute pedagogue was carried out in preparatory phase. In the last stage of preparatory phase, the consent letters for parents were distributed through school, and after getting permissions the interviews with children were arranged according to their school schedule.

The main phase of data collection included qualitative interviews with the key informants. The interviews took place in the school setting. Interviews with pupils were carried out first, in a quiet and private office which was offered by the principal for my use. Interviews with the school staff took place in their offices. The interviews started with “ice-breaker” questions, e.g. weather, health etc., after which I started with the introductory conversation about the study and their roles and expectations. I made sure to emphasize that their help is of crucial importance for the study and that we are equal in this relation. In addition, I explained the data are to be anonymized. All the interviews were audio-recorded, and the notes were taken during the conversation, with additional expanded notes after every session.

The interviews with pupils lasted shorter than expected; although the length was dependant on how talkative the pupil was, the approximate duration of the interview was 30 minutes, with the shortest being 13 minutes and the longest 49 minutes in duration. The approximate duration of the interviews with the school staff was 38 minutes. In addition to face-to-face interview, supplementary information gathered through written interview with the school psychologist was added to the collected data corpus. School staff was eager to share their views on the topic, however, pupils’ interviews depended on their trust and talkativeness, which is discussed in the Limitations of the Study passage.
3.9 Data analysis

“Making sense of the data” was one of the most critical phases in the study; the phase of data analysis included breaking data corpus into meaningful segments with the purpose of examination of the content with the aim of answering the research question (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). According to Hatch (2002) data analysis indicates “organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques or generate theories” (p.148).

Thematic analysis was found suitable for this study for its many advantages as, according to Clarke and Braun (2013), TA’s theoretical independence allows for flexibility within a range of research questions, types of data, data – sets, and can produce data-driven or theory-driven analyses. Thematic analysis is, therefore, unique for it acknowledges reasoning at an intuitive level, and allows researcher to rely on their instincts and senses, instead of being obliged by the rules of the study inquiry (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Themes can be analyzed in both ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ manner (Braun and Clarke, 2013); in this study the analysis is data-driven as the data is used to give an account of a phenomenon in question.

Data analysis required few steps which are as follows; the early stage of analysis organizing and preparing data for the analysis, which included listening to interviews to become intimately familiar with the data, followed by verbatim transcriptions. Transcriptions were compared with the audio files of the same interview for accuracy, and I re-read the transcribed files several times in an active way, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), to familiarize with data. During this phase, I already started making notes on possible codes, which I went through later in the coding process.

Next step included the coding process: according to Rossman and Rallis (2012, in Creswell, 2014) coding presumes a process of “organizing the data by bracketing the chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins” (p.197). With that in mind, I organized the data into meaningful sections and labeled the data manually in relevance to the research questions.
During this process I had an opportunity to reflect on data as a whole and make sense of the phenomenon of the study. The codes were categorized for both informant groups - pupils and educational staff. The codes were written on the verbatim transcripts, after which they were typed in the separate Word file and matched with data extracts that demonstrate that code.

Table 3.4. Data extract with codes applied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data extract</th>
<th>Coded for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are a bit more reserved and shy. They have developed a sense-- with other people have to ... It is in their culture, the time needs to pass to gain the trust of the person. Because everything they say has to be thought carefully, they learned so.</td>
<td>1. Pupils distrustful to new people&lt;br&gt;2. Learned behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following step involved sorting different codes and considering the themes they would fall under. The codes were written on a piece of paper in a form of thematic map (Figure 3.1). At this phase I was considering the patterns that form a theme, and whether the codes fit, which involved a “back-and-forth” process of reviewing and redefining possible themes. Subsequently, the themes were named, and the process of identification of the “essence” and contextualizing the data in the form of report followed.

![Figure 3.1 Initial thematic map](image)

**3.10 Reliability and validity**

Validity and reliability are important quality measures of every research but in quantitative and qualitative studies they are addressed differently. Validity and reliability in qualitative research do not carry the same connotations as in quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). The terms
that refer to validity, according to Creswell, in a qualitative research are credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness.

Qualitative validity implies the researcher checking for the accuracy of the findings by utilizing certain measures to ensure legitimacy of the findings and finding out whether they are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher participant, or the readers of the study (Creswell, 2014). Przeworski and Salomon (1988 in Maxwell, 2013) identified validity and trustworthiness as the main issues in a research design. When we talk about validity, we don’t speak about the “ultimate truth”, since the validity is not a property of a particular method, but refers to the data or conclusions attained by using a certain method in a context with a distinct purpose (Maxwell, 1992).

For the purpose of ensuring validity of the data, Maxwell (1992) suggests five categories of understanding validity, namely, descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability, and evaluative validity.

*Descriptive validity* assumes factual accuracy, and all of the following categories depend on this primary feature of ensuring validity of a particular study (Maxwell, 1992). To ensure descriptive accuracy, the interviews with Romani pupils were audio-recorded and the notes during the interviews were taken for the purpose of recording activities that were not capturable in audio format. Additionally, verbatim interview transcripts were written down and checked for accuracy several times.

Bias and reactivity are two threats to validity a researcher needs to deal with when conducting the study. These threats, according to Maxwell (2013) may lead to invalid conclusions if not approached with understanding; since both of the threats include researcher’s subjectivity and perspective which is impossible to eliminate, a primary concern should be understanding how a certain values influence direction of the study (Maxwell, 2013). To minimize these threats, I used respondent validation, a strategy suggested by Maxwell (2013) in order to rule out possible validity threats; I often checked if I understood the statements correctly to prevent possibility of misinterpreting the meaning behind pupils’ words.

Investigator’s reactivity implies the influence of the researcher on the setting or the informants represent another issue in qualitative studies. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995 in Maxwell, 2013) stated “eliminating the actual influence of the researcher is impossible”,...
the goal is not to disregard its impact, but to interpret it and use effectively (p.125). Being from another culture and non-Romani researcher, influenced the pupils not to report on certain delicate issues, which were found in interviews with educational staff. However, to establish validity and not influence the course of the study, I tried to avoid leading questions and stimulate pupils to honestly express their experiences in school. This and other study restrictions are discussed in the Limitations of the study paragraph.

Validity is the strength of qualitative research and it is based on determining whether the findings are correct from the researcher’s or the participant’s angle. However, beside descriptive accuracy of the setting, researchers are also concerned with the meaning of the factors in a setting, what Maxwell (1992) called “participant’s perspective”. The meaning and the understanding is “interpretative” as it seeks to understand the phenomenon of the study from the informants perspective, thus, it is primarily concerned with the “emic” rather than the “etic” perspective. Since the accounts of meaning come from the conceptual framework of people whose meaning is being inquired, interpretative validity is grounded in informants own language, and rely on their own concepts and words (Maxwell, 1992, p.289). There is no access to data that would, in general, address threats to validity; the concepts are developed according to participant’s reality, but always constructed by a researcher’s understanding of the reality in question (Maxwell, 1992). For that matter, the pupil’s authentic statements will be used when discussing findings in order to allow the reader to understand what lead to my conclusions.

_Theoretical validity_ goes further than mere description and interpretation of phenomenon of the study; it explicitly addresses theoretical constructions which researchers bring with themselves or develop during the study (Maxwell, 1992). For this reason it is more difficult to ensure theoretical validity, for its more abstract nature refers to explanation and application of theoretical relationship among the descriptive and interpretative constructs. Theoretical model on which I based this study represented the framework; validity was increased by building the interview guide based on the Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development. Theory is significant for the framework as it was used for building an instrument for the study where the interview guide was built in regards of environment systems and subjective experience of people living in that environment.

_Generalizability_ in qualitative research carries different connotations than in quantitative research. Since generalizability refers to “generalization” of the results to a wider population,
in the qualitative study like this one is, it is not the case; the study on the Romani pupils was not intended to be generalized and be representative to a larger population. The sample size in this study is small as the purpose of the sample was to develop deeper understanding of the phenomena I intended to study. However, the selection of the sample was partly limited to informants in the case under the study. Thus, the particular school and the type of informants found in that school led to establishment of my sample.

_Evaluative validity_ greatly differs from abovementioned types of validity as it includes the evaluative, rather than descriptive, interpretative, and explanatory framework (Maxwell, 1992, p.295). However, evaluative validity is not central to qualitative research as researchers are rather indifferent to justify and evaluate the phenomenon they study.

It is not possible to completely eliminate the subjectivity of the researchers, their beliefs and notions. For the reason of assuring to understand how my values may have influenced the study and avoid negative consequences, I tried to reflect on these during the course of the study. In addition, _triangulation of data_, which reduces the risk of a systematic biases by employing variety of methods of collecting data (e.g. familiarization with document materials, observation during the school breaks, visiting the school setting prior to the interviews to familiarize with the site, conversations with staff about Romani pupils’ possibilities in school) secured understanding of the concepts I was investigating.

According to Maxwell (1992) reliability does not refer to validity or any aspect of it, but a threat to it. To ensure the reliability of the study, researchers need to document the procedures as thorough as possible, in detail, and to document the steps as much as it is possible (Yin, 2009 in Creswell, 2014). For these procedures in mind and in order to increase reliability, I accurately documented the steps in preparation of the study, which is reported in this chapter.

### 3.11 Ethical considerations

By emphasizing and addressing ethical concerns, educational researcher show respect for research participants, protects them from possible harm and honors their contribution (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007, p. 69). The set of ethical questions surrounding research involving children can be summed up in following points: obtaining consent and permission from parents which will allow the interviewer to approach the children. Consent from the school and permissions from other legal
authorities, as described in “Gaining Entry to the Field of Study” section, were also required at this point of research study.

The codes of ethics require a study should be based on informed consent (Flick, 2014, p.50). Research with children and other vulnerable groups—informants who are not legally able to provide informed consent owing to age or incompetence requires consent usually obtained from a parent or a guardian. This is often provided through the sheet with the information about what is involved and why (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). The information sheet about the study with the consent of parents of Romani pupils was distributed through the school, and it included information about the study, confidentiality and anonymity information as well as the fact that participation in the study is voluntary and that the participants had the right to withdraw at any stage, after which all the personal data will made anonymous. (Appendix 2) In addition, by assuring privacy and confidentiality of data, the treatment of information was indorsed by storing data safely and handling the information with high responsibility.

According to Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences law and the humanities (2006), when it comes to research on minority cultures, researchers must be extra cautious with labeling that might lead to unreasonable generalization and which, in practice, could lead to the stigmatization of certain social groups. Also, researchers need to be specifically aware of the impact of sensitive topics and be non-judgmental and objective at all times. I find these considerations important because of the nature and the background culture of my informants.

Correspondingly, equally relevant ethical facet is the writing of the study report; according to Creswell (2012) reporting and writing of the research results should be ethical in a way it is honestly reported, shared with participants, not published previously and credited to contributing authors, and in line with the central ethical stance that the research should be conducted in a way that “honors right or wrong conduct” (Kaler and Beres, 2010 in Creswell, 2012).

3.12 Limitations of the study

One of the most influential limitation of this study was being non-Romani researcher. Despite all efforts to develop a relationship with my pupil-informants, the fact that I was non-Romani was bound to have effect on their responses. It was especially seen in topics concerning delicate issues, including topics on racism in school. Also, what might be another limitation is a general distrust in authorities, which is related to previous injustices, passed to
a new generations, and maintained through discrimination and negative attitudes towards Romani in general (NOU 2015:7).

Language barrier and the fact that Romani pupils’ mother tongue was Romani is another limitation to be considered. The interviews were carried out in BCS language; however, some minor challenges related to understanding occurred during the interviews, where the questions were adapted so the participants clearly understood what I was asking.

Research with children carries a lot of challenges and limitations; ethical considerations were discussed in previous section, however, methodological issues carrying out interviews need to be thought-out. Unequal power relationships, as suggested by Einarsdóttir (2007), are inevitable, and therefore, researchers must seek for more child-friendly methods which build on their interests and competences. In addition, children do not have the experience of interviewing as adults do, and therefore, are not aware of what is expected of them.
4 Presentation of the Findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to inquire the issues and investigate means of involvement of Romani pupils in one Bosnian-Herzegovinian elementary school in Sarajevo, and explore circumstances that generate risks to participation in mainstream schooling. In this chapter findings are presented through themes emerged from qualitative semi-structured interviews with two groups of informants, pupils and educational staff. The themes were identified from the collected data, in regards to the main question and sub-questions of the study, contextualizing with the theoretical background and international studies as an orientation in the field of inquiry.

The chapter structure follows the main themes derived from the data from both informant groups, and the provided knowledge is presented accordingly: pupil participants are labelled as Case (1-6) and school-staff as Staff (1-3).

4.2 Theme 1: Disrupted educational experience

This theme contains the data derived from Romani pupils and the school staff about lack of continuity in schooling. The informants were asked about the reasons for disrupted educational experience, and the theme includes various obstacles which are presented through sub-chapters.

4.2.1 Disrupted education due to migration

The data informs on tendency of grade retention; four of the Romani pupils are older than the grade they are attaining. This is usually happening for the reason of moving to other countries, usually in search of better life possibilities with their respected families.

“...they [Romani pupils] start the education in our school and then they move somewhere else and continue their education upon return...for example, one pupil is 13 years old, and he is in the 5th grade. He should be in 8th...They do not have
documentation they continued their education somewhere else, therefore we enroll children according to the period when they left our school.” (Staff 2)

To Staff 2 the lack of documentation and proof children continue schooling when they move with parents to other countries in search for better possibilities is the usual cause of grade retention; therefore, grade retention is associated with the attempt of permanent immigration, which, eventually, results in repatriation.

“When I returned from Sweden I started school again. I didn’t want to go to school here because they “took” me out from my old class. They told me I have to continue, and then I realized I had to… I had to, so I returned to school. They [friends] were 7th grade, and I am 6th.” (Case 2)

To Case 2 repeating the 6th grade due to migration came as unpleasant fact since the pupil wanted to go to school with the class she attended before moving to Sweden.

“I am 5th grade, should be 7th…because I was in Germany for two years, I did not go to school there. I could, but there was no place. I was there for two years, I returned and then…5th.” (Case 6)

Similarly, Case 6 also reports on grade retention; the pupil is the oldest one in current, 5th grade. Together with his family he lived in Germany for two years where the pupil did not attend school.

### 4.2.2 Disrupted education due to family factors

As previous study by Smith (1997) also suggested, strong family expectations and responsibilities in the Romani communities are demonstrated through the data, and show high absence of female pupils during school days due to different factors, e.g. caring for household and other children in the family. The following quotes by Case 4 illustrate the notion:

“I did not go to school for about 3-4 months because my mother was in Belgrade…I did not go regularly, but I do now. I had to be home, because my father and brother were alone... There was no one to be home, to clean, cook, sit...So I had to.”

As stated by Case 4, female family members are expected to do chores around the house; when mother was absent the pupil had to be the one in charge of the “womanly”
responsibilities in the household, therefore this pupil reports on low school attendance due to these factors.

“When my mother is sick or has to go to the doctor, I have to stay home. Or when she needs help around the house, cleaning, doing something, laundry, lots of things.” (Case 4)

Case 2 continues in a similar manner:

“I am absent…When my mother is gone I take care of my little sister. She is 2. I look out after her until my mother returns, watch television, and such.” (Case 2)

When it comes to family factors, one female pupil reported on her father not allowing her to go to school. Case 3 stated the following:

“I repeated 7th grade for I had some problems. Then I did not go to school for a year and a half, so I repeated it…I was home, I was afraid to go out. At that time my cousin did not go to school either. We had some problems…They did not allow us to talk about it.” (Case 3)

According to Staff 1:

“It is very complicated situation [with Case 3], a mafia showdown. Father forbade her to go to school. Family reasons… Somebody threatened the father, so she was afraid to go. They came back this year, wanted to enroll her again.” (Staff 1)

In addition to family responsibilities as factors that influence attendance in school, both Case 3 and Staff 1 stated that the problems go beyond duties in the household; pupil (Case 3) was not allowed to go to school for a period of a year, hence the pupil repeated 7th grade. Due to father’s refusal to schooling, Case 3 was subjected to grade retention.

4.2.3 Disrupted education due to work

Poverty as a barrier, but also expectations of involvement of children in economic activities are reported by school staff, however, when asked pupils do not report on any work activities other than domestic shared responsibilities, as the domestic responsibilities are seen as a duty growing up in Romani culture.
“We have these pupils, they often beg in front of Robot [supermarket]. They go in the morning and they...are begging for change. They also washed cars in the street...The other family used to sell on the flea market...selling underwear. But we have to be flexible, give them opportunity...There was this girl; she was never in school on Thursdays and Fridays! Going with mother and father to a fair in city of Mostar...Never to school! But, okay, we need to understand, she will come on Monday...That’s the life...Survival!” (Staff 1)

Staff 1 stated that, as a part of getting children to school, the educational staff has to be tolerant and sometimes “overlook” the reasons of absence in the best interest of a child. Staff 1 is understandable to these circumstances as Romani families are living and fighting for existence; therefore, Staff 1 is willing to overlook the absence and “keep the doors always open”.

Staff 3 continues in the same manner, as she sees the reasons for low attendance in work-related, existential factors:

“Well, you know, children come from different family backgrounds...Those families are fighting for existence. ...We have pupils that do not come to school regularly, but even those who are regular also fight for their bare existence...I do not want to say it is in their tradition, but with existential problems comes begging, so some families involve children and do not send them to school.” (Staff 3)

4.3 Theme 2: Language barriers

Romani language is the mother tongue for Romani children; however, level of acquisition varies between the pupil informants. The language of instruction in the school under the study is Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language; according to school staff Romani pupils starting elementary school have poor knowledge of language of instruction, which further leads to barriers in fully accessing the curriculum. Teaching in a language other than mother tongue not only causes difficulties with literacy, but according to Staff 1 it also “suppresses pupil’s real learning potential”. This viewpoint is in accordance with the Global Education Monitoring report (2016) which also addresses the issue of schooling in home language and argues that the language spoken in the classroom usually holds back child’s learning
especially for those children of poor economic status. The quotes under the theme represent opinions of both school staff and one pupil about the topic in question.

Discussing language barriers Staff 3 informs on poor language acquisition and the reasons behind the matter. Staff 3 stated:

“As you may have noticed, their answers are short, and the problem is the language barrier. Some children do not understand what they’re asked…Questions have to be short and very simplified. For example, this year we have a group of pupils, returnees from Germany…Now they’re back, we have a lot of language barrier issues; I mean, those pupils, literally, don’t understand our questions and mostly they nod in order to leave them alone, not to ask anything.”

Staff 3 discusses language difficulties pupils face in school and gives an example of communication issues; when interacting with adults in school Romani pupils avoid queries and the reason, according to Staff 3, lies in poor understanding of Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian language. Staff 3 has an impression that the pupils who migrate to other countries have literacy difficulties upon return- the notion which is confirmed in Case 6’s following quote:

“I need help now, I forgot how to write, I don’t know half…block or cursive. And I don’t know to read, half of it…I forgot because I have not read in Germany…In first grade I had difficulty with letters, I could hardly understand. I see what’s written and I copy it. But, I made it…”

The situation with Case 6’s literacy was poor from the very beginning of primary education, and it deteriorated more with the attempt of migration as the pupil did not devote time for learning while overseas.

Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015) suggests that particular attention should be paid to policies that refer to role of pupil’s first language when it comes to addressing exclusion. In multi-lingual school contexts, teaching and learning process should be encouraged to be carried out in the first language of a pupil. However, that is not always possible to achieve due to reasons described in Staff 1 response:

“We were looking for somebody, we were very eager to find someone for Romani language. But there is no one…Nobody could apply. That was the idea of non-
governmental organizations, where there is majority of Romani...I remember when there was 70-80 of Romani pupils...That is their right, and the classes and courses could be taught. But, there is no one to hold those classes.”

The lack of educational staff to teach in Romani language represents a problem for school, although, as Staff 1 responded, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations the school had an intention of finding a teacher fluent in the language. The school intended to hire a Romani teacher with background in pedagogy, however, according to Staff 1, the problem lies in the tendency of Romani pupils not advancing to higher education.

“I know of two Romani pupils that enrolled and graduated from high school...We follow up on our pupils; they start and they drop out shortly.” (Staff 1)

4.4 Theme 3: Negative experiences with peers

The data collected showed tendency of non-reporting the negative experiences by the pupils themselves; only one pupil [Case 6] was willing to talk about name calling, while other pupils did not. However, one pupil managed to “recall” that bullying happened, although in lower grades. The school staff interviews tell a different story: similar to Derrington and Kendall (2003) study, despite of non-reporting, the school staff is aware of this given the pupils’ retaliation strategies—both verbal and physical. Staff 1 explains:

“We had a lot of problems with her [Case 4]...I am unsure if she told you...From accusations that she stole money at gym classes...They would separate from her, everyone together on one side, her on the other. We had workshops with her to get through, and for other pupils to see her differently...We now know why she was explosive, irritable, aggressive towards teachers, not coming to school in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. For example, she was cursing, running through school screaming...“You Gypsy!”, they called. Her brother [Case 5]- completely different character. Keeps it in himself.” (Staff 1)

As suggested, school staff describes the behavior of other pupils towards 9th grade Romani pupil: staff is aware of the pupils not reporting the name-calling based on ethnic differences in the interviews, and that it was also the reason behind Case 4’s behavior throughout the years. The educational staff in this school tries to approach the issue of racism by using different
strategies and discussions with both non-Romani and Romani pupils, since the non-disclosure of bullying and name-calling was the usual choice for Romani children. However, Staff 2 indicates that disclosure happens with lower grade pupils, although in “telling on others” manner.

“They tease them very often…Although they would rarely admit it. So, they tease them saying “Gypsy! You are Gypsy!” Then the parents come to school saying “I know that this happens only because my child is Romani”…It is very hard. It happens, yes. They would rarely complain to us, and if they do, they are usually younger, snitching “He called me this and that…” (Staff 2)

The quote supports the notion of non-disclosure of name-calling, and parents’ disappointment with this maltreatment; Staff 2 finds it difficult for school personnel to deal with pejorative name-calling and to find the solution to the problem. As aforementioned, only Case 6 was willing to talk about his bad experiences with other pupils:

“Pupils argue with me, tell me bad things…I feel bad. You know, when someone tells me something bad about…It is my grandfather’s name! I don’t want them to talk bad about him; he is dead…Bad words about my name. I am offended- then we fight and argue. He [the other pupil from class] called me “Coffee”.”

Other child teased this pupil, calling him “Coffee” (as his name rhymes with it); it is also his grandfather’s name so Case 6 finds it very hard to handle as bullying persists. Case 6 implies that it hurts his feelings when other pupils argue with him and insult him on the ethnic grounds. He often reaches out to school personnel, and oftentimes physically retaliates against bullies, school personnel reports.

When asked about her negative experiences, Case 2 answered:

“No…I don’t like to fight, if they call me out, I keep quiet. I don’t know, they have never…I don’t remember they called me anything.”

Nevertheless, when asked does she remember if anything similar happened before, she replied:

“Yes, for example, in 2nd grade. They would insult me; call me “Gypsy” and so.”
The pattern of non-reporting indicated previously continues in this case; the pupil, however, informs on pejorative name-calling in lower grades. Non-reporting of bullying in this study could be considered as, both, limitation to the study in terms of lack of trust as an outside researcher, in addition to general hiding bullying-related behaviour from adults.

4.5 Theme 4: Skepticism and general distrust vs. Trust and co-operation

Data from interviews with school staff showed that creating a social environment that benefits the socio-emotional development of the Romani (and any other) child is their primary activity. Generally, distrust of Romani families towards education is caused due to previous experiences regarding the nature of their treatment in a society at large. In their long history of obstructions and discrimination, the policy of this school as pointed out by all three staff members is co-operation with parents: “What is important is that parents of our Romani pupils have trust in the school management- from principal to other educational staff.” (Staff 2). This theme contains information on increasing trust and co-operation between school and Romani families, and the quotes represent opinions of one informant group- interviewed school staff.

The efforts and support of the school staff, in co-operation with non-governmental organizations, opened the opportunities to develop trust and allow Romani families to see school as their active partners, wherein the school has not only educational but also advisory and supportive role. As the Staff 1 states “We have entered the area of social competence”, the school staff offers aid to foster supportive environment.

Staff 1 gives an example of how one Romani mother saw the school as a helping hand:

“Parents are lost today; there is a manual for everything, except for parents. Especially parents of vulnerable groups... in us they see someone who is going to help. But, here, in school...I am not saying...It is additional work for me, it is exhausting, and not everyone is willing to do that. But that is human, a norm. One mother was alone, she needed support. She used to see school as a partner, trusting, she used to cry, talking for hours. Somebody listens and is going to help her children. I will give her an advice.”
Case 6’s legal guardian, the grandmother, often comes to school to ask for help. Staff 2 is satisfied with the relationships they build with pupil’s family.

“We have a wonderful relationship with her. She often comes and asks for clothes or school supplies for her grandchildren. Three of them go to our school [beside Case 6]. We always help her, when we are able.”

In co-operation with UNICEF, the school decided to take a step further and organize literacy courses for mothers of Romani pupils. While the mothers were in courses, school staff took care of children in the school. Staff 1 is delighted with the success of the literacy course, while she indicates:

“Mothers of our Romani pupils came regularly, for a year. About ten of them. Mostly mothers, rarely fathers. There was a question of what to do with little children when mothers learn alphabet, writing etc. My assistant and I played with children, organized workshops. And after 1, 5 hours- 2 hours in the evening school, they learned how to sign their name, read shorter texts. The satisfaction of it!” (Staff 1)

To Staff 1 helping mothers while they learn in the evening school provides with great feeling of content. Response of Staff 2 was similar:

“We have a great collaboration with other parents as well. They visit when they think we can help them with something. School management along with teachers does everything so that Romani children with their parents feel as comfortable, and go to school as long as possible.”

Other pedagogues, however, are not impressed by the personal involvement and the risk this school is taking by going directly to Romani homes, and seeing the conditions the pupils live in.

“I am not going to enter the house, but I am going to knock on the door, ask for a pupil…I am risking being hit, spit on, seeing something I am not allowed to see….And we did. Social worker, teacher and I saw conditions they live in, in a junkyard, and it is no wonder that a child has an unpleasant smell when coming to school and so on…But that is a separate subject. What school needs to do is give support, which is necessary in our country for every pupil—especially Romani which are the most
vulnerable, because they are minority in majority...To mediate between municipality and NGO’s, parents and other institutions...For example, getting free books, clothes, backpacks.” (Staff 1)

For the reasons mentioned in Staff 1 answer, this school is different from other schools in giving support to vulnerable groups by co-operating between the stakeholders and not following prescribed methods of involvement but following the Romani pupils’ needs. Staff 1 states the following:

“We are connected with NGO network. We state our needs and then distribute the goods in school. In September, when the autumn starts, and the rains start, we know with certainty which pupils are in poor financial situation...We discreetly invite them, give them boots etc. Those are the invisible things which do not have to wait for somebody from municipality to ask which pupils are in need of social help...”

By using subtle mechanism such as this, Staff 1 contributes to caring school environment while creating trusting relationships.

The school is aware that they are bypassing the laws given the bureaucratic lethargy in Bosnia and Herzegovina; therefore Staff 1 criticizes the level of responsibility of institutions that need to help getting the Romani pupils to school.

“Me and my social worker [colleague] went 10 times to visit one family. There were 13 children, none in school. And every time...we got insults, questioning. They did not want to let their children to school. One boy was hearing impaired...After 10th time we asked the father to see where the school where the children will go...To give us a chance. We promised a free meal for children, two hygiene package from UNICEF, and scholarship from local municipality or clothing...And then one day he came with three children. We were delighted!”

The school also relies on the help from mobility teams as a part of collaboration with the Social Work Centre. The mobility team consisted of pedagogue, social worker and a Romani assistant, and their primary role was prevention of begging. Staff 3 frequently used the opportunity to collaborate with mobile team when it came to school absence. The external mobility team has shown to be a great success:
“They go from school to school, directly to their homes etc. In the last two years I used to invite them over to school, and held a meeting at the beginning of the school year. I invite them, I invite the pupil— for example a pupil who is often absent and then we “put up” a show— “See here, they are coming from time to time to check up on your absence”, and that they will come again. That works. I also invite pupils to praise them for their accomplishments...with mobility team present.”

Staff 3 collaborates tightly with the mentioned team and uses them for purposes other than prevention of begging, as she realizes that external influence might help prevent children from skipping the school in such scope.

The efforts that school puts up in work for the best interest of a child, however, is sometimes hindered by discontinuity in education, which, in return leads to skepticism, as Romani pupils have less time to build trusting relationships with peers and teachers. Nonetheless, the orientation towards “what works” in the case of Romani pupils can serve to build trusting relationships.

Staff 1 is persistent in her attempt to bridge the gap between families and education.

“For anything to work, everybody has to be involved. Not to work only with children, or only have seminars and training for educational staff...Or just with parents. We have to work at the same time, all of us. Only we have to have certain indicators and activities that will show us if we were successful in our goals. The goal is the same, approach is different.”

In addition, to increase partnership with school and promote involvement of Romani pupils’ family the school focuses on including at least one parent in a School Council or a Parent Board. Participation of parents, as Staff 2 puts it, is significant as two different settings in child’s life— family and school, will be able to collaborate, but is also an aim which they strive in pursue of better inclusion of minorities in general.

“In our school meetings we have come to an agreement to offer, include, and recognize possibilities targeted for involvement. We did our best with Parent Board. We need to encourage them [parents] to participate more. ”
4.6 Theme 5: Creating the context of diversity and respect

Given the importance of diversity in school, including nationality, class, different cultural backgrounds etc., the school relies on recognizing and addressing tolerance and equality for all pupils, and advocating equal treatment irrespective of those differences. To ensure non-discrimination and everyone’s equal participation, the school focuses on different projects and activities that promote diversity for both children and educational staff involved. The citations under this theme exhibit the stance of the interviewed school staff.

For the purpose of school policies, culture and practice, the school carries out activities which promote tolerance, democracy, and respect for diversity in the best interest of a child.

“The school policy and what we cherish and emphasize at the beginning of every school-year...directly or through different letters, notifications, directly or indirectly address the diversity which is an advantage, the support for each other...Especially since we work with minorities in our school, minorities as Romani pupils are...but also other minorities. The pupils that have different accent, culture and customs.”

(Staff 1)

According to Staff 1 the school nurtures diversity as their asset and highlights recognizing differences as resources for an inclusive school. Different cultural contexts allow for seeing the school as an inclusive place, and the school, according to Staff 1, has a proactive approach when it comes to acknowledging and promoting diversity.

“Along with the principal, the school staff is invested...We go to class meetings. 'Living the Diversity Project’ points to children that diversity should be respected, that all of us are special, that being special is our originality and uniqueness, and that we should respect that in others. So, all of the pupils function together, and they know what the school rules are and what it means to insult somebody, what are the consequences.” (Staff 3)

In addition to the example of projects that celebrate diversity Staff 3 informs on, along with the investment in teaching the respect and the acceptance of differences of all pupils, the school also engages in celebration of International Romani Day on 8th of April every. As an example of good school practice the school established extracurricular “Romano Horo”
(Romani Wheel) club which allows Romani pupils to feel more connected to their culture, but also for other pupils to gain knowledge about Romani folklore—tradition, customs, music etc. Staff 1 indicated:

“That is a club targeted for Romani culture, and includes both Romani and non-Romani pupils.”

The school curriculum prescribes that the teacher in a language class should have a lecture on Romani work of literature; the text that should be an affirmation of Romani culture or a specific Romani writer.

“We had a school-visit from a Romani poet...He visited the classes, left his poetry books to the school library. In the eyes of those- and other children, Romani children... as a role model. Those are the things this school takes into consideration, firstly to reduce animosity, teasing and other unnecessary behaviours that disturb relationships.” (Staff 2)

When it comes to educational staff, Staff 1 informs of activities and trainings for adults.

“They went to interactive workshops, sort of like—reducing prejudice, stereotypes and how we deal with it. For example, we are in a situation of being a minority feeling helpless; you experience injustice and so on. Those kinds of seminars are aimed for promoting social inclusion— the anti-bias programmes. I think we are one of the few schools who went through the training. We, as professionals, need to represent public policy of the institution we work in.” (Staff 1)

Staff 1 considers her personal opinions irrelevant of the school-viewpoint; the school stance should not be compromised by the personal, subjective opinions as one should manage professionally and represent the policies of the school perpetually. As Staff 1 stresses: “The head of the house should never give up professional position”, they strive to create diverse inclusive environment that fosters multicultural climate at all levels.
5 Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate circumstances that generate barriers to participation in education for Romani pupils in one elementary school in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Previous chapter presented findings obtained through semi-structured interviews in a school setting. The research questions were theory driven, and the overall goal was to obtain different perspectives with different informants with focus on education, but to reflect on broader social exclusion of this particular minority.

The discussion is presented after five themes emerged from the data, and it is following the frame of literature delivered in chapter two. Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory of human development served as the framework for the study with the intention to disclose immediate and extended environment factors that generate barriers and produce risk of exclusion from education. The findings will, further, be discussed in the light of earlier studies by Bhopal (2000), Lloyd and Stead (2001), Derrington and Kendall (2008), Lloyd and McCluskey (2008), and Brucker (2008) who pinpointed the factors that influence educational experience, e.g. language, racism, and institutional factors among others.

Therefore, this chapter’s main focus will be the analysis of themes presented in the Findings chapter discussed in the view of theoretical framework, followed by conclusion, recommendation for intervention and further research as well as limitations of the current study.

5.1.1 Disrupted educational experience

Bioecological theory as the theoretical framework of the study underlines the person-context interrelatedness. Therefore, study is focused on the pupils’ subjective experiences in relation to different surrounding contexts, both immediate and remote. This experiential nature of the theory is often referred as the driving force of human development. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) these personal experiential qualities contexts influence
current and future development, however, the participation of the developing person in such contexts must occur on a regular basis to be considered as critical.

The proximal processes and the progressive interaction within those processes are placed as primary stimuli of the development (Gottlieb, Wahlsten, and Lickliter, 2006); the main persons with whom pupils interact, their primary and extended family, influence the outcomes as presented in the findings chapter. Poverty as an influential and detrimental force to education is examined as an exosystem of the study; As explained in theoretical overview, exosystem is defined as “consisting of one or more settings that do not involve developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect or are affected by, what happens in that setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.237). Therefore, poverty as an exosystem influencing development has an effect on pupils’ micro and mesosystem. The fact that the pupil informants experience discontinuation in education which, in return, results in grade retention due to attempt of permanent migration with the family, leads to my assumptions of exosystem’s importance.

Poverty and unequal starting opportunities of Romani children are considered influencing factors as findings show tendency of Romani families involved in the study to search for opportunities of better life elsewhere in Europe. The resulting processes vary depending on the pupil and disadvantaged context interrelatedness (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). These components in bioecological model are dynamic and are designed in an interdependently synergistic pattern. Along these lines, the influence of poverty on pupil’s educational experience is far-reaching: from providing material resources, to limited access to after school activities, to creating quiet and motivating home environment for studying, and frequent migration. Based on the current findings migration determined by poverty resulted in negative after-effect for pupils’ academic life, namely grade retention.

The interaction between the pupil and their respective family affects the child’s educational experience as the family influence is a hindering factor for pupil’s educational involvement. As previous studies showed (Lloyd and Stead, 2001; Derrington and Kendall, 2003; Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008) many parents believe that integration into education system may lead to pupils adopting values of the majority group, therefore lessening the value of Roma culture with children. Worries about cultural dilution, however, have not been found in the current study as Romani parents have not been interviewed.
Strong Romani family expectations and reinforcement to children to be independent is seen throughout the interviews with the pupils. Many studies show that family network is the essential influence in a Romani child’s life (Smith, 1997). Reinforcing independency from a very early age is a trait of Romani culture; children are encouraged to be autonomous without any special constraints (Berthier, 1979). Children, thus, prepare their food, go to sleep without supervision, and care for other siblings (Smith, 1997). In other words, the child has the obligation to adapt to adult life. Current findings show that the kinship system in Romani informants’ life is highly influential when it comes to school absence. Responsibilities that Romani girls take at home often prevent them from coming to school. These responsibilities include caring for children, cooking - strictly speaking, embracing traditional gender-assigned role of a woman in the household. These findings are consistent with Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe (2003) study where they argue that baby-minding responsibilities and commitments at home when mothers were ill or absent are viewed as a priority over school attendance.

Expectedly, the roles of the Romani boys this study finds are in accordance with gender-roles Berthier (1979) further discloses. Young Romani boys have fewer domestic obligations, yet they are more involved in small economic activities which they mimic from the adults in the community (Smith, 1997). Consequently, the interpretation of the findings is in accordance with the notion that Romani children are assumed to take economic and other obligations which will prepare them for the adulthood. The findings inform on selling at markets, begging and washing cars as activities in which Romani pupils are/were involved, aside from obligation of caring for infants and the household.

Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe (2003) pinpoint the culture and lifestyle factors as influencing forces for children’s integration into mainstream schooling system which is further supported with the findings from the data collected through interviews with Romani pupils. Their study outlines cultural and social nature of absenteeism in schools, namely domestic, or economic accounts. The high rate of absenteeism leads to academic discontinuity which, according to Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe (2003), advances into more absence or opting out on the educational system as a whole. Romani families often commit to experiential learning, as discussed before, passing the knowledge from one generation to another, with the openness for any kind of work that is offered (Lloyd and McCluskey, 2008). The family mesosystem as the primary source of education for Romani children, according to the Lloyd and McCluskey
study, creates further tensions within education, and removes any parents’ responsibility for discipline in mainstream schooling.

In order to accurately interpret the findings it is crucial to understand the background and the culture Romani pupils come from. There is a small number of empirical research on Romani children’s exclusion from schooling, however, significant factors identified by Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe (2003) include “cultural differences and traditions related to mobility lifestyle and adult gender roles” (Derrington, 2005, p.55). In addition, unstable and unpredictable environments across time and space as defining properties of biological paradigm (e.g. mobility lifestyle and cultural expectations, and general instability in the family environment) leave a deep impact on pupils’ subsequent development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

Romani traveller parents do recognize dichotomy between their culture and educational engagement, and realize they have to make a choice between equipping the pupils to preserve the culture and the lifestyle, and the consistency of involvement in the educational process (Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe, 2003). The study acknowledges that, in practical terms, the semi- nomadic lifestyle is incompatible with the school attendance and commitment to education.

5.1.2 Language barriers

Children from Romani community in Bosnia and Herzegovina are facing language barriers upon starting elementary school. The reasons for this are interrelated; from low socioeconomic status of Romani families, to low attendance of Romani children in pre-schools. However, as it was stated by the school pedagogue, low attendance of Romanies in pre-schools is a different set of concerns Bosnian- Herzegovinian government has yet to address.

Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015) and Global Education Monitoring Report (2016) both suggest teaching and learning process should be carried out in home language of the pupil in order to foster learning process as well as inclusion. However, this suggestion might be difficult to achieve in this incident.
Romani language is an indoeuropean language, and for hundreds of years it was used without being standardized (Gažovičová, 2012). Romani language in Europe recognizes about 50 different dialects, and being constantly under the influence of majority languages the need for creating standardized written language emerged (Kenrick, 1996). However, since the standardization of Romani language has not yet been accomplished, there is a problem of which form of Romani language should be used as the language of instruction. In addition to non-existence of standardized version of Romani which could be used as a medium for teaching and learning process, the lack of educational staff and a few trained teachers that could perform schooling in Romani language also surfaced from, both, current and Filipović, Vučo and Đurić (2010) study. There is also limited information that instruction in mother tongue has positive effects; instead a greater emphasis should be put on “finding a set of program components that works for the children in the community of interest, given the community’s goals, demographics, and resources” (August and Hakuta 1997 in Parker, Rubalcava & Teruel, 2005, p. 72).

Romani pupils included in the study all speak Romani at home, and demonstrate poor language acquisition in BCS language in school. As the current findings showed low level of competence in language of formal education is one of the major barriers Roma pupils face. Initial complete or partial lack of language of instruction generates difficulties for Romani’s children success in school (Filipović, Vučo and Đurić, 2010). To be successfully included in educational system and overcome cultural and other social barriers, this study argues for a competent guidance for acquiring linguistic fluency in majority language (minority pupil’s second language). Further evidence of variability in school success is seen in involuntary minorities in the United States and other societies, where limited proficiency in majority language generates barriers in social and school performance (Ogbu, 1987).

The language barriers produce difficulties in both communication and learning for Romani pupils; based on the current findings pupils face difficulties in school as a result of poor understanding of language of education. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s PISA (2001) report, pupils who do not write, read or speak the language of instruction on the level of their peers have lower rates of success and performance in school, which mirrors the findings of current study. PISA further addresses the importance of learning the language of instruction when it comes to acknowledging disadvantages minority pupils face. In consideration of language of instruction, the pupils
who do not receive adequate support for learning the majority language, will meet difficulties in educational achievement, school attainment, and future success in the labor market (Christensen and Stanat, 2007).

It is noteworthy to mention there is a mismatch between recommendations from human rights advocates and the reality in the classroom; ensuring the right of pupils to be taught in Romani language is a tough task to implement since teaching minority through the medium of minority language is impossible in a classroom where majority is present, unless the majority language pupils are also to become bilingual (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2004.) According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2004) the uncertainties surrounding linguistic rights in education lead to ambivalence involving minority rights, children’s rights as well as language rights, and shows complexity in the topic of minority education. Bosnia and Herzegovina through its educational policies does not have curricular framework aimed at pupils from minority groups speaking minority language, although current findings highlight the importance of teachers (or the lack of) and the language support for Roma pupils with different linguistic profiles—pupils returning from different European countries, pupils using Romani as a language of family communication, or beginners in language of instruction.

5.1.3 Negative experiences with peers

As the findings from school staff informants reveal, there is a high degree of name-calling by non-Romani pupils, according to the school staff involved in the study. However, the challenge of non-reporting bullying related behavior from pupils arose from the interviews. Still, a number of studies (Lloyd and Norris, 1998; Lloyd and Stead, 2001; Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe, 2003; Derrington and Kendall, 2003; 2008;) report on experiences of aggression towards Romani children, ranging from verbal abuse to physical aggression. Current findings confirm much of the previous studies on racism towards Roma children in school.

Bullying in school might be viewed as a consequence of wider historical and cultural prejudice against Romanies; therefore, to understand bullying as a factor of exclusion we must recognize the effect of prejudice on full inclusion in education.

Name-calling was the form of bullying that was often excluded from British research, however studies in England and Wales report on name-calling most frequently mentioned by
pupils (Smith, 1999 in Lloyd and Stead, 2001). Educational staff in the current study named racist hostility as the reason for Romani pupils' often emotional and retaliating reactions; the pupils who reported on bullying disliked to be called “Gypsy”, as well as several parents who felt strongly about the issue and were urging the school to respond and mediate.

Ethnocentric name-calling in some instances provides affirmation that the majority is unfriendly and unwelcoming towards Romani culture (Reynolds, McCartan and Knipe, 2003). General prejudice is perceived as a force that drives racism within the school, and the findings derived from the school staff reveal these stereotypical attitudes towards Romani pupils being a product of wider community’s mistrust and hostility. Prejudice and ethnocentric views, according to Lloyd and Stead (2001) do carry a deep impact on educational experience as they hold the “awareness of ‘race’ and ethnicity...important in children’s social relationships” (Phoenix, 1997; Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Kelly, 1994 in Lloyd and Stead, 2001, p.369).

Furthermore, the data from the Derrington study (2005) which identifies prejudice and negative stereotypes as one of the most perpetual and widespread agencies within education of Roma children, is supported by the current findings.

Interviews with informants revealed a similar outlook of non-reporting among Romani pupils as many previous studies before did (for example, Derrington, 2005; O’Moore et al., 1997, Smith and Shu, 2000, Cline et al., 2002 in Derrington and Kendall, 2008). Even though the current findings have revealed high incidence of not reporting by Romani pupils in the school under the study, the school staff was still aware of bullying given the pupils coping and retaliation strategies, both verbal and physical. Educational staff finds the non-disclosure of racist behavior towards Romani pupils difficult to understand and, as Derrington (2005) findings exhibit, it is believed to be the apparent norm with the pupils. However, Lloyd and Stead (2001) research shows the tendency of non-reporting having deeper roots; many children appear to believe that “there is no point in reporting” since teachers often dismiss or do not believe complaints on name-calling, or underplay the importance of ethnocentric provoking, seeing it as “normal”. Interestingly, these findings confirm the Derrington and Kendall (2008) conclusion that institutional racism pervades the system and hinders the unprejudiced treatment of the issue of Roma pupils’ bullying in school.

Retaliation and emotional outbursts have been seen through the data collected from both informant groups; the match between findings from the literature implies incidence of
physical and verbal retribution (Derrington and Kendall, 2008). Retribution is often the reason why one pupil in the current study finds himself in trouble, as also implied in Lloyd and Stead (2001) findings. The interviewed school staff data which supports Derrington and Kendall (2008) findings reveals understanding towards Romani pupils, as their aggressive behavior towards teachers and other pupils in school is greatly influenced by their experiences of derogatory name-calling.

Many Romani parents encourage the pupils to “stand up for themselves” and respond to provocation, according to Derrington and Kendall (2008); however, the analysis of current data is in contrast as the interviews did not show evidence of encouragement when it comes to retaliation.

### 5.1.4 Trust and co-operation

It is generally accepted notion that Romani minority does not consider education necessary for their children or that Romanies feel general skepticism towards educational system (Catto, 2012). Variety of studies inform on parents’ attitudes towards mainstream schooling: Romani parents do see the importance of education in getting basic literacy and numeracy skills (Lloyd and Stead, 2001) while others exhibit resistance towards sending children to school for reasons such as discrimination and maltreatment, as well as a reluctance for the utility of education (Ringold, Wilkens and Orenstein, 2004).

Ogbu (1987) argues that societal forces such as the nature of history, subordination and exploitation of involuntary minorities influence the nature of minorities’ expressive response to schooling. The historical practice of society at large denying minorities’ access to desirable jobs and positions in adulthood is significant factor in school performance; ergo, the societal discouragement in terms of meaningful work opportunities throughout history results in pessimism towards education and hinders minorities from developing substantial tradition of academic achievement (Ogbu, 1987).

Therefore, the distrust of Romani families towards education could be found in their previous maltreatment and discrimination in a society at large, and minority rights violations and obstructions leaving them inevitably marginalized in society. However, increasing need for literacy has urged many Romani families to seek mainstream education.
Segregation of Romani children in special classes and schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not the usual policy; therefore, the evidence of this practice has not been found in the school under the study. Instead, the school staff findings report on number of practices aimed for improving participation of Romani pupils in education by increasing family and community involvement, and supporting the vulnerable minority group by helping the families with economic problems, but also mediating between different stakeholders involved in the educational process.

Poverty, in contrast to what Smith (1997) suggests, is given additional attention and is addressed as a barrier to education. In cooperation with different non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the current findings show, the school distributes clothing, guarantees the yearly school supplies for Romani pupils, as well as a free lunch.

Bhopal et al. (2000) emphasize the development of relationships with parents as the crucial element of good practice: according to the study the initial access to schooling depends on families and their interest and confidence in school as an institution which cares for their children. Current findings highlight the significance of trust and co-operation as a foundation of educational inclusion.

Important element to developing trusting relationships with parents, as found in Bhopal et al. study (2000) and also reported by staff participants, is the sympathetic help and advice offered by the known individuals from school. Therefore, establishment of trust and mutual respect is an imperative in fostering good school practice. In the development of good school practice is the understanding that the staff has to engage parents in partnership and provide caring and safe environment so the parents are willing to send their children to school.

Responding to the educational needs of the community strengthens the links with parents; while establishing welcoming school ethos, effective relations with parents can be encouraged through the provision of adult education (Bhopal et al., 2000). It is notable that the current findings show consistency with Bhopal et al. study, as the school organizes evening literacy courses for Romani pupils’ mothers and secures their confidence and involvement.

Liaison with different services has showed to be effective and productive; the use of Social Work Centre mobile team is showed to help securing access and promoting good levels of attendance of Romani pupils. The relationship between mobile team and the school is crucial
for monitoring and maintaining the level of attendance (Bhopal et al., 2000). In order to secure a regular pattern of attendance, incentives are seen as more productive than threatening, as both Bhopal et al. and current findings showed.

Promoting involvement of Romani pupils’ parents and increasing partnership between all stakeholders is significant for developing good relationships, individual school success and fostering regular attendance of Romani pupils as different systems will be able to collaborate cultivating the inclusion of minority children. The back and forth relationships between different social systems, home and school- relation affect the pupil directly as defined in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) early ecological theory.

5.1.5 Creating the context of diversity and respect

The school under the study relies on recognizing equality and tolerance and actively advocates equal treatment of every child, according to the current findings. Nurturing diversity and acceptance of ethnic and cultural status commits to development of trust and confidence, and consequentially, breaks the distrust and fear minorities have for authority institutions (Bhopal et al., 2000). The inclusive nature of the school is, therefore, seen in the commitment for providing equal access for all pupils, irrespective of their nationality and ethnicity.

Acknowledging and promoting diversity reflected in the findings shows strong decision of the school to respond to any stereotypical assumptions, and celebrate and appreciate Romani culture within the curriculum. Responsive curriculum will cater to Romani pupils’ needs and promote cultural differences, and allow for other non-Romani pupils to learn about diversity of cultures. Bhopal et al. (2000) findings point to this importance of recognition and acceptance of Romani cultural status, as the study finds positive self and group image a key objective for every pupil. There is an awareness of the need for learning material to reflect Romani culture in the responses of current school staff participants as they believe it will provide welcoming environment for the pupils, but also cultivate confidence in themselves and a group as a whole. Bhopal et al. (2000) study findings on culturally affirmative curriculum altogether mirror the findings from the current study.

With the efforts for making the school inclusive, the role of the leadership is emphasized in responses of the school staff. Strong leadership quality coming from the principal throughout
the school staff, and commitment for ensuring the inclusive ethos of the school are both suggested as a factors of success in a study by Bhopal et. al.(2000). The ethos should be existent throughout the school and should be filtered down from the head towards both teaching and non-teaching members of the staff. The leadership role will, therefore, enrich the relationships, as well as secure regular attendance and academic achievement of Romani pupils in the school (Bhopal et. al, 2000).

5.2 Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was exploring the issues and investigating circumstances that generate barriers to participation in education, therefore increasing the risk of exclusion. The overall goal to obtain different perspectives with different informants with focus on education was reached through semi-structured interviews. The study was focused on the pupils’ subjective experiences in relation to different immediate and remote contexts, as the theoretical framework of the study served as a background for exploring influences on the overall educational experience of Romani pupils involved.

It was found throughout the study that the poverty, as well as parental and community attitudes are the strongest influences on Romani pupils’ educational experience. The influence of poverty on pupil’s educational experience, as aforementioned, is far-reaching; ranging from providing material resources, limited access to after school activities, creating quiet and motivating home environment for studying, to frequent migration. The attempt of permanent immigration of Romani families to other European countries commonly ends in repatriation, as it was seen throughout data; thus, the family mobility generally has negative consequences on pupils’ academic life, namely grade retention.

Culture and lifestyle factors are recognized as influencing forces for pupils’ integration into mainstream educational system. Cultural and social nature of educational experience, such as domestic or economic accounts, lead to academic discontinuity and suggest strong family and gender influence on experiences of schooling. For accurately interpreting what mediates participation of Romani pupils in education, it is crucial to have a good understanding of Roma culture, and gender and family roles in general. However, too much emphasis on cultural explanations may lead to a theory of cultural pathology, as Derrington and Kendall (2008) suggest, whilst other socio-psycho cultural factors that influence pupils’ educational
experience, such as experiences of racism and name-calling found in the current study, may be neglected.

The language barriers produce difficulties in both communication and learning for Romani pupils; low level of competence in language of formal education (BCS language) is showed to be one of the major barriers to pupils’ educational experience. Since there is a discrepancy between the maximalistic goals of preserving the ethnic identity of minorities by mother tongue schooling suggested by important political instances (e.g. Council of Europe) and the reality of the schooling systems in general (Filipović, Vučo, Đurić, 2010), effective strategy for obtaining proficiency in language of educational instruction could be found in the language support programs for Romani pupils.

Good school policy and practice has showed to be essential for establishment of good relationships with family and community. The trust and confidence of parents is built through caring and understanding the school staff has for the life circumstances of Romani pupils. Active building of inclusive school ethos is seen through the commitment of all the teaching and non-teaching school staff, beginning with the head of the school filtered down to all school members. As the school strives to secure a regular pattern of attendance and inclusion of Romani pupils, the understanding of the factors leading to exclusion provides them with knowledge that will advance to empathy and support for pupils and their families, which in return can result in strengthening the links between the systems involved,

5.3 Recommendations

The recommendations sub-chapter unifies perspectives from both informant groups- Romani pupils and the educational staff, and offers recommendations as possible ways to improve the status of minority children in school:

_Study and learning support:_ It is general view that Romani children experience weaknesses in basic skills, especially majority language proficiency, as it was seen in the current study. Therefore, the support to facilitate the access to curriculum should be given special attention, through numeracy and literacy programs. Systemic support for minority children by offering guidance in acquiring new skills, especially majority language proficiency will make for easier integration into mainstream education.
The children should be given additional help during the after school hours. Supplementary help with homework should be taken into consideration, as many of the pupils do not have a calm and quiet space to study given the conditions at home.

Flexibility: The flexibility should be seen in both organizational and teaching strategies, with the aim of inclusion. This includes part-time timetable (as it was seen in the school under the study) and compromising as the situation demands in order to meet pupils’ individual needs (Bhopal et al., 2000). There is a growing need for a school to be flexible to successfully respond to cultural differences between Romani and non-Romani pupils.

Anti-Bullying Strategies: The issue of racist name-calling should be recognized, and addressed and investigated formally. By taking the racism seriously the school shows the importance of equality and diversity in school. Therefore, strategies through reporting systems, peer support, school policy on bullying and other proactive strategies can be used to acknowledge bullying behavior.

Culturally affirmative curriculum and need for Romani assistants: Through affirmative curriculum minority pupils will develop self and group identity, which will further promote the school as welcoming and inclusive environment for every child. The need for Romani assistants in school as the support to for both teachers and Roma children is recognized in this study, depending on the context and the needs of particular school. The presence of Romani assistant is substantial given the fact that being seen as Roma increases the chances of ensuring success and provides a positive model for Romani pupils together with the confidence in school.

5.4 Limitations and the need for further research

In addition to Limitations of the Study in Chapter 3- Methodology, a crucial indication is the need for further research on the views and perspectives of Romani parents which would secure a multilevel approach to the study of barriers that lead to exclusion from education in the case of Romani pupils. In addition to interviewed educational staff consisting of two pedagogues and a psychologist, there is a need for investigating the views of the teachers and their approach to inclusion of Romani children with the attempt to resolve the complex issue of inclusion of marginalized groups by encouraging joint problem solving.
Being a novice researcher, in addition to children as informants influenced the richness and produced limited interview data. Therefore, applying different type of methodology (such as class observation) and involving other type of informants (e.g. parents, as previously suggested) would result in richness of the data set, and allow for more thorough view on existing barriers to education.
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Tilbakemelding på melding om behandling av personopplysninger

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, motatt 14.06.2015. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 10.07.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

43751 Minority Roma Pupils and Exclusion from Education
Behandlingsansvarlig Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig Stefan Popovic
Student Selma Halilovic

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsloven. Personvernombudet tåler at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilrådning fortsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondance med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.


Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.06.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig tilsen
Katrine Utaker Segadai
Kontaktperson: Hildur Thorarinson tlf: 55 58 26 54
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Appendix 2

Request for participation in research project
“Minority Roma Pupils and Exclusion from Education”

Background and Purpose

This research is a Master’s project at the University of Oslo. Its purpose is to investigate the effects of the exclusion of Roma pupils that are already included in education, and the issues and barriers they face that prevent them from fully accessing education. My intent is to thoroughly explore this problem and find out what are the circumstances that lead to exclusion from school, regarding pupil’s personal experience. I am going to investigate circumstances that generate barriers to participation, therefore increasing the risk of exclusion. The overall goal is to have different perspectives with different informants and to focus on education, but reflect on society and social background (friends, social network, after school activities) and how they influence exclusion from school.

What does participation in the project imply?
The data will be collected through one-to-one interviews with children. The interviews will last about 30-40 minutes each. The questions will concern children’s experiences that influence exclusion from education in Bosnian-Herzegovinian schools. The interviews will be audio recorded and the interviewer may take some notes as well.

What will happen to the information about you?
All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the Master’s student and the supervisor (if requested) will have access to the data. Moreover, to ensure confidentiality list of names will be stored separately from other data. In publications the participants will not be identifiable. The project will be completed by June 2016. By project completion the data will be made anonymous.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous. If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact student: Halilovic Selma; tel: +387 61 403475, email: halilovic.selma@gmail.com or supervisor Stefan Popovic; tel: +47 410 00 540, email: stefan.popovic@gmail.com

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

(Signed by participant, date)
Selma Hailović
Brezka 63
71000 Sarajevo
Kontakt telefon: 061 493 4/5

Datum: 31.07.2015. godine

Ministarstvo za obrazovanje, nauku i mlade, Kanton Sarajevo
Ul. Reisa Džemaludina Čauševića br. 1.

Predmet: Molba - saglasnost za realizaciju istraživanja

Poštovani,

Obračam Vam se molom da mi, u svrhu izrade magistarskog rada, izdate saglasnost o provedbi istraživanja u Osnovnoj školi "Džemaludin Čaušević".

Naime, ja sam studentica postdiplomske studije Univerziteta u Osijek na programu Special Needs Education (Specijalna pedagogija).

Tema rada je "Manjinski romski učenici i inkluzija u obrazovanju". Iz tog razloga sam i odabrao ovu školu koja je je prepoznatljiva po svom inkluzivnom pristupu u radu sa učenicima sa potiskućima i preprekama u učešću u obrazovanju; a posebno po velikom broju romskih učenika koji uspešno pohađaju nastavu i ostvaruju zapažene rezultate u vannastavnim aktivnostima.

Cilj istraživanja je istražiti probleme sa kojima se susreću manjinski romski učenici i okolnosti koje stvaraju prepreke za učešće, time stvarajući rizik od isključivanja. Kroz rad planiram predstaviti položaj romskih učenika iz različitih perspektiva sa fokusom na obrazovanje, ali i na osnovom na društvo i socijalne okolnosti koje mogu utjecati na učešće u obrazovanju.

Za istraživanje sam planirala koristiti kvalitativnu metodu intervju. Svrha intervjuja je da odgovori na pitanja o iskustvima, motivaciji, pogledima na određena pitanja i da pruži dublje razumijevanje inkluzije kao fenomena.

Istkustvo manjinskih učenika je moćan alat u formiranju samog obrazovnog iskustva. Stoga, pronalaženje odgovora koji su to fakto koji dovode do prepreka u učešću su od ključnog značaja za efikasno provođenje inkluzije u obrazovanju, kao i samog kvalitetnog obrazovanja.

U prilogu Vam dostavljam saglasnost i potvrdu Univerziteta u Osijek. Čujenja bih ako biste mi na molbu odgovorili što prije, jer fakultet nalaze striktni rokove za istraživački dio studijskog programa. Način im se da rate udovoljiti moj mog Vam se unaprijed zahvaljujem. Za sve dodatne informacije stoim Vam na raspolaganju.

S poštovanjem,

Selma Hailović

Sema Hailović
Appendix 4

Bosna i Hercegovina
Federacija Bosne i Hercegovine
KANTON SARAJEVO
Ministarstvo za obrazovanje, nauku i mlade

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
CANTON SARAJEVO
Ministry for Education, Science and Youth

Broj: 11/1 -02 38- 21818 /15
Sarajevo, 23.09.2015. godine

Halilović Selma
Breka, br. 63
Tel. 061 403 475

PREDMET: Saglasnost za istraživanje

Cijenjeni,
obratili ste se Ministarstvu za obrazovanje, nauku i mlade Kantona Sarajevo molbom za davanje saglasnosti za provođenje istraživanja u Osnovnoj školi Đemaludin Čaušević u svrhu izrade magistskog rada.
Pažljivo smo razmotrili Vašu molbu i upitnik koji ste u prilogu akta dostavili, te smo saglasni da uz dogovor sa direktoricom škole o svim detaljima intervjuisanja, realizirate intervjuisanje učenika.

Napominjemo da je intervjuisanje dozvoljeno isključivo uz primjenu liste pitanja čiju ste kopiju dostavili Ministarstvu i da nije dozvoljena izmjena liste pitanja

S poštovanjem,

Dostavljeno;
- Halilović Selma
Breka, br. 63
Tel. 061 403 475

- Arhivi
Appendix 5

SAGLASNOST roditelja/zakonskog staratelja

Ja ____________________________________________________________________________, sam upoznat i saglasan da moje dijete,
(ime i prezime jednog od roditelja/zakonskog staratelja)
__________________________________________________________, učestvuje u istraživanju u sklopu programa Specijalna
(pedagoška Univerziteta u Osu, sa temom 'Manjinski romski učenici i inkluzija u obrazovanju'.

Šta učestvovanje u ovom projektu podrazumijeva?

Podaci će biti prikupljeni putem intervjua sa djecom. Intervjui će trajati 30-40 minuta, a pitanja će se odnositi na dječja iskustva koja utječu na isključenje iz obrazovanja u Bosni i Hercegovini. Sve informacije će biti povjerljive i zaštićene, a imena djece se neće koristiti. Projekat će biti završen u junu 2016. godine.

Učestvovanje u projektu je dobrovoljno.

Nadamo se da ćete podržati naš rad za izgradnju zdravije budućnosti svih nas, posebno manjinske djece i mladih u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Mjesto: ________________________________
Datum: ________________________________

Potpis roditelja/zakonskog staratelja: ___________________________________________
Appendix 6

Interview guides for pupils and educational staff

In this study I will use general interview guide approach. This interview involves series of subject- matters which are going to be investigated with different informants. During the interview, the themes are developed without being previously defined and they are flexible for both researcher and informant.

**Interview guide for Romani pupils**

**Main question:** What are the barriers that Romani pupils experience in order to fully access education?

Introduction: Opening the interview; acknowledging their help and sharing their experience. Asking pupils to introduce themselves (Background information).

**Sub-questions**

*Social barriers*

1. Can you tell me what do you do during school breaks?
2. Do you have friends in school?
3. Do you have friends from your own cultural group?
4. What is important when it comes to your friends?
5. Do you have negative experiences with school colleagues?
6. Where do you sit in class?
7. Are you involved in after school activities?

*Family barriers*

8. Do parents allow you or not to participate in education?
9. Do your parents find being in school important- Do they prioritize education?
10. What are your daily family responsibilities?
11. Do your parents ever withdraw you from school to work?
12. Did you ever emigrate with parents?
13. Did you continue schooling in another country?

**Other barriers that influence exclusion from education**

14. Can you tell me do you have experience of being excluded and why? (e.g. lack of engagement, interrupted education, negative experiences and lack of continuity)
15. Do you skip school often?
16. How do teachers treat you? Do teachers help when needed?
17. Do you understand the language of instruction?

**Summary**

18. Is there something you would like to add that I forgot to ask you?

**Closing the interview:** Thank you for your help. Best of luck.

**Interview guide for educational staff**

Introduction: Opening the interview; acknowledging their help and sharing their experience. Asking staff to share background information.

**On school policy:**

1. What is the school policy when it comes to minority pupils?
2. Are they collaborating with other stakeholders?
3. How do they acknowledge Romani culture?
4. What does school do to address differences?
5. What is your view on schooling in mother tongue? Is there a language barrier, in your experience?

**On family involvement:**

6. Are the parents of Romani pupils involved with school? How?
7. Do they trust the educational staff?
8. Do parents withdraw children from school? For what reasons?
On Romani pupils:

9. Do Romani pupils experience bullying?
10. Based on your experience, is there inconsistency in education and why?
11. Are they involved in extracurricular activities?

Summary

12. Is there something you would like to add that I forgot to ask you?

Closing the interview: Thank you for your help. Best of luck.