

Socioeconomic typologies of immigrants' integration: The case of Thessaloniki Prefecture

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Abstract

The paper deals with the investigation of the integration rate of immigrants in rural areas of the prefecture of Thessaloniki and the factors that contribute to their "integration" in the current period which is characterized by uncertainty. For this purpose, a survey research was carried out in 607 residents of the Prefecture. The data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multivariate statistical analyses. The contribution of this research is particularly important as, for the first time in Greece under economic uncertainty, a systematic and holistic approach to the factors contributing to the integration and support of immigrants takes place.

Keywords: integration, immigrants, economic uncertainty, rural areas, Categorical Regression, Two Step Cluster Analysis

1. Introduction

Nowadays, due to the political, economic and social developments that have taken place worldwide, there is intense mobility of people, attitudes and perceptions (Sirkeci and Cohen, 2016). Greek society has received many immigrants (Kasimis, 2008) and according to ELSTAT data (2011) there are 911,929 foreigners in Greece.

Immigrants' entry brings changes to society, social cohesion in the workplace and the economy of the host country (Gilmartin and Migge, 2015; Loizou et al., 2014). The influx of immigrants leads to population renewal as it helps to increase the population of the host country and change its age pyramid (Mitrakos 2016; Boulet and Boudarbat, 2015; King et al., 2013; Kostaki et al., 2013). Moreover, it affects the birth rate and the formation of marriages (Mitrakos 2016; Kostaki et al., 2013). In the working environment, immigrants are mainly employed in jobs that do not require specific qualifications and for which natives are indifferent due to their low pay and difficult working conditions as manual labor in agriculture and the construction sector (Sandeep 2015; Schovánková, 2013; Williams, 2009). According to the above, while for the unskilled labor force of the host country, immigrants contribute to reducing their jobs and, by extension, to their income for specialized locals, there is an opportunity for work with higher qualifications (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). As the existence of a cheap labor force is contributed to reducing inflation and boosting the economy of the host country (Mitrakos, 2016; Piracha et al., 2016; Kotani, 2012).

Considering rural areas, the effects of immigration on them are similar to those that they generally bring to societies. The existence of immigrants in the rural areas of

Greece has contributed positively to the crisis of the agricultural sector (Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2005) and led to the revitalization of the agricultural sector (Hedlund et al., 2017; Mitakos, 2016; Collantes et al., 2014; Gidarakou et al., 2011; Kasimis and Papadopoulos, 2005). Immigrants met the demands of the agricultural sector for a flexible and cheap labor force (Martinovic et al., 2009; Kasimis, 2008) and their employment in manual work has enabled some farmers (e.g the elderly) to maintain their farms and others to expand into business activities (Mitakos, 2016; Labrianidis and Sykas, 2009; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007).

The integration of Immigrants is an obligation of the host societies as immigrants are not an ephemeral phenomenon (Renzaho et al, 2017; Bilodeau and White, 2016; Bahcekapili and Cetin, 2015). The main purpose of this paper is the investigation of acceptable rates of immigrants in Greek society mainly in rural areas and in an unstable economic period which characterize recent years and the factors which contribute to the integration of immigrants.

The contribution of this paper to scientific research is particularly important as for the first time in Greece, in an unstable economic period, is carried out a systematic and holistic approach to the characteristics of immigrants contribute to their integration. On the basis of the results, proposals will be made to the state with a view to creating measures and social practices for the design of a new immigration policy that encourages the social and economic integration of migrants into societies and will help to facilitate societies on measures and the attitudes they will have to adopt. Therefore, the results of this study will be of particular interest not only to the scientific community but also to society. The rest of the paper develops as follows: the next section describes the methodological framework employed in the study, while the third section presents the empirical results and finally concluding remarks in combination with some emerging police suggestions are offered in the last section.

2. Methodological framework

The prefecture of Thessaloniki consists of 14 municipalities. The permanent residents of the prefecture are 1,110. According to the 2011 census, 69,961 foreigners are resident in the region, of which 10,910 are citizens of the European Union, while 59,051 are nationals of other countries or unclear nationalities. In *Table 1* is presented the distribution of samples in the municipalities (ELSTAT, 2011).

Tab. 1. Population by groups of nationalities

Municipalities	Real Population	Greece	Foreign countries	Questionnaires
Municipality of Ampelokipoi-Messeni	52,185 (4.7%)	47,703	4,424	27 (4.4%)
Municipality of Kordeio-Evosmos	102,149 (9.2%)	96,242	5,511	51 (8.4%)
Municipality of Delta (Western)	45,523 (4.1%)	41,505	4,334	15 (2.5%)
Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies	84,384 (7.6%)	78,791	5,950	41 (6.8%)
Municipality of Langada (Western)	41,082 (3.7%)	39,148	1,955	15 (2.5%)
Municipality of Pavlou Mela (Western)	98,818 (8.9%)	93,924	5,321	64 (10.5%)
Municipality of Chalkidona (Western)	33,309 (3.0%)	33,673	2,284	21 (3.5%)
Municipality of Oraiokastro (Western)	38,861 (3.5%)	37,201	1,116	14 (2.3%)
Municipality of Thessaloniki (center)	325,321 (29.3%)	299,874	25,308	225 (37.1%)
Municipality of Volvi (Eastern)	23,317 (2.1%)	21,583	1,895	10 (1.6%)
Municipality of Thermaikos (Eastern)	49,964 (4.5%)	45,951	4,313	16 (2.6%)
Municipality of Thermi (Eastern)	53,295 (4.8%)	50,506	2,695	15 (2.5%)
Municipality of Kalamaria (Eastern)	91,046 (8.2%)	88,814	2,704	46 (7.6%)
Municipality of Pylaia-Chortiatis	69,950 (6.3%)	67,959	2,151	47 (7.7%)
Total	1,109,202	1,040,590	69,961	607

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), 2011

A survey research was performed in residents in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki in order to meet the objectives of this paper. In relation to the survey research, a qualitative research was initially conducted in a small sample of residents (two focus groups), whereby the final questionnaire was structured and after that a quantitative research was carried out through personal interviews during September 2016 - December 2016. From a technical and architectural point of view, the process of designing the questionnaire is divided into four levels of functionality (Fig. 1). These levels consist of the section that provides information: (1) on integration of immigrants (2) on the impact of immigrants' installation in rural areas (3) on the impact of immigrants' installation in the current period of economic uncertainty and (4) on personal or demographic characteristics of the respondents. In order to encourage participation and minimize the cognitive burden on respondents, most questions were framed in Likert scale intervals.

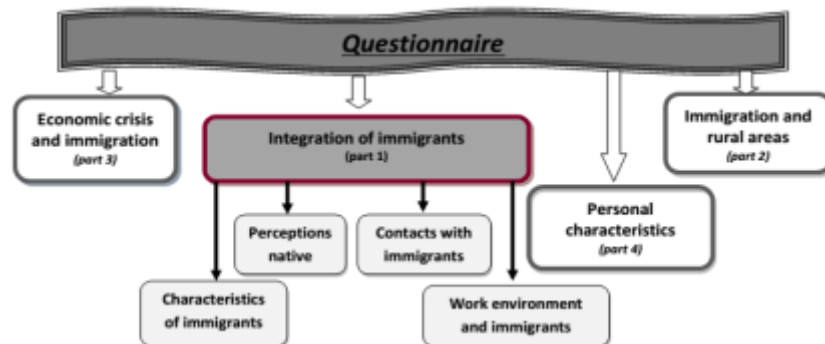


Fig. 1. Questionnaire

3. Data Analysis and Results

The results of the descriptive statistics (Fig. 2) indicate that the representative respondent is not married (42.5%), female (63%), 25-34 years old (50.1%), with fairly high level of education (47.4%) and lives in a household with two adults (64.5%). Most participants working in the private sector (47.1%) and have a median net monthly income less or equal than 1.000€. Furthermore, the 38.1 % of the respondents have friendship with immigrants.

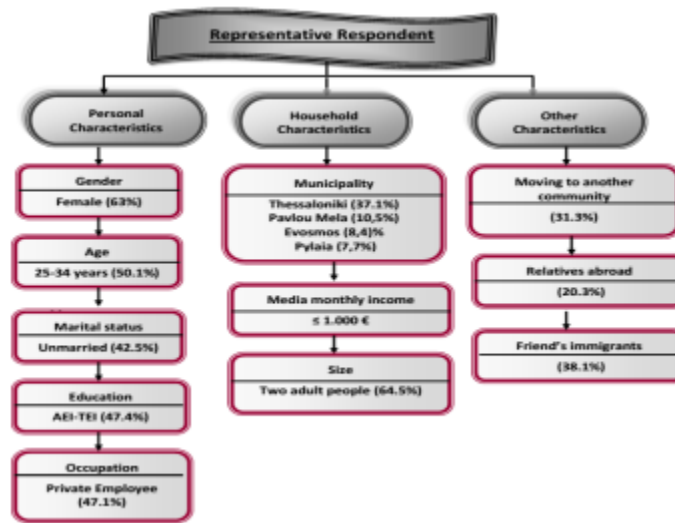


Fig. 2. Description of the sample

In order to discover the factors which influence the immigrants' "integration" variable, Categorical Regression Model (CatReg) was applied (via SPSS v.23 for Windows). CatReg model is well-performed and indicates a significant relationship between the dependent variable which is immigrants' "integration" and the group of selected prognosticators predictors ($R^2 = 0.962$). As presented in Table 2, the most important factors as regards Pratt's measure of relative importance which contribute to immigrants "integration" are "the participation of immigrants in community activities" (26.3%), "employment in jobs which do not prefer in locals" (8,9%), "help of locals to find a job to immigrants" (6,8%) and "the growth of workforce in community" (6,5%).

Tab. 2. Relative Importance Measures for the prefecture of Thessaloniki

Models	N	R ²	Relative Importance Measures			
General	607	0.926	participation in community activities (0.263)	labor in jobs that the locals do not (0.089)	help from the locals to find work (0.068)	increase the workforce of the community (0.065)

Dependent variable "integration"

The method of Two Step Cluster Analysis (TSCA) was applied in order to investigate the level of integration of immigrants by locals regarding their impact on rural areas and on a period which characterized by uncertainty. To investigate the factors which affect the "integration" of immigrants in each cluster a model of Categorical Regression was applied. As far as the level of integration of immigrants in the current period of economic uncertainty, results show that is not satisfactory since the highest percentage of respondents (49.6%) belong to clusters of skeptical and contrary. In accordance with them, the existence of immigrants is a threat to the locals as immigrants contribute to the compression of jobs and wages of the locals because they provide cheaper labor (Fig 3).

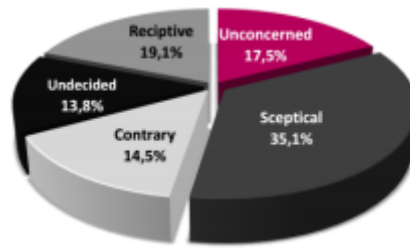


Fig. 3. Level of integration of immigrants in the period of economic uncertainty

According to demographic characteristics, the skeptical and contrary are young (23-34 years old), married, high-educated (University), low income ($\leq 1,000$ €) and have no immigrant friends (Fig. 4)

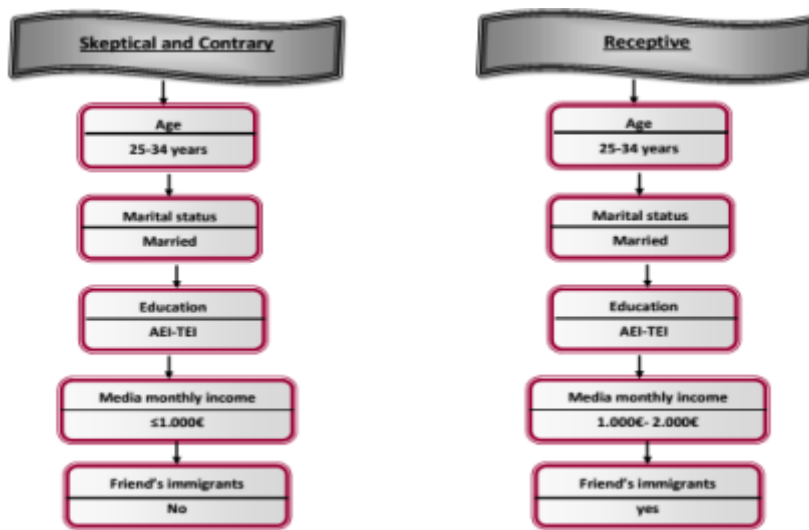


Fig. 4. Demographic characteristics

The results of categorical regression indicate that the most significant factor which contributes in immigrants’ “integration” is the “participation in community activities” according to the skeptical and contrary and the receptive, too. Other significant factors are that “the immigrants should have equal economic rewards with locals” and the “existence of immigrants in working environment” as regards CatReg models to skeptical and contrary, respectively (Table 3).

Tab. 3. Relative Importance Measures in the period of economic uncertainty

Models	R ²	Relative Importance Measures	
skeptical	0.96	participation in community activities (0.279)	should have equal economic rewards to locals (0.111)
Contrary	0.991	participation in community activities (0.302)	cooperation in the work environment (0.167)
receptive	0.982	participation in community activities (0.212)	finding work for immigrants (0.157)

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The integration rate of immigrants in rural areas is considered satisfactory as the highest percentage of respondents (55.1%) is located in clusters of receptive and supporters (Fig 5). The existence of immigrants in rural areas contribute to the revitalization of agriculture, the improvement of demographic indicators, undertaking manual jobs and boost the Heads of farms in business.

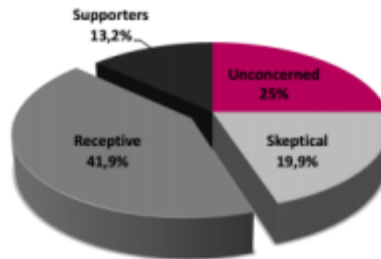


Fig. 5. Level of integration of immigrants in rural areas

In relation to demographic characteristics, the supporters and receptive are young (23-34 years old), unmarried, high-educated, belong to the middle-income category (1,000 € - 2,000 €) and have immigrant friends. On the other hand, the skeptical are young (23-34 years old), unmarried, high-educated, have low income (≤1,000 €) and no immigrant friends (Fig 6).

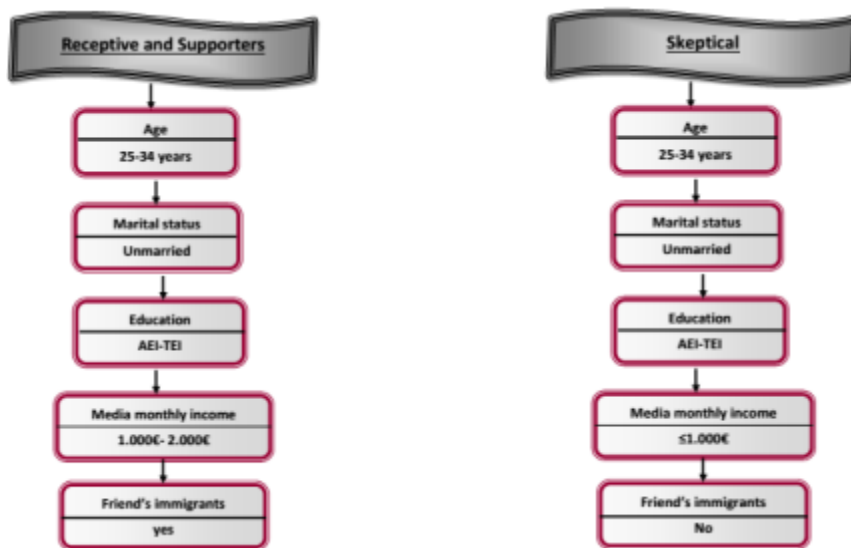


Fig. 6. Demographic characteristics

The participation of immigrants in community activities is the most significant factor of immigrants' "integration" in proportion to receptive, supporters and skeptical (Table 4). In addition, for supporters, there are more important factors which are "employment in jobs which do not prefer in locals" and "the cooperation in the workplace". On the other hand, for skeptics other factors which contribute to immigrants' integration are the view that "immigrants should have equal salaries with locals" and "have friendly relations with immigrants".

Tab. 4. Relative Importance Measures in rural areas

Models	R ²	Relative Importance Measures		
supporters	0.999	participation in community activities(0.258)	labor in jobs that the locals do not (0.119)	cooperation in the work environment (0.112)
Receptive	0.958	participation in community activities (0.253)		
Skeptical	0.983	participation in community activities (0.333)	should have equal economic rewards to locals (0.113)	friendly relations with immigrants (0.111)

Dependent variable "integration"

4. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was the estimation of the integration rate of immigrants in Greek society and the factors that contribute to their "integration" of the current period which is characterized by uncertainty. The identification strategy was based on descriptive statistics and multivariate statistical analyzes.

After the discussion on the factors of "integrating" immigrants into societies and according to the multivariate statistical analysis, the study concluded that the main reason, which has a positive impact on the "integration" of immigrants, is their participation in community activities. By encouraging participation in society's activities, they increase the chances of interacting with the locals, creating new values and behaviors that lead to increased levels of trust, less prejudice, improved levels of social capital, and smooth integration of immigrants into societies. To achieve this, there is a need for an immigration policy that enhances policies towards multiculturalism and social cohesion.

On the other hand, the results of the two step Cluster analysis showed that level of integration of immigrants, the current period of economic uncertainty, is not satisfactory as immigrants contribute to the squeeze of jobs and wages of locals because they provide cheaper work. As far as rural areas are concerned, the level of support for migrants is satisfactory as they have helped revitalize the agricultural sector, improve demographic indicators, cover manual jobs and encourage farmers to take part in business.

Therefore, the settlement of immigrants in rural areas in Greece, helps to solve many of the problems these areas face (demographic aging, cheap labor, raising productive age, so it is proposed to the government to step up its efforts to integrate immigrants in economic and social terms. This could be done by organizing programs to encourage them to be set up in areas where they can contribute on the basis of their potential. Also considering the demands of the agricultural sector for seasonal work, it would be reasonable to design a policy that would favor and facilitate the installation and thus their acceptance based on the requirements for seasonal workforce.

Finally, this document attempts to explain the factors of immigrants' "integration" during a period of economic uncertainty. The results show that immigrants pose a kind of threat to the natives by providing economic labor and leading to the squeeze of local jobs and wages. On the other hand, the integration of immigrants in rural areas has significantly contributed to revitalizing them. Through the current economic situation and the global demands for better quality of life, this study, calls into question living conditions for both natives and immigrants and is trying to add to the modern debate the search for new types of interaction and communication among immigrants and indigenous. Therefore, there is a need to develop an immigration policy which emphasizes the strengthening of policies on multiculturalism and social cohesion.

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