

Evaluating the Structure of Nationalistic Attitudes

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Abstract: Starting from the notion that nationalism can be presented and interpreted as an attitude syndrome composed of various components or dimensions of ethnic views and sentiments the aim of this paper is to research whether national emotional attachment, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups, and national siege mentality are correlated to such a degree that they on latent level form a homogeneous and internally coherent construct of nationalistic syndrome. In this research, the nationalistic syndrome is defined as a system of relatively linked ethnic orientations and sentiments constructed of the threat perception (cognitive component), ethnic exclusionism (potentially behavioural component) and strong national affection (affective component). The study was carried out on a random sample of students at the University of Zagreb (N=368). In order to establish the factor and construct validity of the created Nationalistic syndrome scale (NSS-1) consisting of 15 items, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. The first order CFA yielded a three-factor model ('xenophobia and anti-Semitism', 'perception of threat to national security', and 'national emotional attachment') which on the level of second-order CFA resulted in plausible model of nationalistic syndrome with acceptable goodness-of-fit measures (SRMR=0.06; RMSEA=0.09; CFI=0.95; NFI=0.95). The results imply that the theoretical model of nationalistic syndrome is confirmed, and high reliability of the NSS-1 ($\alpha=0.89$) proves it is a parsimonious, useful and efficient tool for assessing nationalistic syndrome, and thus one aspect of nationalism in sociological and political sciences.

Keywords: nationalistic syndrome, nationalism, threat perception, confirmatory factor analysis, NSS-1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of nationalism can be studied on various levels of analysis and from different aspects, so it is hard to define it in a way that would be generally accepted in the social sciences. For example, nationalism can be studied as a particular political ideology [1, 2, 3], as a process of creation of nation or establishing a national state [4], as an individual political orientation [5, 6], socio-anthropological construct [7, 8], or as a space of particular ethnic attitudes that indicate an existence of a nationalistic sentiment [9, 10, 11, 12]. In other words, studying the phenomenon of nationalism can be approached from the aspect of political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and politics-psychology. It is the different disciplinary starting points in studying nationalism, as well as the application of different methodological procedures in measuring it, that lead to ambiguity in terms of conceptualization and operationalization of the phenomenon of nationalism. Additional blurring of the concept and measuring of nationalism comes from the authors who identify the 'nationalistic' with the perception of national superiority and orientation towards national dominance [13, 14]; who make

insufficient distinction between the political-psychological meaning and the sources of ethnocentrism and nationalism [15, 16, 17]; who define nationalism in terms of strong national attachment and strong awareness of being affiliated to one's own nation [18, 19, 20, 21], or who define nationalism by using various other concepts, like chauvinism, collection narcissism or blind patriotism [22, 23, 24, 25]. It can be noted that the political ideology or world view of certain authors often greatly influences the measuring methods, and interpreting of nationalism as an attitude syndrome composed of various components or dimensions of ethnic views and sentiments. This misbalance in defining and measuring the nationalistic syndrome makes it difficult to predict the political, social and economic behaviour of individuals and particular social and national groups in a potentially conflictive historical-political context. The importance of conceptualization, operationalization and construction of instruments for measuring the nationalistic syndrome is surely important in the area of studying the migration processes [26], national security [27, 28], globalization processes [29] and economic relations [30, 31]. The confusion in conceptualization

and operationalization of the nationalistic syndrome as a political-psychological construct certainly generates its weak explanatory power, makes it difficult to construct an integral theory of nationalism, and makes it impossible on the empirical level to make a valid interpretation of findings obtained from researches in various historical and political contexts. Unlike the historical-developmental and political approach in studying nationalism, it is much more complex on the level of individual political orientation to define nationalism that actually presents a set of different individual ethnic viewpoints and sentiments, i.e. the structure of the nationalistic syndrome. Hence, in an ideal-typical sense, we could treat the 'phenomenology' of nationalism as historical-political processes that result in creation of a particular nationalistic ideology on one hand, as well as the inter- and intra-physical processes that result in the appearance of the nationalistic syndrome in the form of particular internalized ethnic viewpoints and sentiments. Although in this study we primarily deal with the nationalistic syndrome construct, this does not mean that it will not provide us with the possibility to make implicit conclusions about the political-psychological background of structure and dynamics of a possible nationalistic ideology and its social and political consequences.

Since the nationalistic syndrome in this paper is primarily treated as an attitudinal construct, i.e. a compound of various opinions, beliefs, evaluative judgments and emotional involvement, a question arises of what exactly is the core of the attitude we hold to have the political-physical meaning of the nationalistic syndrome. In this research, we defined the nationalistic syndrome as a system of relatively connected ethnic orientations and sentiments that on the (1) affective level indicate a strong national identification (*national emotional attachment*); on the (2) cognitive level indicate the presence of perception of threat (*perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups – threat from minorities; perception of threat coming from hostile nations and countries – national siege mentality*) and prejudice (*anti-Semitism*); (3) on a potential behavioural level indicates ethnic exclusionism (*xenophobia*). We see that, apart from the concepts like the national affective attachment, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, we used the concept of the perception of threat in the conceptualization and operationalization of the nationalistic syndrome construct. We strived to implicitly include the theoretical concept in the very structure of the nationalistic syndrome construct, which, among other things, may lie in its political-psychological background.

Namely, the concept of perception of threat is considered in literature as one of the best individual predictors or the explanatory variable of different forms of ethnic *exclusionism and intolerance* [32, 33, 34],

national identification [35, 36, 37] *authority* [38, 39, 40], *prejudice* [41, 42, 43] and *ideological orientations* [44, 45, 46]. Therefore, the perception of threat lies in the social and political-psychological background of various patterns of exclusionism in ethnic and other social interactions, in the strong national identification and non-critical affective relation to one's own nation, various forms of authority, type of prejudice and ideologies that can present perceptive distortion. In that case, the combination of various patterns of ethnic exclusionism and perception of threat can lie in the background of authoritative political ideology. It is the perceptive distortion of reality that can in certain cases generate not only the forms of social and political isolation of particular ethnic and social groups, discrimination of their members, but it can sometimes also lead to their destruction in a particular political-historical context [47, 48, 49].

Therefore, in this study, we tried to investigate whether the national emotional attachment, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups and the national siege mentality are correlated in such a way that on the higher order latent level they form a homogenous and internally coherent attitude, i.e. whether the nationalistic syndrome scale (NSS-1) is a reliable instrument that can be used in various studies in political science, sociology and psychology. The relationship between these concepts basically represents the theoretical background of the nationalistic syndrome. On the level of first-order factors, we assumed that the nationalistic syndrome will represent a multidimensional construct. Keeping in mind the research that found intercorrelations of various dimensions of *ethnic exclusionism*, intercorrelations among various dimensions of threat perception, and *national emotional attachment* (implying the existence of a strong national identification), we assumed a three-factor model of the nationalistic syndrome. The research namely shows that there is a positive correlation between anti-Semitism and xenophobia [50, 51, 52] which is particularly established in a psychodynamic set and under the influence of authoritative socialization [53, 54]. Other research found a substantial correlation between the perception of the inside and outside threat [55], and the perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups and national siege mentality [56, 57, 58] under the strong influence of collective memory of physical violence in interethnic conflicts [59]. Also, without the strong emotional saturation, i.e. strong national identification, it is difficult to grasp the nationalistic syndrome or sentiment [55, 60, 61, 62, 63]. In order to verify the theoretical model of the nationalistic syndrome that we defined as an internally coherent system of the threat perception (cognitive component), ethnic exclusionism (potentially behavioural component) and strong national affection (affective component), we conducted the confirmatory factor analysis. Also, the reliability

analysis of the final scale, including the test of the gender differences, was performed and the results are presented in this paper.

METHOD

Survey participants

A random sample of students from the University of Zagreb (N=368; 63% female) participated in the study. Out of this number, 62% of the students studied humanities and/or social sciences (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Centre for Croatian Studies), 30% technical sciences (Faculty of Architecture, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing) and 8% at the Faculty of Science. Average age of participants was 21. All participants were Croatian. Participants filled in the questionnaire in groups, during their regular classes at the University. The research was carried out in 2009 as a part of a larger research of ethnic attitudes and political orientations of students in Zagreb.

Instruments

Nationalistic syndrome scale (NSS-1) was developed by selecting items of ethnic attitudes and sentiments which define five sub-dimensions (Table 1): (1) *national emotional attachment* - the existence of a strong feeling of national identification, where the individual's nation is his 'alter ego' [64] (codes: ns1, ns2, ns3); (2) *xenophobia* - an anti-immigration sentiment or a strong social distance towards migrant workers (codes: ns7, ns8, ns9) [65]; (3) *anti-Semitism* - the existence of prejudice towards Jewish people in terms of their honesty and power of Jewish people in the business world [66] (codes: ns10, ns11, ns12); (4) *perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups* - a threat to national security [38] (codes: ns4, ns5, ns6); (5) *national siege mentality* - a feeling of a threat to the nation, i.e. the mental state in which members of a particular nation maintain a central belief that other nations and countries have strong hostile intentions toward them [67] (codes: ns13, ns14, ns15). To answer on each of the items the respondents used 5-point scale defined from 1 = 'Strongly disagree' to 5 = 'Strongly agree'.

Table 1: Nationalistic syndrome scale (NSS-1)

Code	Variable	N	M	SD
ns1	Love towards your nation is one of the most beautiful feelings a person can have	368	2.96	1.28
ns2	I always get mad when someone speaks badly about my nation	368	3.16	1.16
ns3	I perceive every insult to my nation as an attack on myself	368	2.46	1.20
ns4	There are national political parties of ethnic minority groups that should not be allowed into our national parliament	368	2.37	1.18
ns5	Certain ethnic minority groups are a threat to our country's safety	368	2.10	1.10
ns6	Certain ethnic minority groups are trying to politically destabilize our country	367	2.17	1.04
ns7	I wouldn't like to live in a neighbourhood with migrant workers	368	1.98	1.02
ns8	I would never approve of someone in my family to marry a migrant worker	367	1.69	0.99
ns9	A higher number of migrant workers would be a threat to the Croatian nation, because it could not be prevent them from marrying our girls	368	1.89	1.03
ns10	Jewish people are not as honest in business like other business people	367	2.08	1.03
ns11	Jewish people have too much power in the business world	367	2.74	1.25
ns12	Jewish people use dishonesty in order to get ahead	367	2.17	1.06
ns13	My nation has many enemies	368	2.31	1.07
ns14	Our nation is under threat from all sides	367	2.04	1.12
ns15	There is always a threat from neighbouring nations	367	2.83	1.21

RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis of the Nationalistic syndrome scale

To test the factor and construct validity of the Nationalistic syndrome scale, we conducted the confirmatory factor analysis by using structural modelling software (Preliis and Lisrel, version 8.54). Simply put, the confirmatory factor analysis is a statistically stronger procedure than the explorative analysis, because it is impartial in testing how well a theoretically-based model (or hypothetical latent structure) fits the empirical data. It is desirable for the model (conceptualized as a set of interrelated

covariance matrices) to fit as good as possible (i.e. to have the best possible 'fit') to the covariance matrix of the actual data. The absence of a good fit (or insufficient 'fit') usually means that the model is not well supported by actual data, and that the model needs to be modified or completely abandoned. There are various criteria of model's suitability, i.e. the goodness-of-fit indices linking empirical data with the theoretical model. Among them, the most used ones are the chi-square test and the corrected chi-square test (relative to the degrees of freedom, i.e. χ^2/df , relative χ^2), and various indices of comparative fit. Usually, several complementary indices are used simultaneously. In this

study, we list the following: comparative fit index (CFI), normed index of fit (NFI), standardized root mean-square residual (SRMR), and the root mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). CFI and NFI values should be greater than 0.90 [68, 69], and SRMR values [70] and RMSEA values [71] should be less than 0.10. In other words, greater CFI and NFI values, as well as lower SRMR and RMSEA values, indicate a better fit of the suggested model. The value of relative chi-square less than 3.00 is usually accepted as a good fit, although some researchers accept value 5.00 [72]. The fit of results with the theoretical postulates of the model was compared with comparative indices CFI and NFI, and the deviation from the model with indices of relative chi-square, SRMR and RMSEA.

Confirmatory factor analysis of the Nationalistic syndrome scale on the level of first-order factors extracted a three-factor structure, or the nationalistic syndrome model (Figure 1). The first factor is defined by variables indicating prejudice towards Jewish people, concerning their honesty and influence in the business world. The Jewish people are perceived as dishonest and too influential. This factor is also defined by variables that indicate a strong social distance towards migrant workers. We named this first factor *Xenophobia and anti-Semitism* (defined by items: I wouldn't like to live in a neighbourhood with migrant workers; I would never approve of someone in my family to marry a migrant worker; A higher number of migrant workers would be a threat to the Croatian nation, because it could not prevent them from marrying our girls; Jewish people are not as honest in business like other business people; Jewish people have too much power in the business world; Jewish people use dishonesty in order to get ahead).

The second factor is defined by variables that indicate a national siege mentality and perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups. In other words, the perception of threat to national security posed by some ethnic minority groups living in Croatia, and the perception of threat to national security coming from other nations and countries define the factor we called *Perception of threat to the country's and nation's safety* (defined by items: There are national political parties of ethnic minority groups that should not be allowed into our national parliament; Certain ethnic minority groups are a threat to our country's safety; Certain ethnic minority groups are trying to politically destabilize our country; My nation has many enemies; Our nation is under threat from all sides; There is always a threat from neighbouring nations).

The third factor indicates national identification of the type where the border between one's own ego and national collectiveness disappears. In other words, the national belonging receives psychological characteristics of an alter ego. We named this factor *National emotional attachment* (defined by items: Love towards your nation is one of the most beautiful feelings a person can have; I always get mad when someone speaks badly about my nation; I perceive every insult to my nation as an attack on myself).

It can be seen in Table 2 that the suggested nationalistic syndrome model is not completely satisfactory on the level of primary factors, i.e. the empirical data somewhat deviates from the hypothetical model. However, we can see that the comparative goodness-of-fit indices are marginally acceptable (CFI=0.90; NFI=0.89), which means that the suggested three-dimensional model of the nationalistic syndrome should not be completely rejected.

Table 2: Goodness-of-fit indices for the nationalistic syndrome model on the level of first-order factors and on the level of second-order factor

	<i>Nationalistic syndrome</i>	
	First-order factor	Second-order factor
df	90	87
χ^2	614.68	326.19
χ^2/ss	6.8	3.7
SRMR	0.26	0.06
RMSEA	0.13	0.09
CFI	0.90	0.95
NFI	0.89	0.95

df – degrees of freedom

χ^2 – chi-square

SRMR – standardized root mean-square residual

RMSEA – root mean-square error of approximation

CFI – comparative goodness-of-fit normed

NFI – normed goodness-of-fit index

On the level of the second-order factor, the confirmatory factor analysis extracted a more general nationalistic syndrome factor (Figure 2). Table 2 shows that the nationalistic syndrome model on the level of second-order factor has a satisfying goodness-of-fit within the allowed levels of standard error. We can see

therefore that the nationalistic syndrome measured with the NSS-I represents a theoretically based model as a second-order factor. In other words, the hypothetical latent structure of the nationalistic syndrome on the level of second-order factor has a satisfactory fit with the empirical data.

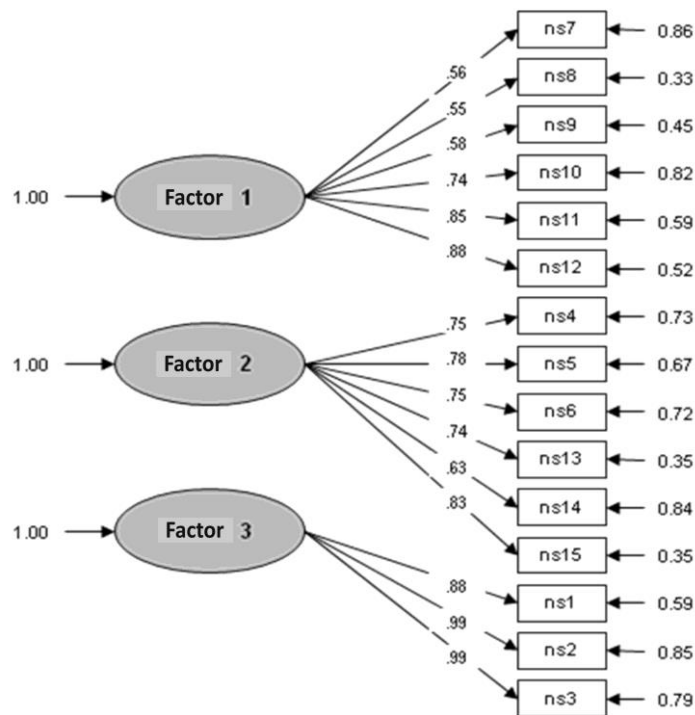


Fig-1: Confirmatory factor analysis of the Nationalistic syndrome scale on the first-order factor level

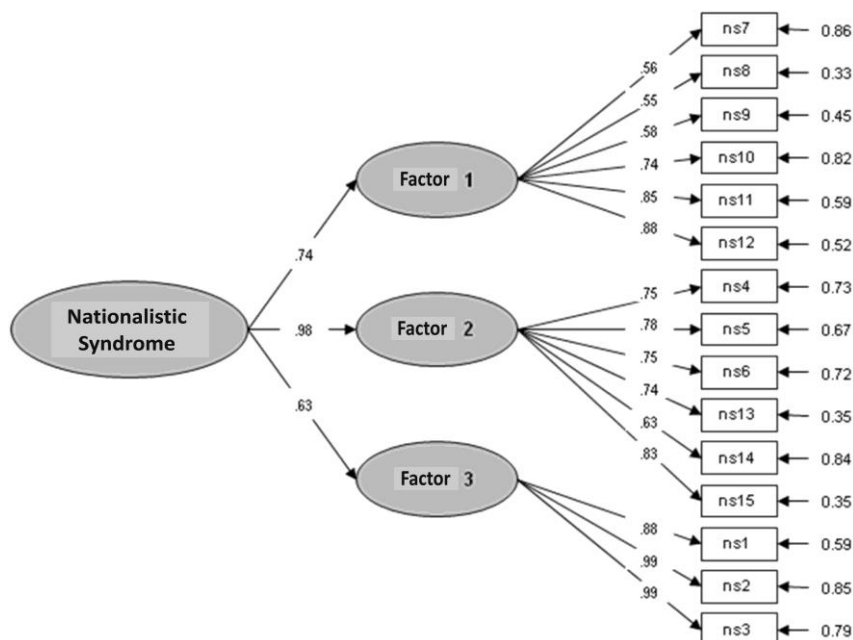


Fig-2: Second-order confirmatory factor analysis of the Nationalistic syndrome scale

Reliability of the Nationalistic syndrome scale

Based on the correlation matrix of 15 items of the Nationalistic syndrome scale, we also conducted the

exploratory factor analysis (EFA), by using principal components analysis and promax rotation. We extracted three identical factors with significant eigenvalues of

6.17, 1.58 and 1.18, explaining 59.63% of the total variance. The inter-factor correlations (0.45, 0.50, 0.58) indicated that there is a common origin of the extracted dimensions of the nationalistic syndrome, i.e. that the individual differences have a very similar source. Second-order factor analysis confirmed the presumption about the existence of a more general dimension of the nationalistic syndrome. Having also in mind the eigenvalue of the first principal component (6.17), the percentage of the variance it explains (41.14), and the range of factor saturation of its constituent items being between 0.78 and 0.85, we can consider the Nationalistic syndrome scale to be an internally homogenous measure of an attitude.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 15-item scale is 0.896, indicating a high reliability of the NSS-1. The high reliability of the scale is also indicated by other indicators in the item analysis, like the

discriminative validity coefficient or the item-total correlation, and the size of Cronbach's alpha without a particular item (Table 3).

The value in the column 'item-total correlations' represents correlations between each item and the total result achieved on the scale. Table 3 shows that all the items have substantial correlation with the total of the NSS-1 (all the item-total correlations are between 0.49 and 0.63). The values in column 'Cronbach's alpha without the item' are total alpha values if a particular item was not taken into account in calculating the Cronbach's coefficient. Total alpha value is 0.89, meaning that all alpha values should be somewhere around this value. Table 3 shows that none of the items would significantly affect the scale's reliability if we would leave it out of the calculation of Cronbach's coefficient.

Table 3: Item-total correlation of NSS-1 and Cronbach's alpha without the items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Item-total correlation</i>	<i>Cronbach's alpha without the item</i>
ns1	0.52	0.89
ns2	0.54	0.89
ns3	0.58	0.88
ns4	0.55	0.89
ns5	0.63	0.88
ns6	0.63	0.88
ns7	0.51	0.89
ns8	0.54	0.89
ns9	0.62	0.88
ns10	0.59	0.88
ns11	0.52	0.89
ns12	0.60	0.88
ns13	0.60	0.88
ns14	0.49	0.89
ns15	0.60	0.88

Distribution of results on the Nationalistic syndrome scale

Based on the established homogeneousness and reliability of the NSS-1, we can treat the nationalistic syndrome construct as a composite variable obtained by summing up numerical values of the 15 items which constitute Nationalistic syndrome scale. Even though the theoretical range of the NSS-1 is from 15 to 75, the obtained range of results is 15 to 65, while the mean is 35 (SD=10.71; Table 4). The skewness coefficient is 0.19, with the standard error of 0.13. This value indicates that the distribution of results on the NSS-1 does not show a significant skewness (values are near zero). The kurtosis coefficient is -0.56, with the

standard error of 0.25, indicating that there is a certain tendency towards kurtosis of the distributions of results (Table 5). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the distribution of results on the NSS-1 is not significantly different from normal (K-S $z = 0.87$; $p = 0.436$). Figure 3 shows the categorized version of NSS-1 from which can be seen that none of the respondents scored on the highest category of the scale (namely, none of them fully agreed with all 15 statements) implying that there is no record of the respondents with expressed nationalistic syndrome in its full extent. We can speak only in terms of tendencies in expressing nationalistic syndrome.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of total scores on the composite variable of the nationalistic syndrome measured by the NSS-1

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Variance
Nationalistic syndrome	365	15	65	34.937	10.709	114.69

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of skewness and kurtosis of results on the NSS-1

	N	Skewness coefficient	Standard error (skewness)	Kurtosis coefficient	Standard error (kurtosis)
Nationalistic syndrome	365	0.193	0.128	-0.560	0.255

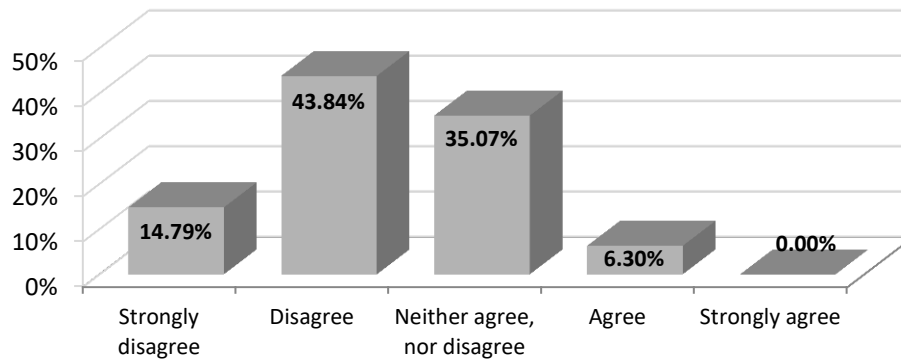


Fig-3: Frequency distribution of the categorized version of NSS-1

Influence of gender on the internalization of the nationalistic syndrome

Examining the statistically significant gender differences, in terms of the level of internalization of the nationalistic syndrome, is also one of the aspects of nationalistic syndrome investigated in this study. For this purpose, we conducted a t-test on the composite variable of the nationalistic syndrome of male and female participants. We found that, statistically speaking, there is a significant difference in the sense of expressing the nationalistic syndrome between male and female participants ($t=5.54, p<0.001, df=363$). This can also be seen in Figure 4 presenting the gender-specific

distributions of the categorized version of NSS-1. Although we found that the male participants have a largely internalized nationalistic syndrome, and that this difference is statistically significant, we still do not know the true effect size which participants' gender has on the presence of the nationalistic syndrome. To compute the effect size, we had to convert the statistics of the t-test into Pearson's correlation [73]. We found that the correlation is $r=0.28$, i.e. that the coefficient of determination is 0.078. This means that around 7.8% of the variance can be attributed to gender differences in terms of internalization of the nationalistic syndrome.

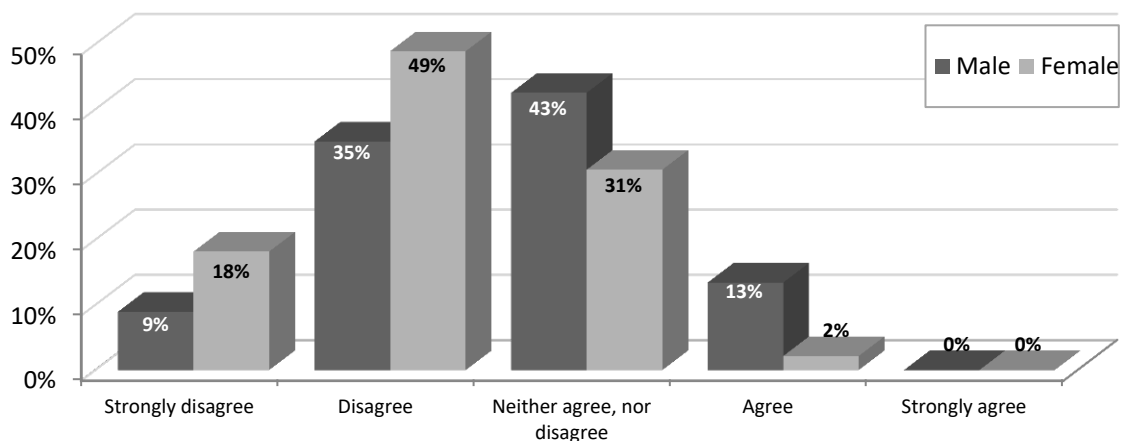


Fig-4: Frequency distribution of the categorized version of NSS-1 by gender

DISCUSSION

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) have shown that on the level of first-order factors, the nationalistic syndrome is a multidimensional construct defined by three factors: *Xenophobia and anti-Semitism*, *Perception of threat to state and national security*, and *National emotional attachment*. The structure of the first factor did not only confirm some earlier findings about the relation of xenophobia and anti-Semitism [50, 51, 52], but it also indicated that these two concepts have a very similar socio-psychological meaning and political-psychological background in social interethnic relations. Having in mind that the concept of xenophobia can be treated as an indicator of ethnic exclusionism [74, 75], and that the concept of anti-Semitism can be treated as a prejudice indicator [23, 76], we can conclude that the structural relation between anti-Semitic prejudice and ethnic exclusionism indicates a certain *cognitive-behavioural* component of the nationalistic syndrome.

The structure of the second factor is defined by the perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups and the national siege mentality, that is, the presence of the perception of threat posed by some ethnic minority groups on the one hand, and the perception of threat posed by other nations and countries on the other. The content and political-psychological meaning of the second factor indicate the presence of threat perception to the national security coming from the internal and external enemies i.e. signify the *cognitive component* of the nationalistic syndrome. This confirms the findings of the studies that found the relation between different types of threat perception, regardless if these are realistic or symbolic threats [32, 57, 55].

The third factor indicates the presence of a strong national identification in which the line between national collectiveness and own ego is erased, i.e. where national belonging and identification assume 'alter ego' characteristics. The isolation of the *National emotional attachment* on the level of first-order factors indicates the specific nature of the affective component within the composite variable of the nationalistic syndrome and ethnocentrism, which is something that the findings of other studies also indicated [44, 55, 64]. In other words, this means that the affective component of ethnocentrism or of the nationalistic syndrome do not necessarily have to form the internally homogenous single dimensional construct. Perhaps in some future version of the scale for measurement of the nationalistic syndrome we should exclude the affective component, and focus only on the dimensions of the ethnic exclusionism and the perception of threat to national security. In that case, we would probably have a more reliable cognitive-behavioural model of the nationalistic syndrome.

Although the model of the nationalistic syndrome on the level of first-order factors failed to completely satisfy the set of goodness-of-fit indices, it still should not be completely rejected. In other words, this means that the construct of nationalistic syndrome can be located on two levels of conceptual width: (a) on the lower, three-dimensional level of expressing the nationalistic syndrome, and (b) on the higher level of generalization, i.e. on the one-dimensional second order factor level. Namely, we have seen that on the level of second-order factor, the CFA yielded one-dimensional nationalistic syndrome construct which had satisfactory goodness-of-fit. This confirms the theoretical model of the nationalistic syndrome as an internally coherent system of ethnic exclusionism (potential behavioural component), threat perception (cognitive component) and national emotional attachment (affective component). Accordingly, the nationalistic syndrome, like many other constructs in the social and political psychology, has a hierarchical structure that enables the prediction of results on a lower level by individual sub-dimensions, and on a more general level. Depending on the problem and research goals, a multidimensional or one-factor concept can both be used. Apart from the confirmed model of the nationalistic syndrome as a higher order factor, measurement NSS-1 has proved to be a highly reliable measurement instrument that can be used in various political, sociological and psychological studies.

Taking into account the results obtained by confirmatory factor analysis and the high reliability of the NSS-1, the nationalistic syndrome can be treated as a one-dimensional construct on a higher conceptual level. The political-psychological determinants of the nationalistic syndrome measured by the NSS-1 are: (a) national identification in whose affective background the border between 'we' and 'me' is lost, i.e. where the nation and national belonging have become an integral part of a person's individual identification (alter ego); (b) existence of prejudice towards Jewish people in the sense of their business moral and financial power in the business world, and the existence of stereotypes as a justification of these prejudices [77]; (c) potential exclusion of foreigners, i.e. migrant workers from the immediate social transactions; (d) lack of trust into certain ethnic minority groups that are perceived as a threat to national security; and (e) the feeling of a threat to the nation from other nations and countries that are perceived as a threat to national security. Therefore, this confirms the general theoretical notion that the perception of threat lies in the political-psychological background of a strong national identification and ethnic exclusionism [35, 32, 36, 43, 33, 37]. In our actual case, the perception of threat to the security of the country and the nation lies in the political-psychological background of ethnic exclusionism and strong national identification, i.e. attachment.

The structural relation between the strong feeling of national identification with the concept of the threat perception does not always have to point to their cause-and-effect relation, although the perception of threat is most often placed in the position of 'causal', independent or explanatory, variable in defining structural models [32]. However, a strong national identification can in a given political and historical context be a 'consequence' of perception of a realistic threat or conflict, but it can also be a 'cause' of threat perception, i.e. contribute in perceiving certain ethnic minority groups, Jewish people, immigrants and other states and nations as a threat to state and national security [55]. Accordingly, the strong national identification can be an antecedent of a perceived threat coming from external groups, but also a consequence of the threat perception [37]. In any case, we are inclined to accept the theoretical model within which it is postulated that the perception of threat, especially the type of threat that concerns state and national security, significantly contributes to the development and expression of the national identification, i.e. which implies the existence of a strong national emotional attachment [36, 78]. Expressing a strong national emotional attachment in the context of anticipated state and national threat indicates a national cohesion that is characteristic for the personal self-transcendence [79]. Accordingly, apart from the usual agents of socialization, collective memory and historical traumas, the perception of threat that comes from the internal and external enemy can largely transcend the individual identity into national collective and bring conflictive potential to its actualization.

The established structural relation between the ethnic exclusionism (xenophobia and anti-Semitism) and the perception of threat to state and national security is in accordance with the findings of studies in which the concept of the perception of threat is treated as a key explanatory variable in forming and expressing anti-immigrant attitudes, xenophobia and anti-Semitism [74, 75, 57, 80, 81]. We can therefore conclude that the concept of threat perception, especially the threat to state and national security, is the theoretical concept which largely contributes to the understanding of political and psychological dynamics of the nationalistic syndrome. Although the nationalistic syndrome construct is defined in terms of ethnic attitudes and sentiments, this does not mean that it cannot, to a certain degree, indicate the presence of a particular nationalistic ideology, political conservatism, extremism, authoritarian political culture [82, 45, 83, 54] or the presence of psychopathic personality traits.

Testing of gender differences gave the expected results. Even though neither males nor females scored on highest level of NSS-1, males expressed significantly higher tendencies towards nationalistic

syndrome. These results mirror the results obtained in many researches indicating that male respondents are more prone to express aggressiveness than female respondents [84, 85].

In order to further investigate the ideological, political-cultural and psychological background of the nationalistic syndrome, and verify the theoretical sustainability of the structural model, and the reliability of the NSS-1 as a measure, it is necessary to conduct a study on a more representative sample. In its design, the dimensions of political orientations, social capital, authority and conative personality characteristics would be placed in the position of the predictor set of variables. In spite of the possible criticism that the research was carried out on student population, we have constructed a reliable and efficient measure of the nationalistic syndrome that is theoretically based on the threat perception concept. Since the distribution of results on the Nationalistic syndrome scale is not significantly different from the normal distribution, we can conclude that the nationalistic syndrome, measured with NSS-1, does not represent the sociological or political pathological phenomenon significant for the sample of Zagreb students which have participated in this research, especially taking into account that the highest level of the NSS-1 was not recorded. However, this could mean that the student population might have a significant conflict potential, not directly connected to the nationalistic syndrome, which, due to actual or imagined perception of a national threat, could lead to interethnic conflicts, xenophobia, political paranoia, collective narcissism and conspiracy.

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