KEY FACTORS DETERMINING INDOOR AIR PM\textsubscript{10} CONCENTRATIONS IN NATURALLY VENTILATED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BELGRADE, SERBIA

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Abstract

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is rated as a serious public health issue. Knowing children are accounted as more vulnerable to environmental health hazards, data are needed on air quality in schools.

Methods. A project was conducted from 2007 until 2009 (SEARCH, School Environment and Respiratory Health of Children), aiming to verify links between IAQ and children’s respiratory health. Study was conducted in ten primary schools on 735 children, in 44 classrooms. Children were randomly selected. Research tools and indicators used for children’s exposure to school environment were indoor and outdoor pollutants, two standardized questionnaires for school and classroom characteristics. In both classroom air and ambient air in front of them we measured, during a 5-day exposure period for continuous 24h measuring: carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, indoor air temperature, relative humidity, and PM\textsubscript{10} during classes.

Results. PM\textsubscript{10} concentrations were significantly more frequent in an interval of \(\geq\)80.1 µg/m\(^3\), that is, in the interval above 50 µg/m\(^3\). Mean PM\textsubscript{10} value was 82.2±42.43 µg/m\(^3\), ranging from 32.00µg/m\(^3\) to 197.00µg/m\(^3\).

Conclusion. The increase of outdoor PM\textsubscript{10} concentration significantly affects the increase of indoor PM\textsubscript{10}. A statistically significant difference exists for average IAQ PM\textsubscript{10} concentrations vs. indicators of indoor thermal comfort zone (p<0.0001); they are lower in the classrooms with indicators within the comfort zone. Moreover, dominant factors for the increase of PM\textsubscript{10} are: high occupancy rate in the classroom (~2m\(^2\) of space per child), high relative humidity (>75%), and indoor temperature beyond 23 °C, as well as bad ventilation habits (keeping windows shut most of the time).

Keywords: indoor air quality, classrooms, particulate matter, PM\textsubscript{10}, primary schools, exposure, Serbia

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1 INTRODUCTION

The quality of indoor air of homes, offices, or other public or private dwellings could be accounted as one of the essential determinants of a healthy life and wellbeing of each individual (1). School indoor air quality (IAQ) is expected to have a key role in the assessment of children’s personal exposure to air pollution, concerning the fact that they spend at least a third of their time inside school buildings, approximately 7 hours a day (2-5). Children are particularly vulnerable to all types of pollutants, because their breathing and metabolic rates are high. In a school, they have much less floor space than adults working in a typical office. Their breathing zone tends to be closer to pollutant sources, such as a new carpet, and less likely to be well ventilated, as it is below the window level. The immune system of young children is yet immature, and exposure to pollutants can mean allergic reactions or ill health (6).

Poor indoor environment in schools may be attributed to three primary causes: inexistence or inadequate operation and maintenance of ventilation systems, infrequent and unthoroughly cleaned indoor surfaces, and a large number of students in relation to room area and volume, with constant re-suspension of particles from the surface (1).

Furthermore, IAQ can be attributed to various phases of the building process, including poor site selection, choice of materials, roof design, poor construction quality, improper installation, or any number or combination of these factors (7). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to provide good IAQ in classrooms, to help minimize these effects (8, 9). Sources of IA (indoor air) pollution could be: furnishings, IT equipment, bio-effluents, and external pollutants, such as nitrogen-dioxide and carbon-monoxide (3, 10-12). In the indoor environment, in which people spend most of their time, both indoor and outdoor sources contribute to PM levels.

Indoor PM is affected by ambient concentrations, air exchange rates, penetration factors, as well as deposition and re-suspension mechanisms. In this complex microenvironment, activities such as cleaning, walking, playing, and, particularly, smoking cause the formation of PM in indoor air (13,14).

The main objective of this paper was to study the difference of PM$_{10}$ concentration values, sampled both inside classrooms of ten Belgrade primary schools and in ambient air in front of them, and relate it to different classroom and school characteristics, using SEARCH Project methodology. A specific objective was to study the difference of concentration of the PM$_{10}$ measurements inside and outside the chosen classrooms. In addition, we aimed to correlate a specific quantitative indicator of the thermal comfort zone, as given by the ASHRAE Standards (4), that is, space occupancy (<2m$^2$ of indoor space per child, not suitable), to the measured values of indoor PM$_{10}$.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sampling Site Description

The cross-sectional SEARCH (School Environment and Respiratory Health in Children) study has involved 6 European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, and Italy). In Serbia, the research was undertaken in the capital city of Belgrade. The project has defined that a sample of 10 schools per country shall be enough to get a clear picture on the level of indoor exposure of children in primary schools. They were chosen (sampled) to be with heterogeneous characteristics. Primarily, schools were grouped by their location, i.e. the level of their exposure to potential sources of air pollution in their vicinity (be it traffic or industrial facility), as suburb schools, schools in broader urban area, and downtown ones, shown in Table 1 (15). As for the vicinity of busy traffic, it can be easily comprehended by consulting the GIS map of their address, together with traffic characterisation (Figure 1). The criterion for the choice of a classroom was its orientation, either towards the street or to the school yard.

![GIS map of 10 schools' geographic distribution on the Belgrade City map](image)
windows. Measuring instruments were looked after by the teachers (indoor) and authors who were mostly present in the school to check upon the equipment. The following measurements took place in the chosen classrooms: combination of diffuse sampling during a 4-day exposure period for formaldehyde (HCHO), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), BTX, and continuous 24h measuring for carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO2) and PM$_{10}$, during school hours. Air temperature and relative humidity were measured as well. Parallel to these IAQ monitoring activities, outdoor air quality was followed for the same specific pollutants, close to school building (selected classroom). Besides air sampling procedures, the study protocol included two standardized questionnaires, namely: for school characteristics (filled in by the school administrator); for classroom characteristics (filled in by the teacher holding classes in it).

### Table 1. Characteristics of sampling sites.

| School name          | School code | Spatial characteristics of the surroundings                                                                 | GIS coordinates |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| “Aca Milosavljevic”  | 1           | Suburb Rušanj village, in the valley downhill the regional highway;                                          | 44°41'01,10“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°26'20,86“ E  |
| “Kosta Abrašević”   | 2           | Suburb Resnik, residential area, trees in between the street and school                                      | 44°52'20,13“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°27'18,7“ E   |
| “Nikola Tesla”      | 3           | Rakovica, suburban municipality, ex-industrial zone, ordinary urban traffic mode                             | 44°42'33,95“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°27'06,52“ E  |
| “I. G. Kovačić”     | 4           | Broad city centre, isolated from dense traffic, residential area;                                           | 44°49'18,19“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°24'15,75“ E  |
| “Skadarlija”        | 5           | Downtown, high density traffic, backyard towards pedestrian zone, bus stop in front                         | 44°44'30,27“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°25'44,89“ E  |
| “Stevan Sremac”     | 6           | Borča III, urbanized suburb, with no heavy traffic                                                        | 44°48'17,27“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°29'01,08“ E  |
| “Drinka Pavlović”   | 7           | Downtown, close to two busy streets, 1 tunnel                                                              | 44°48'16,20“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°27'43,91“ E  |
| “Petar Petrović Njegoš” | 8       | Downtown, high traffic density                                                                             | 44°48'21,72“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°27'21,81“ E  |
| “Radojka Lakić”     | 9           | Squeezed between two streets with high density traffic (lots of heavy traffic), downtown, next to the Central Rail Station | 44°49'06,12“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°27'49,41“ E  |
| “Ivan Gundulić”      | 10          | New Belgrade, broader urban zone, frequent traffic                                                          | 44°48'48,32“ N  |
|                      |             |                                                                                                             | 20°27'54,66“ E  |

### 2.2 Monitoring Campaign

For both indoor and ambient air PM10 sampling, a portable HAZ-DUST EPAM-5000 particulate monitor (Ambient Portable Direct Reading Aerosol Monitor for Measuring Lung Damaging Airborne Particles) was used. It uses light scattering to measure particle concentration and provide real-time determinations and data recordings of airborne particle concentration in mg/m$^3$. By the model specification, its accuracy is ±10% to filter gravimetric SAE fine test dust; sensing range: 0.001-20.0 mg/m$^3$ or optional 0.01-2000 mg/m$^3$; particle size range is .1-100 µm, and precision ±.003 mg/m$^3$ (3 µg/m$^3$) (16). For indoor air monitoring, it was positioned in classrooms, at 1.5 m height, away from the walls, to prevent influence of chipping. The monitor was positioned outside of the school building, in front of the indicated classroom, for ambient air PM$_{10}$ sampling. Monitoring lasted for one whole working week, in both school shifts, while the children were present indoors, only. Monitoring lasted for 4 days during heating season in February 2008, simultaneously with the procedures undertaken in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovakia. During each of the 4 measuring days, authors would fill in the checklist of the questionnaire for the classrooms, with details on the presence of pupils, and conditions concerning natural ventilation through the windows. Measuring instruments were looked after by the teachers (indoor) and authors who were mostly present in the school to check upon the equipment. The following measurements took place in the chosen classrooms: combination of diffuse sampling during a 4-day exposure period for formaldehyde (HCHO), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), BTX, and continuous 24h measuring for carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO2) and PM$_{10}$, during school hours. Air temperature and relative humidity were measured as well. Parallel to these IAQ monitoring activities, outdoor air quality was followed for the same specific pollutants, close to school building (selected classroom). Besides air sampling procedures, the study protocol included two standardized questionnaires, namely: for school characteristics (filled in by the school administrator); for classroom characteristics (filled in by the teacher holding classes in it).

### 2.3 Statistical Methodology

Simple descriptive statistics, such as mean ± standard deviation, was used for continuous variables, IAQ and OAQ PM$_{10}$, the number and % of IAQ interval distributions, by schools and schools' position, while numbers (percentages) were used for categorical variables. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check if IAQ and OAQ PM$_{10}$
had a normal distribution. Quantitative variables were compared using ANOVA F test, and categorical variables were compared using contingency tables and Chi-Square or Kruskal Wallis test. Chi-square test was used to compare IAQ PM\textsubscript{10} between groups - schools or schools’ position. For correlations between variables, we used Pearson Correlation for the linear relationship between two variables, by schools. A P-value less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Geographic Positions of Schools

Table 2 shows comparative values of IAQ PM\textsubscript{10} and OAQ PM\textsubscript{10} by groups of schools. Both indoor and outdoor PM\textsubscript{10} measured values are significantly higher in suburban schools than in those located in the broader urban zone: (for PM\textsubscript{10} IAQ: K-W test=107.86, p<0.0001; PM\textsubscript{10} OAQ: K-W test=39.43, p<0.0001). A similar level of significance appears when correlating values measured in suburban schools, with the values in schools located in the strictly urban zone: (K-W test=93.01; p<0.0001), and for PM\textsubscript{10} OAQ, (K-W test=27.74; p<0.0001).

Indoor PM\textsubscript{10} concentrations are significantly lower in schools located within a broad urban zone, when correlated to ones in a strictly urban zone, i.e.downtown (K-W test=12.943, p<0.0001). On the other hand, it does not count in the case of outdoor PM\textsubscript{10} values (K-W test=2.228, p=0.135). PM\textsubscript{10} IAQ measured values are significantly highest in suburban schools, (K-W test=133.454, p<0.0001), together with PM\textsubscript{10} OAQ, (K-W test=69.86, p<0.0001).

Among schools, a statistically significant difference is proved for the distribution of IAQ PM\textsubscript{10} concentration (p<0.0001). School 4 has significantly higher frequency of measured values IAQ PM\textsubscript{10} in the range lower than 50 g/m\textsuperscript{3}. On the other hand, schools No. 1, 2, 3 and 8 had highest average values, and in all of them each of measured indoor concentrations was in the interval beyond 50 µg/m\textsuperscript{3} (Table 3).

### Table 2. IAQ and OAQ PM\textsubscript{10} concentration related to school’s geographic positions (µg/m\textsuperscript{3}).

| Type of schools by location | No. of exposed children | Mean | SD  | 95% Cor Mean | Median/Range | Min | Max |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|------|-----|-------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| **PM\textsubscript{10} IAQ** |                         |      |     |             |              |     |     |
| Suburb schools             | 244                     | 109.18 | 47.66 | 103.17 | 115.19 | 96/164 | 33 | 197 |
| Schools in broader urban area | 220                   | 66.08  | 37.36 | 61.12 | 71.05  | 53/126 | 32 | 158 |
| Downtown                   | 271                     | 71.09  | 26.90 | 67.88 | 74.31  | 70/79  | 32 | 111 |
| Total                      | 735                     | 82.24  | 42.43 | 79.17 | 85.31  | 70/165 | 32 | 197 |
| **PM\textsubscript{10} OAQ** |                         |      |     |             |              |     |     |
| Suburb schools             | 244                     | 153.90 | 130.39 | 137.46 | 170.34 | 116/515 | 34 | 549 |
| Schools in broader urban area | 220                   | 83.46  | 55.77 | 76.05 | 90.87  | 55/168 | 22 | 190 |
| Downtown                   | 271                     | 77.30  | 28.53 | 73.89 | 80.72  | 80/89  | 30 | 119 |
| Total                      | 735                     | 104.57 | 89.85 | 98.07 | 111.08 | 82/527 | 22 | 549 |

### Table 3. Interval distribution IAQ PM\textsubscript{10} Concentration >50 or ≤49.9 µg/m\textsuperscript{3} by schools

| PM\textsubscript{10} ranges | School 1 | School 2 | School 3 | School 4 | School 5 | School 6 | School 7 | School 8 | School 9 | School 10 |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| ≤49.9 µg/m\textsuperscript{3} | 0.0       | 0.0      | 0.0      | 67.2     | 39.7     | 23.4     | 32.1     | 0.0      | 57.8     | 37.8      |
| >50 µg/m\textsuperscript{3}  | 100.0     | 100.0    | 100.0    | 32.8     | 60.3     | 76.6     | 67%      | 100.0    | 42.2     | 62.2      |
The following Table 4 presents indoor PM$_{10}$ mean concentrations (μg/m$^3$), standard deviation, median and range. The maximum concentration values of PM$_{10}$ (162.12±41.93 μg/m$^3$) was registered in school No. 2, while a significantly lower concentration value of PM$_{10}$ (44.72±12.48 μg/m$^3$) was at school 4 (p<0.001), and its value is below 50 μg/m$^3$.

Ambient air mean concentration of PM$_{10}$ (μg/m$^3$), together with standard deviation, median and range by groups and schools, is given in Table 5. The maximum concentration values of PM$_{10}$ in ambient air (320.82±137.79 μg/m$^3$) were in front of a suburban school No.2, while significantly lower concentration values of PM$_{10}$ OAQ (38.33±9.65 μg/m$^3$) were outside school 6, located in the broad urban area, slightly hidden away from frequent traffic flow (p<0.01), with a value below 50 μg/m$^3$. The highest average values of both IAQ PM$_{10}$ and OAQ PM$_{10}$ concentration are accounted to school 2 (suburb schools).

### Table 4. IAQ PM$_{10}$ (μg/m$^3$) concentration by schools.

| School Groups   | School              | PM$_{10}$ (μg/m$^3$) | IAQ    | CI 95%   | Median | Range |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|
|                 |                     | Mean     | SD     | Lower   | Upper  |       |
| Suburban        | „A. Milosavljevic“   | 109.16   | 18.440 | 105.48  | 112.84 | 105.00| 46.00 |
|                 | „K. Abrasevic“       | 162.12   | 41.926 | 151.97  | 172.27 | 183.00| 106.00|
|                 | „S. Sremac“          | 62.47    | 23.592 | 57.11   | 67.82  | 52.00 | 63.00 |
| Broad urban area| „Nikola Tesla“       | 99.70    | 45.620 | 89.35   | 110.06 | 72.00 | 107.00|
|                 | „I. G. Kovacic“      | 44.72    | 12.479 | 41.53   | 47.92  | 38.00 | 30.00 |
|                 | „Ivan Gundulic“      | 50.40    | 6.224  | 49.03   | 51.77  | 53.00 | 16.00 |
| Downtown        | „Skadarlija“         | 58.24    | 18.276 | 54.12   | 62.36  | 70.00 | 46.00 |
|                 | „D. Pavlovic“        | 65.68    | 26.899 | 58.26   | 73.09  | 51.00 | 63.00 |
|                 | „P. P. Njegos“       | 103.87   | 8.523  | 101.92  | 105.82 | 110.00| 18.00 |
|                 | „R. Lakic“           | 52.31    | 11.222 | 49.51   | 55.12  | 44.00 | 26.00 |

### Table 5. Outdoor PM$_{10}$ (μg/m$^3$) concentration by schools.

| School Groups   | School              | PM$_{10}$ (μg/m$^3$) | OAQ     | CI 95%   | Median | Range |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
|                 |                     | Mean     | SD     | Lower   | Upper  |       |
| Suburban        | „A. Milosavljevic“   | 105.84   | 26.945 | 100.46  | 111.21 | 106.00| 78.00 |
|                 | „K. Abrasevic“       | 320.82   | 137.797| 287.47  | 354.18 | 309.00| 380.00|
|                 | „S. Sremac“          | 68.27    | 36.277 | 60.04   | 76.51  | 41.00 | 85.00 |
| Broad urban area| „Nikola Tesla“       | 134.00   | 55.399 | 121.43  | 146.57 | 141.00| 135.00|
|                 | „I. G. Kovacic“      | 80.33    | 35.626 | 71.20   | 89.45  | 75.00 | 84.00 |
|                 | „Ivan Gundulic“      | 38.33    | 9.648  | 36.21   | 40.45  | 42.00 | 26.00 |
| Downtown        | „Skadarlija“         | 83.64    | 30.003 | 76.88   | 90.41  | 96.00 | 87.00 |
|                 | „D. Pavlovic“        | 69.85    | 31.935 | 61.05   | 78.65  | 52.00 | 83.00 |
|                 | „P. P. Njegos“       | 98.00    | 13.862 | 94.83   | 101.17 | 101.00| 46.00 |
|                 | „R. Lakic“           | 51.17    | 3.444  | 50.31   | 52.03  | 51.00 | 9.00  |
Descriptive statistical analysis of the data for particulate matter mass concentrations (PM$_{10}$) measured outdoors and in the classrooms, by schools is given in Table 6. None of the 10 schools satisfies the World Health Organization (WHO) standard for PM$_{10}$ annual average of 20 µg/m$^3$ (17, 18). However, they meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (12) and WHO standards for PM$_{10}$ 24-hour average, which have been set at 150 µg/m$^3$ and 50 µg/m$^3$, respectively (19).

Table 7 presents the distribution of the occupancy rate (according to ASHRAE) for each school, in m$^2$ per present child in the indicated classroom. Values are given as the percentage of children exposed to overcrowdedness (<2m$^2$/per child), or to convenient spatial conditions (>2m$^2$/per child). Indicators of crowdedness are the number of children in the classroom (less/more than 20), and space available in the classroom, per one child, of less/more than 2m$^2$ (4). Statistically significance is proven for the distribution of occupancy rate (m$^2$/per child), for each school, $\chi^2=340.70$, p<0.0001.

### Table 6. Correlations between IAQ and OAQ by school (signif.)

| School       | PM$_{10}$ outdoor median (µg/m$^3$) | PM$_{10}$ indoor median (µg/m$^3$) | R     | P       | N  |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|----|
| „A.Milosavljevic“ | 106.00 | 105.00 | 0.799 | 0.000 | 99 |
| „K.Abrasevic“     | 309.00 | 183.00 | 0.756 | 0.000 | 68 |
| „N.Tesla“       | 141.00 | 72.00  | 0.457 | 0.000 | 77 |
| „I.G.Kovacic“   | 75.00  | 38.00  | 0.956 | 0.000 | 61 |
| „Skadarlija“    | 96.00  | 70.00  | 0.598 | 0.000 | 78 |
| „S.Sremac“      | 41.00  | 52.00  | 0.744 | 0.000 | 77 |
| „D.Pavlovic“    | 52.00  | 51.00  | 0.937 | 0.000 | 53 |
| „P.P.Njegos“    | 101.00 | 110.00 | 0.725 | 0.000 | 76 |
| „R.Lakic“       | 51.00  | 44.00  | 0.160 | 0.207 | 65 |
| „I.Gundulic“    | 42.00  | 53.00  | 0.453 | 0.000 | 82 |

### Table 7. Child occupancy rate per school distribution (m$^2$/per child) vs. PM$_{10}$ values (µg/m$^3$), by schools.

| School No. | School name | <2 m$^2$/child | >2 m$^2$/child | IAQ PM$_{10}$ mean |
|------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1          | „A.Milosavljevic“ | 77.8           | 22.2           | 109.16           |
| 2          | „K.Abrasevic“   | /              | 100            | 162.12           |
| 3          | „N.Tesla“      | /              | 100            | 99.70            |
| 4          | „I.G.Kovacic“   | 16.4           | 83.6           | 44.72            |
| 5          | „Skadarlija“    | 38.6           | 61.4           | 58.24            |
| 6          | „S.Sremac“      | /              | 100            | 62.47            |
| 7          | „D.Pavlovic“    | /              | 100            | 65.68            |
| 8          | „P.P.Njegos“    | 47.4           | 52.6           | 103.87           |
| 9          | „R.Lakic“       | /              | 100            | 52.31            |
| 10         | „I.Gundulic“    | /              | 100            | 50.40            |

### DISCUSSION

As an outcome of our study, when differentiating between OAQ PM10 and IAQ PM10 concentration values in relation to some classroom and school characteristics, we singled out the following moments: the highest average values of IAQ PM10 and OAQ PM10 concentration were measured in the school No. 2 (suburb school), while only in one school measured values IAQ PM10 were below 50 µg/m$^3$, that is in the school No. 4. The school No. 10, located in New Belgrade, in a broader urban zone with frequent traffic, had PM10 outdoor mean value below 50 µg/m$^3$, which could be explained with the terrain’s topography. New Belgrade is, in geographical means, a flat terrain, with broad boulevards and widely spread buildings, belonging to the geographical entity of the Pannonian plain, enabling the build-up of high ambient air concentrations of traffic-related pollutants. This particular school is located in a residential block, built in the 1960s. School building is circled by greenery and residential buildings, acting as
a physical barrier to three streets with very busy traffic, of which one is the E-75 highway. It was, moreover, reported by the City of Belgrade Institute of Public Health, that in 2008, a series of days in a row were characterized with SE (south-east) wind ('Košava'), with episodes of wind speed reaching 12m/s, which caused a decrease of concentration of all ambient air pollutants measured by this institution (20).

A statistically significant correlation exists between PM10 indoor and outdoor concentration for each school (p<0.0001), except for the school No. 9, ‘Radojka Lakic’ (p=0.207), although it is located in a strictly urban zone, close to the juncture of two streets with very busy traffic. The increase of outdoor PM10 concentration is significantly correlated to the increase of indoor PM10 values (except for the school No. 9).

Considering this school, located close to the heavy traffic and Central rail station, with no statistical significance between indoor and outdoor measurement, we can conclude that, in this case, indoor concentration could be influenced by activities and movements of occupants, allowing re-suspension of previously deposited particles or their delayed deposition or settling. Fromme et al. found an average indoor particulate matter concentration higher than corresponding outdoor level in a German primary school (21). Similar was confirmed in a Belgian survey (22). Oeder et al. detected indoor PM10 concentration even 5-fold higher than outdoor ones in six schools in Munich (23). In addition, the presence of children, together with their movements, could affect indoor PM levels through the interception of personal clouds (primarily comprising of course particles), recorded by sampling devices (1).

In the school No. 1, which is both in the suburb and has all its measured values of IAQ PM10 beyond 50 µg/m³, with an average PM10 IAQ of 109.16±18.44 µg/m³, a significantly higher number of children is exposed to classroom indoor environment in a space with less than 2 m² per child. Concerning the fact that there is no busy traffic close to the school, high occupancy rate, together with bad ventilation habits and cleaning practice could be the reason for such results. This may be due to large number of students in relation to the room area and volume, whose movements cause re-suspension of settled particles (24).

In the school No. 8, 47.4% of its pupils have less than 2 m² per child, while all measured IAQ PM10 were above 50 µg/m³, in which case the high occupancy rate could be accounted for one of the reasons for it. Some authors have determined that re-suspension is a significant factor affecting indoor particle concentration with suspension rates increasing with the particle size (25).

The school No. 4 is worth mentioning, with only its 16.4% pupils residing in the space with <2 m² per child, located in a broad urban zone of the city. IAQ PM10 values were below 50 µg/m³, with the average PM10 IAQ concentration being the lowest compared to other schools, 44.72±12.48 µg/m³.

On the contrary, the school No. 3 has 100% PM10 IAQ measurements in space with >2 m² per child, located in a broader urban zone, with all measured values of IAQ PM10 beyond 50 µg/m³. The average indoor PM10 concentration in it is 99.70±45.62 µg/m³. This school is cleaned mostly with the broom, and combined with the use of chemicals. This cleaning practice, being predominant as a cleaning pattern in this school, obviously facilitates the process of particle re-suspension (24).

As one of the defined elements of the thermal comfort zone, occupancy rate was chosen to be one of the key indicators in this study, together with CO2 indoor concentration, relative humidity, and classroom air temperature. Statistically significant smaller chances exist for formaldehyde indoor concentrations to be below 1.01 mg/m³ in classrooms with more than 2 m² of space per child. For indoor CO2 concentration to increase above 1000 ppm, the number of children in the classroom above 20 (N>20) is a statistically significant predictor. Namely, chances for CO2 concentrations to be higher than 1000 ppm are 3.6-fold bigger in classrooms hosting more than 20 children. For indoor (classroom) air temperature within a comfort zone, a statistically significant predictor is classroom crowdedness, i.e. space in square meters per child. In fact, chances for indoor temperature to be within the comfort zone are less likely to occur in classrooms with less than 2 m² of space per child (4). For indoor values of relative air humidity, a statistically significant predictor is classroom crowdedness, i.e. space in square meters per child. In other words, chances for this parameter to be within the comfort zone are close to 18-fold higher in classrooms hosting less than 20 children. Chances for PM10 to be below 50µg/m³ are smaller, with high statistical significance, in classrooms hosting more than 20 children, having a blackboard, with chalk to write on.

The average indoor PM10 concentrations are lower in the classrooms where indicators of thermal comfort zone are satisfactory. In the school No. 4, the average indoor PM10 concentration is lower in classrooms with achieved standards for indoor comfort zone indicators, with high statistical significance Z - test=6.540, p<0.0001, while in the schools No. 5 (Z=0.105, p=0.916), No. 8 (Z=1.614, p=0.107) and No. 10 (Z=0.948, p=0.343) it is lower, but with no such high significance. Significantly highest mean values of IAQ PM10 concentration was measured in the schools 1, 2, 3 and 8, where comfort zone was not achieved (p<0.001).
Values of classroom indoor PM10 concentrations, from measurements in similar studies in different countries, during the heating season, are close to the values reported in this study in Serbia: in three schools in Portugal, PM10 average concentrations ranged from 30 to 146 µg/m³; in a German study implemented in 64 urban and rural schools, it was 105 µg/m³ (16.3-313.2 µg/m³), while in HESE study, IAQ was monitored in 21 schools, both urban and rural, with the average PM10 concentration 112 µg/m³ (91-133 µg/m³) (1, 10, 26).

In most of the SEARCH1 countries, ambient PM10 concentrations were significantly increased in school zones close to frequent traffic streets, compared to those located further from such sources of air pollution. On the other hand, this difference in the traffic frequency of streets surrounding schools, has not significantly influence IAQ PM10 concentrations measured in classrooms, pointing that key sources of this pollutant are mainly in classrooms themselves (15). In the case of Belgrade study, as a part of the mentioned research, 36.2% of pupils study in classrooms with I/O PM10 ratio beyond 1.0, where the key source of PM10 is within the room; 3.7% is in classrooms with the ratio equal to 1.0., while 60.1% attend classes in rooms with the ratio below 1.0, where the source of a particulate matter is in ambient air, mostly from traffic in the vicinity of school buildings.

Although the city is located close to two coal burning power plants (Obrenovac, Kolubara), traffic is seen as the most powerful source of air pollution. Air back trajectories analysis showed that the prevalence of stagnant or week flow regimes (calm conditions) favours the suspension and accumulation of particles produced locally, resulting at the elevation of suspended particles levels (20, 27).

If we compare the location of Belgrade, on the banks of Sava River, with another region on its banks in Zasavje Region in Slovenia, with PM10 ambient air concentration, we spot some differences. Firstly, it is an issue of topography, as Zasavje is surrounded by steep hilly terrain, while Belgrade spreads in parts of the Pannonian Plain. Secondly, sources of air pollution are different in these two cases. In Zasavje, it is the case of industrial PM10 emissions (36.3µg/m³), while in SEARCH1 Belgrade study, traffic was attributed as the key source for high PM10 levels (104.7 µg/m³) (15, 28).

5 CONCLUSIONS

The majority of surveyed children is exposed to high indoor PM10 concentrations (560/735; 76.2%). Maximum PM10 values were measured in suburban schools, away from busy traffic. The increase of outdoor PM10 concentration significantly affects the increase of indoor PM10 values. Concerning an insufficient achievement of standards for indicators of indoor thermal comfort zone, dominant factors for the increase of PM10 are: high occupancy rate in the classrooms (<2 m² of space per child), high relative humidity (>75%) and indoor temperature beyond 23ºC; bad ventilation habits (keeping windows shut most of the time).

As the authors suggest, measures for the improvement of conditions in classrooms are as follows: schools should be built in places not directly affected by heavy traffic or industry, or any other polluting establishments in the neighbourhood; crowdedness should be avoided in the classrooms; appropriate ventilation regime of the classrooms should be introduced in order to provide good indoor air quality during the whole period of teaching hours, especially in classrooms directed towards crowded streets with presumably high ambient air pollution; in schools being ventilated only through natural means, but located close to traffic-induced air pollution, installing air-conditioning units should be taken into consideration. Cleaning practices should be standardized.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that no conflicts of interest exist.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

In the case of the Republic of Serbia, if there is no direct contact with body fluids, tissues, personal contact concerning individual dignity, through questionnaires, researchers are not required to apply for the permission to research at the Ethical Committee. This study was not implemented on individual subjects, but was concerned only with the positioning of the standardized air quality measuring equipment in the classrooms and outside the same classrooms, for which, the REC project office had direct communication with school directors. Especially, when the moment of the equipment turning on/off was performed while classrooms were empty, with no physical contact with the pupils whatsoever.
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