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# EXPLORING THIRD YEAR ENGLISH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ONLINE LEARNING DURING POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract:** *COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted every sector of the world, particularly education. As a result, many schools have shifted to online learning. This study aims to explore how learners feel about online learning during the post-COVID-19 pandemic. A questionnaire was distributed to third-year English students to investigate their perceptions of online learning during this time. The findings of this research indicate that most learners have negative attitudes towards online learning during post-COVID-19 and prefer traditional teaching methods. They believe that face-to-face interaction is more effective for students, and that online learning is not as convenient or successful.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, online learning, online learning during Covid-19, teaching during Covid-19, students' perceptions.

## 1. Introduction

In an unprecedented turn of event, the sudden spread of Covid-19 had impacted the world negatively, in which the world health organization was obliged to declare it a pandemic in March 2020. The pandemic's devastating spread has caused widespread fear around the world. Consequently, to stop the virus from spreading, many countries throughout the world, including Algeria, have declared a state of emergency. The proliferation of Covid-19 resulted in many cases throughout numerous areas, including the economic, socio-cultural, commercial, and educational sector.

In a short period of time, Covid-19 has changed the way students are educated throughout the world (Chung, Subramaniam, & amp; Dass, 2020). Thousands of educational institutions, including Algerian universities and institutions, believe that online learning mode may be conveniently accessed by students or professors without the need to face-to-face interactions (Sari, 2020). Therefore, the Algerian Ministry of Education pushed instructors to use blended learning to minimize the spread of the disease and to allow students to learn from home using digital technology. Teaching techniques are implemented in an online mode in which a platform is designed for both teachers and students at all levels in order to post lessons and assignments there by teachers, also face-to-face sessions are shifted into the online mode where teachers can use either Google meet or zoom to conduct online classes with their teachers. Algerian universities have been closed, and online learning has become the norm for all topics and courses. This online learning wave is a relatively new trend; both teacher and student rely on this new technique, at the current state which requires effective teaching and establishing a new teaching-learning methodology. It is important to know the perspectives of both learners and teachers, as well as to investigate learners' attitudes towards this unique teaching methodology.

## 2. Literature Review

Humanity has been exposed to many health crises, which in turn led to many losses and general imbalance, which among; Covid-19 pandemic, the new virus has affected all different sectors of life, especially, educational sector, where all schools and universities have been closed to prevent the spread of the virus, and the process of teaching-learning has been

shifted from face-to-face mode into an online one. In the following section, previous researches have been demonstrated on online learning conducted during the Covid-19 crisis, as well as some researches related to the challenges of online learning, in addition to other studies that dealt with perceptions of learners and teachers towards online learning during this pandemic. During the pandemic, the transition to online learning occurred quickly, researchers conducted several studies about various strategies and techniques that they used for teaching online (Benraghda, 2024). There is a need to learn more about the students' perspectives concerning online learning and how it is applied in the teaching-learning process (Benraghda, Mohd Radzuan & Lardhi, 2022), this will ensure a successful online learning process, if the students' perspectives of online learning were not taken into consideration, that will lead to a poor learning experience. Besides that, understanding the perspectives of students will ensure analyzing the students' needs in the context of online learning. As a result, this study aim is to investigate the perceptions of third-year English students of Bordj Bou Arreridj University towards online learning during post-Covid pandemic.

### **2.1. Definition of learning:**

Learning is a transformative process in which the understanding of new information can lead to a change in a person's behavior or perception of the world around them. Learning is a process that mainly leads to change, which happens based on experience and enhances the ability for better performance and learning (Ambrose et al, 2010). Thus, learning can be described as a process of acquiring information and getting knowledge about certain topics, fields, aspects, and skills. Learning is the process of obtaining, acquiring knowledge about a specific subject or skill through study, experience, and instruction. (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023).

Moreover, some authors did define learning, for instance, (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2023) described learning as the process through which individuals learn varied habits, knowledge, and attitudes that are required to satisfy the general demands of life. While Piaget claims that as a person learns, he or she is developing a new experience of reality, according to Moerland, Broekens, Plaat, and Jonker (2023), learning is the process of changing behavior through practice or training. Vygotsky believes that learning is a social process and the source of human intellect. Therefore, learning can be defined as the general process of acquiring, understanding new information, concepts, attitudes, values, and different skills.

### **Types of learning**

In general, there are three types of learning, the first one is face to face learning, which is almost the usual type before the pandemic, the second type is online learning which is currently most used during covid-19, and the third one called blended learning.

#### **Face- to- Face Learning:**

Is a traditional type, in which, teachers and lecturers present their lessons and lectures in the classroom in front of their students in a set of time.

In face-to-face learning, the teacher provides his/her students with more detailed information about the subject presented (Top Hat Glossary, 2019). This teaching/ learning strategy emphasizes eye contact and interaction in the classroom as a means of an effective teaching process.

#### **Online Learning:**

Is a different method of learning, in which, students can learn in a completely online environment. It is a technique that enables learners from various places to learn flexibly and interact with academic institutions in order to get a degree or certificate.

Online learning is defined as a type of education that uses electronic methods to interact, receive information, and learn new skills. As it is described as an educational system to

provide educational programs for learners at anytime and anywhere. According to (Wong, 2023) online learning is the process of receiving information using modern technologies for the purpose of learning, and knowledge acquiring.

### **Blended Learning:**

Blended Learning, also known as hybrid learning, is a method of education that generally combines online learning and face-to-face learning, according to Collis and Moonen (2001); it is an integration of face-to-face and online learning, in which the teaching-learning process occurs in both classroom and online environment. That is, learners may study through online classes at times and in classrooms at other times. So, it can be said that blended learning includes a class teaching-learning and online courses as well as certain assignments and activities that shall be done outside of the classroom. Therefore, Blended learning focuses on learning through self-directed learning activities. (Ruchan & Adem, 2018).

### **Online learning during Covid-19**

Today's teaching practices, particularly during the Covid-19 outbreak, obliged teachers and learners to shift to online learning mode and conduct online classes from home using the appropriate technology tools. That means tasks, presentations, assignments, and assessments are needed to be performed via online. Implementing online learning during a pandemic can be concluded that the whole world changed the way of the teaching-learning process into online mode using online tools as necessary materials. Because the only choice that seems to be appropriate during this pandemic is online learning, since it is time-saving, and does not require any physical connection. On the other hand, it is not always effective. Especially for universities with little experience of online learning. Furthermore, it is complicated when teachers are unfamiliar with this new method of teaching.

### **2.2. Perceptions of students towards online Learning during the pandemic:**

The perception of students is one of the most important factors in the success of online learning. When students perceive online learning to be beneficial to their learning, they may perform well (Smart & Cappel, 2006). Numerous researches have been conducted in different contexts and different educational levels on students' perceptions towards online learning. Among these studies, a study was conducted in Pakistan on perceptions of students regarding online learning during post-Covid-19, on (May 2020 onwards), at a private medical college, the results revealed that students were more partial to face-to-face learning over online learning since they did not adapt to this new process of learning.

Furthermore, in comparison to laptops and tablets, the focus of this study was primarily on the use of mobile as most used devices among students for online learning. Which indicates that the majority of them used mobile devices, however, this study did not cover the struggles, difficulties that students have faced regarding their experience with online learning, also, the sample was chosen from a particular private medical department. This means that the study's findings cannot be generalized.

Another study by Nambiar (2020) conducted on the impact of online learning during Covid-19 on (June 2020), The main focus of the study was to get a clear understanding and feedback about both students' and teachers' perspectives towards online learning. According to the findings of this study, face-to-face learning is more favorable, regarding the actual presence, and interaction among students and teachers, as well as the general performance of the student. Although it was revealed that online classes were more appropriate because they are time-saving, still students considered them to be less productive and organized in comparison to face- to- face learning. Nevertheless, this study though it did cover almost the important details that could be more beneficial for further research, did not provide some previous studies or articles or other views that did tackle such a topic, as it did not cover definitions of the main words according to some researchers.

Another recent study was conducted by Syauqi, Munadi, and Triyono (2020). This study targeted English students in the Philippines College where it focus the most on their perceptions towards online learning during Covid-19, after having a questionnaire for investigating this research gap, the findings revealed that most of the students were not enthusiastic about online learning, in addition to their negative views towards the tasks and the assignments that were given to them by their lecturers, Moreover, some of them revealed that online learning for them was challenging due to the lack of internet connection because they live in the rural area. However, the findings of this study cannot be generalizable since it was specified for a particular field and particular sample

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants of this research are 102 third-year undergraduate students from the Department of English Language and Literature at Bordj Bou Arerridj University. The aim of the study is to explore their perceptions and experiences of online learning during the pandemic. The students were randomly chosen to be a part of the study.

#### **3.2. Instruments**

The current study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2022/2023. For valid and accurate data, an online questionnaire was designed for third-year English students to answer the first research question.

### **4. Data Collection**

A questionnaire was prepared for third-year English students, to explore their perceptions of online learning during the pandemic, which consists of 16 items. It was delivered online to students, where 102 students had responded. The participants were 102 students who were anonymous and from different groups, it contains 16 questions which are close-ended questions. Each question has a goal; the first question is for the purpose of gathering general information about the students' gender, while the second question investigates the students' access to platforms. The third question investigates two parts; the first one is whether lecturers are conducting online classes or not, and the second part is exploring their opinion about online classes. Whereas the fourth question aims at exploring the students' satisfaction with the technology used for online learning. As for the fifth question, it aims at exploring the students' ability to manage their time for learning online. While the sixth question aims at exploring the extent of cooperation of lecturers during online learning. The seventh question aims to know the most used device for students during learning online. And the eighth question aims at knowing the student's preference between traditional learning and online learning. Questions, nine and ten aim at exploring the possibility to get more information and explanation during online classes. While eleven and twelve were designed to explore the advantages and disadvantages of online learning according to the students. Whereas the thirteenth question was designed to know whether online classes are difficult or not. And the last three questions, aim at exploring whether online learning is motivating and effective or not.

### **5. Data analysis**

This section represents the results that were obtained from the questionnaire, which aims at exploring the perceptions of third year English students towards online learning during the pandemic.



**Table 01: The number of participants towards online learning (by gender):**

Students' gender	Number of participants	Percentage
Male	51	50 %
Female	51	50%

From the table above, it is noticed that the participants who answered the questionnaire were 50% of males and 50% of females. This means that both male students and female students were equally involved in the questionnaire.

## 6. Results

**Table 02: The perceptions of students towards online learning:**

Questions	Yes	No	Yes	No
	(Number of participants)	(Number of participants)	Percentage	Percentage
Do you have access to platform for online learning?	98	4	96.10%	3.90%
Do your lecturers conduct online classes for you?	89	13	88.10%	11.90%
Are you satisfied with the technology you are using for online learning?	13	89	12.70%	87.30%
Can you manage your time while learning online?	17	85	16.70%	83.30%
Do you prefer regular classes than online classes?	97	5	95.10%	4.90%
Can you ask questions and receive a quick response during online activities outside of class?	18	84	17.60%	82.40%
Do you find it difficult to obtain further explanation from your lecturer, during online learning?	89	13	87.30%	12.70%
Do you think that lessons/lectures can be given online without any difficulty?	17	85	16.70%	83.30%
Do you think that learning online is more motivating than a regular class?	10	92	9.80%	90.20%
Would you describe yourself as a successful online learner?	14	88	13.70%	86.30%
Do you think that online learning is effective?	13	89	12.70%	87.30%

As shown in Table 2, several yes and no questions were presented to the students, each response indicate their experiences with online learning during the pandemic. Firstly, regarding access to online learning platforms, the data revealed that 96.10% of the students had access to the platform for online learning, whereas only 3.90% of the participants did not have access to it. This indicates that the majority of students are able to access to the platform. Similarly, it is noticed that 88.10% of the participants reported that their lecturers conduct online classes for them, while 11.90%only were the opposite. And for those who answered with yes, 89.80% of them reported that online classes are more difficult than regular classes, whereas 7.10% of them reported that online classes are easier than regular classes, and only 3% reported that online classes are the same as regular classes. Satisfaction with the use of technology for online learning was obviously low, whereas only 12.70% of the students were satisfied, while the majorities were dissatisfied.

Concerning time management during online learning, the data revealed that the majority of the participants cannot manage their time while learning online, which means that they may get distracted by other things as social media, housework, or other occupations. Yet, 16.70% of them reported that they can manage their time during online learning. Furthermore, 98.10% of the participants expressed their preference towards regular classes rather than online classes claiming that regular learning is more effective and useful than online learning. Additionally, it is noticed that 82.40% of the students cannot ask and receive a quick response during online activities outside of class; this could be due to poor internet connection. However, 17.60% of them can ask and receive response during the online activities. As it is revealed that 87.30% of the students find it challenging to obtain further explanation from lecturers during online sessions, anyway 16.70% of the participants believed that online lessons could be conducted without any difficulty.

Motivational factors have more tendency towards traditional classes, as majority of the participants (90.20%) believed that regular classes are more motivating than online class, However, only 9.80% believed that online classes are motivating. This indicates that either lecturers are not motivating their students during online learning, or learning online was just not effective and useful for students as regular learning. Moreover, only 13.70% perceived themselves as successful online learners, this indicates that the majority of students were not familiar with this new method of learning, and probably it was difficult for them to adapt to this new process of learning. Ultimately, the effectiveness of online learning was perceived to be low, as 87.30% of the participants claimed. This indicates that the majority of students believed that face to face learning is more effective and useful than online learning, due to some reasons as lack of face-to-face interaction, poor internet connection.

**Table 03: Do you think that online classes are?**

Response	Number of participants.	Percentage
a. more difficult than regular classes.	90	89.80%
b. easier than regular classes.	8	7.10 %
c. the same as regular classes.	3	3.00 %

From the Table 3, it is noticed that 88.10% of the participants reported that their lecturers conduct online classes for them, while 11.90% only were the opposite. Concerning those who answered with yes, 89.80% of them reported that online classes are more difficult than regular classes, whereas 7.10% of them reported that online classes are easier than regular classes, and only 3% reported that online classes are the same as regular classes.

**Table 04: Cooperation of lecturers during online learning (How helpful are your lecturers while studying online?)**

Response	Number of participants.	Percentage
a. not all helpful	37	36 %
b. rarely helpful	58	57 %
c. very helpful	7	7 %

As shown in the Table 04, the results indicate that the majority of the participants have all come to an agreement that their lecturers are rarely helpful while studying online. While 36% of them reported that not all of their lecturers are helpful and only 7% reported that their lecturers are very helpful. This could mean that some lecturers are not really familiar with this new method of teaching.

**Table 04: Online learning devices (What device do you use for online learning?)**

Response	Number of participants.	Percentage
a. laptop	49	48 %
b. Smartphone	53	52 %

As shown in the table above, the data obtained revealed that 48% did use laptop for online learning, while 52% used their smart phones for learning online. This means that not all of the students have laptops, they just depend on their smart phones to learn online, and attend online classes.

**Table 05: Advantages of online learning. What are the advantages of online learning?**

Response	Number of participants.	Percentage
a. access to online materials while learning at your own pace	82	80.40 %
b. ability to stay at home	80	78.40 %
c. classes interactively	1	1 %
d. comfortable surrounding	19	18.60 %

As shown in the Table 05, the data obtained, revealed that, 80.40% reported that the advantages of online learning are “access to online materials while learning at your own pace”, however 78.40% have chosen “ability to stay at home”, and 18.60% have chosen “comfortable surrounding” and only 1% have chosen “classes interactively”.

**Table 06: Disadvantages of online learning (What are the disadvantages of online)**

Response	Number of participants.	Percentage
a. lack of interaction with teachers and classmates	90	88.20 %
b. technical problems	77	75.50 %
c. poor learning conditions at home	71	70.60 %
d. lack of self-discipline	74	73.50 %
e. social isolation	1	1 %
f. it is not helpful at all	74	72.50 %

As shown in the Table 06, according to the participants, the disadvantages of online learning 88.20% have chosen “lack of interaction with teachers and classmates”, whereas, 75.50% have chosen “technical problems”, while 73.50% of the participants have chosen “lack of self-discipline”, and 70.60% have chosen “poor learning condition at home”, however, 72.50% have reported that it is not helpful at all, and only 1% have chosen “social isolation.

## 7. Discussion

The data indicate that online learning was perceived negatively in terms of effectiveness, usefulness, interaction, and satisfaction, it was revealed that online classes were reported to be more difficult than regular classes and non-convenient, and less effective in terms of interaction because students preferred to face to face interaction in the classroom, also poor learning conditions at home, technical problems, and lack of self-discipline were found to be essential factors for determining effectiveness, satisfaction, and usefulness with online classes. So mostly, students had negative perceptions towards online learning, which is similar to findings in a study by Nambiar (2020), who found that face-to-face learning was regarded more favorably than online learning regarding the actual presence, and interaction among students and teachers, as well as the general performance of the students. Although it was revealed that online courses were more appropriate because they are time-saving, still

students considered them to be less productive and organized in comparison to face-to-face learning.

Another similar result in a study by Abbasi et al. (2020) revealed that students were more partial to face-to-face learning over online learning since they did not adapt to this new learning process. Furthermore, Sit, Chung, Chow, Wong (2005) and Barrot, Llenares, Del Rosario (2021) found that most of the students were not enthusiastic about online learning, in addition to their negative views towards the tasks and the assignments that were given to them by their lecturers, moreover, some of them revealed that online learning for them was challenging due to the lack of internet connection because they live in the rural area.

## 8. Conclusion

To ensure an effective teaching-learning process, there must be appropriate conditions for both learners and teachers. Over the years, the traditional method of teaching and learning was the only available option in the educational system, but since the start of the pandemic, the way of teaching and learning has been changed into online mode. Throughout the academic year of 2022-2023 the process of teaching and learning in Bordj Bou Arerridj University, English department has been quiet changed into online mode. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the perceptions of lecturers and learners towards online learning during post-Covid-19. The findings of this research revealed that the minority of students showed a positive perception of online learning during the pandemic in terms of usefulness and effectiveness, however, the majority of students agreed that online learning was not effective, that could reflect the belief that teaching must take place in the classroom and require a face-to-face interaction between students and teachers. Ultimately, online learning could be more effective if appropriate materials and fast internet connectivity were available. Still, it can be a helpful option during the pandemic, but it certainly is not as effective as classroom learning.

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# THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ON DEVIANT BEHAVIORS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF FEELING SAFE, ADHERENCE TO REGULATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES.

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates the impact of the school environment on deviant behaviors among students at Arabaji Tayeb High School, Bouinan Municipality, Blida Province. It focuses on how impact of feeling safe, adherence to internal regulations, and management strategies influence such behaviors. The study employs a descriptive methodology, collecting data through observations and interviews with 45 male and female students from various educational levels and specializations during the 2023/2024 academic year. Qualitative data were converted into quantitative data using SPSS version 23, and statistical methods such as frequency distribution and percentage calculations were applied. The results demonstrate that the impact of feeling safe and adherence to internal regulations significantly reduces deviant behaviors. Additionally, effective management strategies, including attention to students' psychological conditions and strict enforcement of regulations, contribute to an improved psychological and behavioral status among students, thereby fostering a more stable and stimulating educational environment.*

**Keywords:** deviant behavior, school deviance, school security, school environment

## 1. Introduction

The issues of security and safety concerning behavioral deviations in Algerian schools are crucial topics that capture the attention of social researchers due to their involvement in breaches of established school rules and norms. This interest is particularly evident in their social and educational dimensions, as many relationships within the school context are experiencing increasing tension, which adversely affects various areas of communication. Studies indicate that adolescents are more prone to exhibiting deviant behaviors, necessitating focused attention during this developmental stage. This phenomenon is a significant concern for families, educators, and the research community (Cioban et al., 2021:10).

Furthermore, the prevalence of individual or collective violence, such as deviant behaviors directed at teachers or students, suggests severe consequences that threaten the overall social fabric. The school, as the second institution in the socialization process following the family, both influences and is influenced by society. It plays a critical role in structuring relationships and ensuring their moral legitimacy. Consequently, specialists and policymakers should address the prevention of deviant behavior among students by systematically organizing and implementing preventive measures. This approach aims to enhance the effectiveness of preventive activities provided by experts in psychological and educational services (Albakova et al., 2020:4086).

Research on behavioral deviations among students has sought to understand the nature and causes of the problem, the key factors contributing to it, and potential solutions. The concept and nature of deviant behavior have been extensively explored in studies by various scholars in the fields of psychology, education, and sociology. Notable contributions include works by Ghazal, N. E. (2017), Al-Latiniya, H. M. A. (2020), Awda, M. S. (2020), Ben Taher, N. (2022), and Abdel-Lawi, M. (2023). A review of the scientific literature reveals that while issues related to deviant behavior among youth have been

adequately covered, there remains a noticeable gap in theoretical and applied research focusing on the prevention of deviant behavior among adolescents within the framework of psychological and educational services in educational institutions.

Our study distinguishes itself by focusing on the fundamental role of the school environment in influencing deviant behaviors. This role is manifested through enabling educational actors to perform their duties effectively, facilitating continuous interaction and communication with students. Such interaction aims to help students achieve self-awareness, psychological and social adaptation, and positive engagement with their peers and their school and social environment. Therefore, it is evident that perceptions of safety, adherence to regulations, and management strategies play a crucial role in addressing the phenomenon of behavioral deviation among students within the school environment.

## **2. Research Problem and Questions**

School security constitutes an integrated system that includes security services, awareness initiatives, and educational approaches, all of which aim to protect the school environment from manifestations of delinquency, deviation, and crime. School security strives to balance two fundamental variables: security and the educational setting. As the second social institution following the family, the school plays a crucial role in shaping individual personality traits, tendencies, and relationships with others. Recently, heightened interest in school security has emerged due to advances in scientific knowledge and the significant revolution in communication technologies.

The issue of deviant behaviors among students is prevalent in Algerian schools, highlighting the need to focus on the impact of the school environment on such behaviors. With the recent increase in school enrollment in Algeria, deviant behaviors present a significant challenge, leading to greater pressure on teaching staff and school administration and contributing to instability in educational activities. This situation has become a major concern for the Ministry of Education, as well as for parents, teachers, and administrators in Algerian schools. Consequently, this study aims to address a series of questions, beginning with the primary question: What is the impact of the school environment, feeling safe, and adherence to internal regulations, on students' deviant behaviors, and how does the school administration address these behaviors?

### **2.1. Sub-questions:**

1. What is the impact of feeling safe within the school on students' behavior?
2. To what extent do students adhere to the school's internal regulations?
3. What are the most common deviant behaviors among students, and when do they occur?
4. How does the school administration address deviant behaviors, and what strategies are employed to manage such behaviors?

### **2.2. Study Objectives:**

This study aims to:

1. Explore the impact of feeling safe within the school on students' behavior.
2. Identify the extent of students' adherence to the school's internal regulations.
3. Identify the most common deviant behaviors in the school environment and when they occur.
4. Understand how the school administration manages deviant behaviors and the strategies it employs for behavioral control.

## **3. Defining the Concepts of the Study**

**3.1. Deviant:** A deviant is an individual who engages in actions that lead to negative consequences, losing control over their emotions and causing collective emotional responses

(Wadfel & Amara, 2022: 24).

**3.2. School Deviance:** School deviance refers to behaviors and practices that violate established school and social norms and rules, becoming recurring and familiar habits among students. Such behaviors may result from the influences of the educational system and the surrounding social environment, leading to students being perceived as problematic within the educational context. Deviance manifests in learned physical habits and various attitudes towards school and learning, including opposition, hostility, boredom, misunderstanding, collusion, and exploitation. These behaviors contribute to students being labeled as deviant or disturbed, potentially portraying them as victims of an educational system that reinforces such images (Moignard & Rubi, 2018:46).

**3.3. Sense of Security:** School security is defined as a state of stability and social balance that relies on mental agreement and intellectual unity among school members, as well as the alignment of material interests and mutual benefits. This stability prevents mental disarray and moral disorders that could lead to instability within the school. Achieving security requires not only the fulfillment of material needs but also intellectual and normative compatibility to ensure the stability and progress of the school (Muhammad Ali Al-Sheikh Ibrahim, 2021:427).

**3.4. School Environment:** The school environment is the setting in which students engage in educational and instructional activities. This environment is governed by a set of laws and regulations designed to regulate student behavior. It comprises three fundamental components: material resources, human resources, and regulations aimed at controlling behavior (Asiyai, 2019:171).

#### **4. Study Methodology**

**A. Methodology Used:** This study aims to investigate behavioral deviations in Algerian schools. To achieve this objective, the researcher employed a descriptive methodology, which involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting participants' responses to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

##### **B. Spatial and Temporal Boundaries of the Study:**

**1.Spatial Boundaries:** The study was conducted at Arabaji Tayeb High School, Bouinan Municipality, Blida Province.

**2.Temporal Boundaries:** The field study was carried out during January and February of the 2023/2024 academic year.

##### **C. Study Community and Sample:**

The study population consists of secondary school students at Arabaji Tayeb High School, Bouinan Municipality, Blida Province, with a total of 45 male and female students for the 2023/2024 academic year. The sample was selected deliberately to effectively achieve the research objectives.

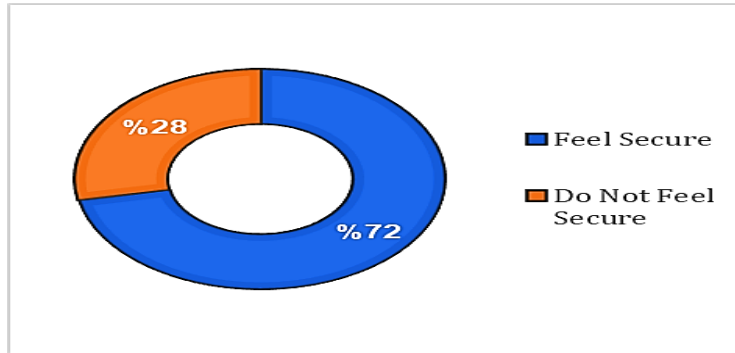
##### **D. Statistical Methods Used in the Study:**

Frequency distribution and percentages were utilized to describe the responses of the sample members.

observation and interviews. The interview was prepared by the researcher and consisted of a set of carefully designed questions aimed at achieving the study's objectives. The interview included questions designed to explore the impact of feeling safe within the school on students' behavior, assess the degree of students' adherence to the school's internal regulations, identify the most common deviant behaviors among students, and determine the times when these behaviors occur. Additionally, the interview aimed to understand the strategies employed by the school administration in addressing deviant behaviors.



**Figure 1. Distribution of Percentages of Students Feeling Safe Inside the School**



## **5. Study Methodology**

### **5.1. The Impact of Feeling Safe Inside the School on Students' Behavior**

Feeling safe within the Algerian school environment is a fundamental need that must be met for students. Data presented in **(Figure 1)** indicate that (72%) of students report feeling safe within the school, while (28%) do not share this sentiment.

This disparity can be explained by the fact that many students perceive the school as a second family. They are accustomed to an environment that fosters competition and knowledge acquisition, which contributes to their psychological and behavioral equilibrium. These students have a heightened awareness of the importance of school and education.

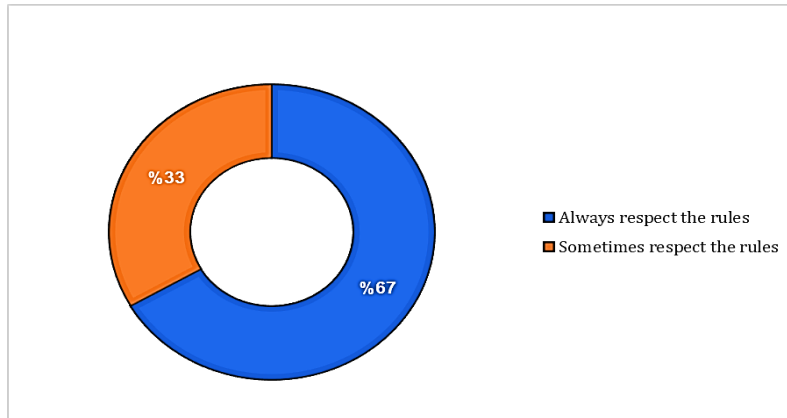
Conversely, a notable percentage of students do not feel safe inside the school. This lack of safety is attributed to their difficulty in adapting to the school environment, which differs from the family setting, as well as experiences of conflict or altercations with peers. Students who breach internal school regulations are subject to stringent monitoring by administration and teachers, which adversely affects their psychological well-being and amplifies feelings of isolation and insecurity.

Ultimately, a sense of safety contributes to reducing anomie by establishing a stable learning environment that promotes adherence to values and standards. Students who feel secure exhibit better social and psychological balance, which decreases the likelihood of behavioral deviations. School safety provides a clear framework of laws and regulations, helping to mitigate feelings of anxiety and ambiguity that can lead to anomie.

### **5.2. Degree of Students' Commitment to the School's Internal Regulations**

Adherence to the internal regulations governing student conduct within the school is crucial for achieving the goals of the educational institution. Data presented in **(Figure 2)** indicate that the majority of students (67%) consistently adhere to the school's internal regulations, while (33%) comply only occasionally.

**Figure 2. Distribution of Percentages of Students' Adherence to the School's Internal Regulations**



This trend can be attributed to the fact that most students respect the school's internal regulations due to their understanding that these rules serve as a regulatory framework for managing behavior within the school. Students recognize that violations of these regulations can result in severe penalties, such as expulsion for the academic year or transfer to a more distant school.

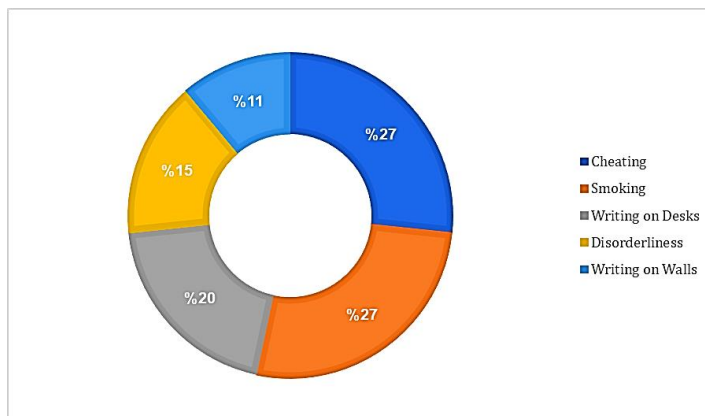
Conversely, students who only occasionally adhere to the regulations may belong to a category that perceives itself as distinct from others, such as repeat students, who might violate the regulations due to feelings of difference or marginalization. This phenomenon is also evident among final-year students who, viewing this as their last year in school, might disregard certain regulations and act with greater freedom.

These findings suggest that school discipline is a mechanism for regulating individual behavior to ensure alignment with shared values. Adherence to internal regulations reflects the effectiveness of social control within the school, as students who consistently follow these rules demonstrate their conformity with shared values and school order, thereby reducing the likelihood of deviant behavior.

### **5.3. The Most Common Deviant Behaviors Among Students and Their Peak Times**

The school, as a critical institution in the educational process, is not immune to various deviant behaviors. According to data presented in **(Figure 3)**, cheating and smoking are identified as the most prevalent behaviors among students, each reported by (27%) of respondents. These are followed by writing on desks (20%), disorderly conduct (15%), and writing on walls (11%).

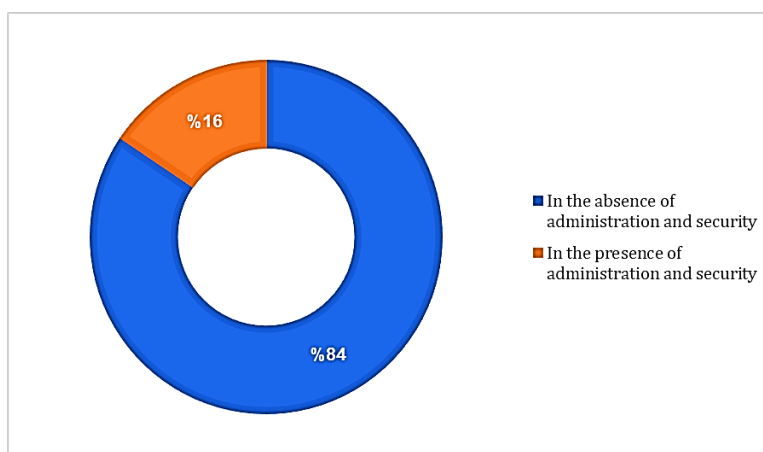
**Figure 3. Distribution of Percentages of the Most Common Deviant Behaviors in the School**



This prevalence can be attributed to several factors. Cheating is particularly common during exams, driven by the challenges of memorizing study materials and the pressure to succeed. Some students resort to cheating as a means to achieve success with minimal effort. Similarly, smoking, despite awareness of its dangers, emerges as a new phenomenon within schools. Some students perceive smoking as a symbol of masculinity and a way to distinguish themselves. Writing on desks and walls are negative behaviors that students use to express their thoughts and feelings, which can escalate into deviant behaviors if deemed inappropriate. These deviant behaviors reflect a lack of adherence to clear standards and exemplify the state of anomie, where individuals do not conform to societal values and norms. In the absence of security, the incidence of deviant behaviors may increase due to feelings of alienation or instability. Behaviors such as cheating and smoking may arise from anomie as individuals seek ways to cope with feelings of loss or marginalization.

Deviant behaviors occur at specific times, as illustrated in **(Figure 4)**. The majority of students (84%) reported that such behaviors occur predominantly in the absence of administration and security, while (16%) indicated that deviant behaviors also occur even when administration and security are present.

**Figure 4. Distribution of Percentages of Times When Deviant Behaviors Occur in the School**

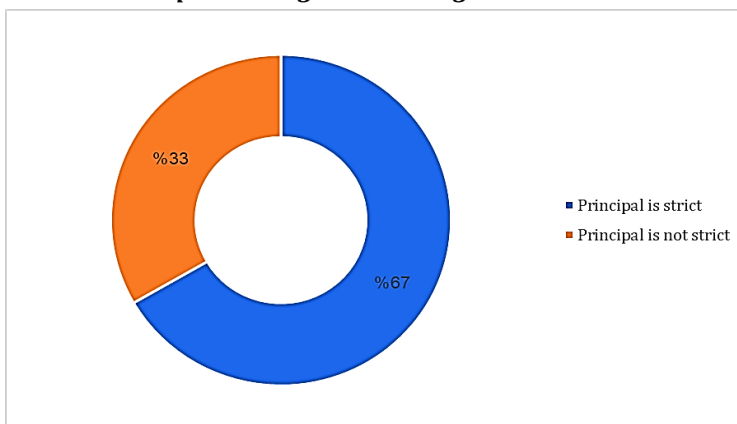


This pattern can be explained by the fact that students engaging in deviant

behaviors tend to do so primarily when administrative and security oversight is lacking. This tendency reflects the students' awareness of their violations and their cunning in concealing unacceptable behaviors. The situation highlights the issue of insufficient human resources in Algerian schools, where many schools face a shortage of administrative and security personnel. Nonetheless, deviant behaviors also occur in the presence of administration and security, suggesting that while supervision does not completely eliminate deviant behaviors, it significantly mitigates them. The times when deviant behaviors are observed underscore the importance of effective social control and supervision. According to the study's findings, the absence of adequate supervision increases the likelihood of deviant behaviors, as students exploit these periods to engage in misconduct, reflecting a gap in the effectiveness of the control system during those times.

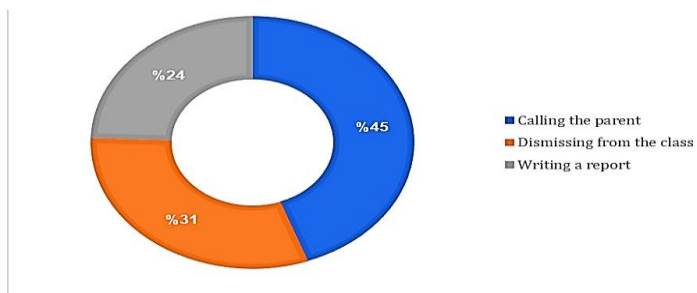
#### 5.4. School Management Strategies in Dealing with Deviant Behaviors

**Figure 5. Distribution of Percentages of the Principal's Strictness in Implementing Internal Regulations**



School management is pivotal in organizing the internal and external affairs of the school as an educational and administrative institution. According to data presented in **(Figure 5)**, the majority of students (67%) perceive the principal as strict in enforcing the school's internal regulations, while (33%) of students view the principal as not strict in this regard. This perception is attributed to the fact that most students see the principal as strict due to constant monitoring at the school entrance, emphasis on wearing uniforms, oversight of tardiness, and requiring students to provide their guardians or a valid reason for their actions. These measures reflect the principal's commitment to upholding internal regulations

**Figure 6. Distribution of Percentages of Methods Used by the Administration to Address Student Misbehavior**



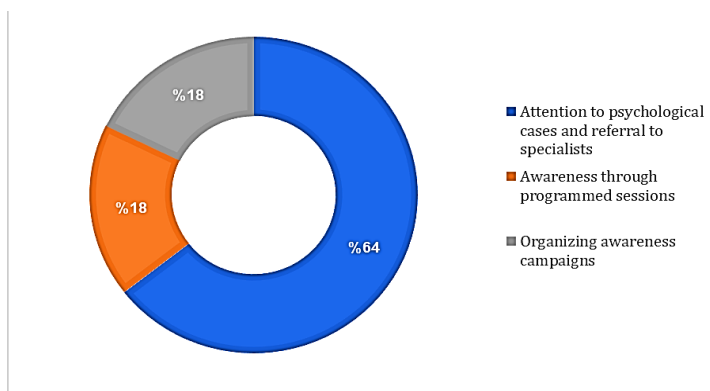
to maintain order and discipline within the school. Conversely, students who perceive the principal as not strict are generally those who consistently adhere to the internal regulations. They do not experience additional pressure or restrictions and view the principal's actions as normal and appropriate for ensuring order and discipline.

Data presented in **(Figure 6)** also indicate that the majority of students (45%) have their guardians summoned when inappropriate behavior occurs. This is followed by (31%) who are expelled from the class, while (24%) of students are required to write a report about their inappropriate behavior. This approach reflects the school's reliance on involving guardians to address student misbehavior, highlighting the importance of coordination between the school and the family in managing behavior. Summoning the guardian is intended to involve the family in addressing the student's behavior. Additionally, expulsion from the class is used as a disciplinary measure for repeated inappropriate behavior, aiming to enforce immediate discipline. Writing a report is also used to document inappropriate behavior and obtain a pledge from the student not to repeat it, which aids in monitoring and controlling behavior.

According to the data in **(Figure 7)**, the majority of students (64%) believe that the school administration focuses on addressing psychological issues and consulting specialists to manage student behavior, while (18%) cite awareness through scheduled classes and organizing awareness campaigns.

This indicates that the school administration places significant importance on addressing students' psychological conditions by referring them to psychologists for the treatment of behavioral and psychological disorders. This reflects an understanding of the role of mental health in behavior management, as psychologists have the expertise necessary to address the root causes of deviant behavior. On the other hand, the administration also employs awareness through scheduled classes and campaigns as preventive measures to educate students about the consequences of inappropriate behavior and to reinforce adherence to school rules.

**Figure 7. Distribution of Percentages of Preventive Measures Taken by the School Administration Against Deviant Behaviors**



In conclusion, school management strategies such as summoning parents, expulsion from class, and writing reports represent various methods of control and reintegration. According to the study's results, social interventions are essential for restoring balance and reintegrating individuals into the social system. These strategies contribute to correcting deviant behaviors and guiding students back to appropriate conduct by reinforcing social norms and ensuring adherence to regulations.

## 6. Conclusions

**The Effect of Feeling Safe on Deviant Behaviors:** The study demonstrated that feeling safe enhances students' psychological and behavioral balance, which contributes to a reduction in deviant behaviors. 72% of students reported feeling safe within the school. Conversely, students who do not feel safe face difficulties in adapting to the school environment, leading to feelings of isolation and an increased likelihood of engaging in deviant behaviors.

**Students' Commitment to the School's Internal Regulations:** The study results reflect the effectiveness of social control within the school, as evidenced by the extent of students' adherence to internal regulations. Students who consistently follow the rules align with the school's shared values. In contrast, those who adhere to the rules inconsistently may experience feelings of marginalization or a sense of difference.

**Deviant Behaviors and Their Prevalence:** The study identified cheating and smoking as the most prevalent deviant behaviors among students. These behaviors are associated with a lack of clear standards or adherence to them and embody a state of anomie, as students attempt to cope with feelings of loss or marginalization. Furthermore, it was found that 84.4% of deviant behaviors occur in the absence of management and security, reflecting the impact of inadequate supervision and human resources in schools.

**School Management Strategies:** According to the data, 67% of students perceive the principal as strict in enforcing internal regulations. School management strategies also include summoning guardians as a key measure to address inappropriate behaviors. Additionally, 65% of students indicated that the administration places significant emphasis on addressing psychological cases and referring them to specialists.

The results indicate that both the feeling of security and adherence to internal regulations significantly influence students' deviant behaviors. Moreover, the presence of effective management strategies in schools, including attention to psychological cases and the stringent application of regulations, can improve students' psychological and behavioral conditions.

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# THE CONFLICT, ITS METHODS, AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

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**Abstract** *The types of organizational conflict vary with different situations and relationship parties. Personal (intrapersonal) conflict relates to the individual itself, being the sole source of conflict occurring within the individual. It doesn't necessarily require the presence of other individuals. In some cases, the effects of this conflict may extend to others within or outside the organization when the individual's condition deteriorates, leading to unconscious behaviours that alter others' perceptions of them. Interpersonal conflict occurs between individuals and involves multiple parties. It can happen between a manager and their subordinates, between a manager and their deputy, or among groups of individuals due to differences in opinions and attitudes towards a specific phenomenon. This type of conflict can also occur between groups, involving various levels and encompassing a large group within the organization. Conflict might arise between different work units, departments, or organizations due to differences in viewpoints, fair resource distribution, or difficulties in defining responsibilities among different units, leading to conflict between these groups or organizations, known as 'inter-organizational conflict.' Due to the significance of this issue, we wanted to shed light on this phenomenon by focusing on its methods, tools, the reasons behind its occurrence within organizations, as well as its management strategies. Additionally, we will also focus on its effects, whether positive or negative.*

**Keywords:** conflict, conflict management strategies, competition, conflict resolution, conflict avoidance, effects and methods of conflict

## 1. Introduction

Conflict within organizations is considered a natural phenomenon, arising from the continuous social relationships built on interests, dominance, and profit margins. Conflicts form within organizations between individuals and groups. Therefore, the sociology of organization studies this phenomenon and presents sociological theories that explain conflict, its causes, and consequences.

As previously mentioned, conflict is a natural phenomenon with different methods, causes, and ways to address and mitigate its adverse effects. Conflict can be utilized within the bounds of competition to enhance organizational development and consequently improve performance within institutions.

## 2. Conflict management strategies

### A. Competitive Approach (Assertive/Uncooperative)

This approach aims to dominate the other party by enhancing one's own interests at the expense of the other party's. It involves trying to achieve one's own interests regardless of the other party's. Competition as a conflict management style is about seeking complete control, where one party attempts to gain everything, often seen as a win/lose scenario. This approach relies on power, utilizing any available means to win over individuals to your side. Methods commonly used in this approach include argumentation, financial rewards, coercion, and exerting power.

Key uses of the competitive approach include (Jerry and Yezneski, 1999: 17):

- ✓ During emergencies when speed and decisive action are necessary.
- ✓ In situations requiring minor changes.



- ✓ After other methods have proven ineffective.
- ✓ In work relationships lacking mutual trust.

### **B. Accommodating or Yielding Approach (Non-Assertive/Cooperative).**

In contrast to the competitive approach, this style focuses on achieving the other party's interests even at the expense of one's own. It involves being willing to give up one's position for the benefit of the other party. Some argue that adopting this accommodating approach by a management team does not necessarily indicate weakness, but rather, it reflects good management and quality leadership (Burlaud, Lemelin and other, 1999: 377).

Key uses of the accommodating approach include (Jerry and Yezneski, 1999: 17):

- ✓ When maintaining relationships is more critical for the individual.
- ✓ When demonstrating a level of generosity.
- ✓ When encouraging others to express their viewpoints.
- ✓ When wanting others to learn from their choices and actions.

### **C. Avoidance Approach (Non-Assertive/Uncooperative).**

This approach involves neglecting both one's and the other party's interests by avoiding or sidestepping areas of conflict. Some individuals refuse to engage in conflicts that may arise within the organization. Such behavior may be described as avoidance behavior, where individuals refrain from involvement in any conflicting relationship or situation. This non-engagement can be observed through two main methods: withdrawal and non-action.

Key uses of the avoidance approach include:

- ✓ When others are better equipped to handle organizational conflict efficiently.
- ✓ When both parties consider the issue trivial.
- ✓ When the negative impact of the situation could be devastating or costly for both parties.
- ✓ When clarification of the position is needed.
- ✓ When both parties need time to cool down.

### **D. Collaborative Approach (Assertive/Cooperative):**

This approach involves individuals neglecting their own interests and the interests of others by avoiding or evading points of conflict. Some individuals may refuse to engage in conflicts that may arise in the organization, and based on this behavior, their conduct may be described as avoidance behavior, characterized by absence or disengagement from any relationship or conflict situation. This disengagement is manifested through two main methods (Burlaud, Lemelin and other, 1996: 376):

- ✓ Withdrawal method.
- ✓ Non-action or non-involvement in the conflict.

Among the most appropriate uses of this approach are: (Jerry and Yezneski, 1999:19):

- ✓ If others can handle organizational conflict more efficiently.
- ✓ If each party in the conflict considers the issue trivial.
- ✓ If the negative impact of the situation itself could be destructive or costly for both parties.
- ✓ If there is a need for clarification.
- ✓ If both parties need an opportunity to calm down.

In addition to these five approaches, there are other methods that may be added to them, and we will mention some of them when discussing conflict management strategies. These methods serve as important tools for implementing various conflict management strategies. Choosing the appropriate model or approach that suits each situation requires scientific study and careful analysis.

### 3. Organizational Conflict Management Strategies

The term "conflict management approach" refers to the method used to manage conflict or the strategy adopted by one of the active parties in dealing with conflict within the organization. Participants' behaviour is influenced by the desires, inclinations, values, and goals of the involved parties. Researchers in the field of organizational behaviour have studied the behaviour used in conflicts and classified it into various methods. One of the latest models developed for analyzing conflict management methods is the model proposed by Baker Shaker (Jarallah Al-Khashali, 2004: 07).

The ability to address and manage conflicts has become a vital skill exercised by prominent leaders in the organization. It has become necessary to develop this skill to the highest possible degree because most organizations are undergoing continuous changes at faster rates than in the past, in addition to rapid environmental changes.

This can be one of the catalysts for igniting conflicts. These organizations are based on the interaction between individuals who are diverse in their personalities, behaviours, and actions due to changes in their cultural and social composition. Consequently, these interactions may lead to disagreements, which may escalate into organizational conflicts. Therefore, it is essential to work on developing the ability to accept and understand different cultural values and to create positive interactions among them.

The concept of teamwork has witnessed growing interest alongside other concepts such as Total Quality Management. Hence, there is significant interest in building integrated and collaborative teamwork.

Given that organizational conflict has become inherent in complex organizations today, effective management should strive to efficiently manage organizational conflicts before they escalate and before their negative effects reflect on overall performance and organizational effectiveness.

P. Feiffer conducted a study titled "Conflict Analysis within Different Groups in the Organization," presenting various strategies for managing organizational conflicts. A- These strategies can be elucidated as follows:

**A. Avoidance or Withdrawal Strategy:** In this strategy, one or more parties in the conflict deliberately divert their focus from the conflict or withdraw from confronting the other party, meaning they overlook the causes of the conflict. This strategy may employ several methods that serve as tactics to avoid conflicts, including: (Daniel Feldmann, 1998, pp. 218-225):

- ✓ Neglect or Ignoring the Conflict.
- ✓ Physical Separation of the Parties, meaning keeping the conflicting groups apart.
- ✓ Limited Interaction, allowing the conflicting parties to interact in a restricted manner.
- ✓ Additionally, the Withdrawal or Retreat approach, which is a passive and conflict-relieving method that reduces tension.

**B. Pacification Strategy:** This strategy aims to soothe and calm the conflict by consoling the conflicting parties to calm them down, using persuasive language to restore healthy relationships between the conflicting parties. This strategy seeks to buy time until the emotions and reactions of the conflicting parties subside and the intensity of the conflicts decreases. During this time, secondary points of contention are settled, leaving the fundamental points either intact or diminished over time (DeCieri, Walters, 1991: 276).

This strategy can be implemented through a range of interaction methods, including (Nakhlah and others, 2111: 44):

- ✓ Mitigation Approach: This involves minimizing the significance of differences between the conflicting parties and highlighting similarities and common interests.
- ✓ Settlement or Conciliation Approach: This is achieved by utilizing interpersonal skills to influence the conflicting parties to move towards finding compromise solutions acceptable to all parties.

**C. Power Utilization Strategy:** The objective of this strategy is to manage organizational conflicts as quickly as possible after identifying their real sources. It involves resorting to power to resolve conflicts. This strategy is used when there is no common ground that can be used as a basis for dialogue and agreement, or when the conflicting parties are uncooperative.

In this strategy, two primary approaches can be relied upon (Mohammed Qasim Al-Qaryouti, 2114: 261):

- ✓ **High-Level Authority Intervention:** This involves the intervention of a higher-ranking official in a stronger position, where the latter intervenes to order the conflicting parties to end the conflict, or else punishment will be used. The conflicting parties may be removed from their positions and assigned to other roles, or even more severe forms of punishment may be applied.
- ✓ **Political Maneuvering:** Conflicts are typically dealt with using this approach by redistributing power between the conflicting parties.

This strategy often takes less time than other strategies, but it may leave negative effects on individuals due to disregarding their objections to various situations. Conflicts managed or addressed using this strategy may resurface, surprising the organization's management with new conflicts. Therefore, this strategy should only be used in managing organizational conflicts when all other methods and strategies have failed.

**D. Confrontation Strategy:** This strategy is one of the conflict management strategies in organizations. It involves managing existing conflicts and resolving the situation by relying on an understanding of the real causes of the conflict. This is achieved by presenting facts among different parties or sides of the conflict, analyzing them, and attempting to identify the common interests of the conflicting parties. The strategy focuses on using organizational communication patterns between workers and employees, exchanging perspectives, sharing ideas, and emphasizing the organization's higher goals through regular meetings or gatherings. (Musa Al-Lawzi, 1999: 99).

This strategy is implemented through a set of methods or tactics used as confrontation approaches, including (DeCieri and Wall:1996: 280).

- ✓ **Employee Exchange:** Increasing communication and understanding between different groups by exchanging workers and employees for a period of time (job rotation). Those who have been changed to work in other positions or roles will become familiar with other groups and convey their impressions and ideas about them to their original groups. The purpose of this method is to understand and absorb the function of the other party.
- ✓ **Common Higher Goals:** These are extremely important goals that require conflicting individuals to focus their attention on them to ensure the organization's survival and continuity. When it comes to the survival and continuity of the organization, conflicts become trivial or irrelevant altogether (Al-Qurayuti, 2002: 260).
- ✓ **Formal Confrontational Meetings for Problem Solving:** This method aims to provide these groups with the opportunity to present their viewpoints and discuss differences. Discussions in these meetings focus on identifying and analyzing problems and finding various possible solutions.

In addition to these methods, there are other strategies such as:

- ✓ **Alliance Strategy:** Cooperation among all parties to achieve common ideas and bridge multiple perspectives.

**Redesigning the Organizational Structure:** This involves reducing overlapping tasks between different groups and clearly defining the levels of work for each group.

However, some researchers and thinkers interested in organizational behavior consider these strategies insufficient for effectively managing organizational conflicts. Therefore, they add other strategies, such as:

- ✓ **Mediation Strategy:** This strategy relies on the use of a neutral third party with influence and impact on the conflicting parties. The mediator can play a role in settling and managing conflicts by mediating between the conflicting parties (Afifi and Al-Geneini, 2002: 335).
- ✓ **Negotiation Strategy:** This strategy involves direct engagement between parties to study points of disagreement carefully and make efforts among all to find solutions to each issue and settle existing conflicts. (Beard and Pastor, 2000: 193) It is used when conflicts have led to losses for various parties (Ghani and Hilal, 2001: 119).
- ✓ **Arbitration Strategy:** This strategy is resorted to after exhausting the efforts of all parties involved in the conflict and after various previous strategies have failed to find a settlement. (Beard and Pastor: 183-183) Arbitration involves a set of measures and means to settle conflicts, usually carried out by an official body delegated by the conflicting parties to avoid specialized courts. The decisions of this body are binding on the parties involved in the conflict.

Ultimately, using one or more of these strategies helps the organization avoid many problems that may escalate. Therefore, it preserves its growth, development, and continuity in the business world. Failure to address and manage conflicts positively will lead to the organization's fragmentation, negatively affecting its activities and functions, reducing individuals' motivation to work, weakening performance and efficiency, and increasing costs or declining revenue as a result.

**2. Enhancing innovation and creativity:** Effective organizational conflict opens up new horizons for management by encouraging subordinates to come up with new things that may include ideas, solutions, products, services, or methods. This fosters innovative thinking and the development of new ideas, making the organization more adaptable to its surroundings.

- ✓ **Conflict as a form of communication:** Resolving conflicts may create new and permanent avenues for communication, deepening trust, providing information, and facilitating its flow. Inadequate communication channels within an organization can lead to contradictory decisions and misunderstandings, often serving as a significant cause of conflict. Thus, managing conflict effectively can lead to improved communication between all members of the organization, enhancing coordination and trust.
- ✓ **Meeting psychological needs:** Conflict may provide an opportunity to satisfy the psychological needs of some individuals, especially those with aggressive tendencies. By using motivational techniques, management can leverage organizational conflict to recognize and reward departments, sections, or individuals with outstanding production, efficiency, or innovation, thus channeling their aggression positively for the benefit of the organization.
- ✓ **Fostering constructive competition:** Conflict can foster healthy competition among parties involved, leading to the development of alternative and improved work methods, problem-solving approaches, and strategies. It encourages individuals to question, discuss, review values, beliefs, and work, promoting personal and organizational growth through constructive competition (Al-Haniti and Faleh, 1993: 32).
- ✓ **Building experience for conflict resolution:** The occurrence and recurrence of personal conflicts allow management to identify their causes and patterns, gaining valuable experience for resolving conflicts effectively in the future. This accumulated experience contributes to the continuous improvement of conflict resolution processes within the organization, fostering a healthier organizational climate (Mehdi, Susan; Mohamed, Waheeba; Hussam, Ismail, 2000: 230).

- ✓ **Generating new ideas and behaviors:** Disagreement fosters new ideas that work to replace undesirable behavior with behavior acceptable to all. Each individual in the group adopts an approach aimed at gaining the greatest satisfaction from the group, resulting in the generation of new ideas due to their differing opinions and proposals. This leads them to replace their undesirable behaviors with ones that satisfy everyone (Al-Kharb and Mohammed, 2006:119).
- ✓ **Enhancing group cohesion in conflict with other groups:** When in conflict with other groups, the internal conflicts within a group can aid in developing its internal cohesion. The personal conflicts within a group can transform into a unified force to confront other groups, thereby strengthening the group's internal cohesion.
- ✓ **Fostering mutual satisfaction between leaders and subordinates within departments:** Effectively managing and addressing conflicts can result in a mutual sense of satisfaction between leaders and subordinates within departments. Positive conflict management and resolution can lead to a sense of fairness in the management's actions toward all parties involved, thereby enhancing mutual trust between leaders and subordinates, which positively impacts the organization as a whole (Adib and Mohammed, 1994: 94).
- ✓ **Generating additional energy for individuals:** Even if the outcomes are not constructive, conflict can awaken and motivate individuals. Positive organizational conflict stimulates parties involved and provides them with energy and capabilities for action, fostering a competitive atmosphere. Senior management can harness this energy from conflict and channel it into a positive force, transforming it into benefits and positive outcomes for the organization and its members (Refai, Basyouni and Ali, 2004: 484).
- ✓ **Key factor in organizational survival and change:** Positive organizational conflict helps organizations avoid problems and, therefore, evolve and survive. It facilitates adjustments in management objectives, policies, or any element of organizational work to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Conflict stimulates organizational change by prompting modifications in organizational goals, policies, management methods, and areas of activity, enabling adaptation and response to environmental changes.
- ✓ **Tendency towards autocratic leadership:** In situations of severe conflict and when threats are perceived, democratic leadership methods become less attractive and accepted. Members of the group prefer strong and decisive leadership capable of issuing orders, making decisions, and handling difficult situations (Johns, 1984: 445).
- ✓ **Increasing commitment to organizational goals and discussing conflicting viewpoints:** Open dialogue and allowing the discussion of conflicting viewpoints result in the flow of new ideas and constructive opinions from conflicting parties. This leads to the identification of multiple solution alternatives, creating a climate of self-confidence among different managerial levels and boosting their morale. It fosters a sense of management's concern for discussing proposals and different viewpoints, encouraging them to present constructive suggestions that lead to commitment to the organization's goals (Dris, Thabit; Al-Mursi, Gamal, 2004: 496).
- ✓ **Improving decision quality:** Sometimes, conflict leads to better decision quality compared to decisions made under normal circumstances due to competition and rivalry. Organizational conflict fosters positive competition among parties involved, resulting in new opinions and proposals. It develops their capabilities and creates innovative and renewing initiatives aimed at developing the organization in its various activities.
- ✓ **Increasing productivity and work growth:** Proper management of organizational conflict transforms the energy generated by conflict into a positive force, rather than a negative one. The goal is not to eliminate conflict but to leverage it to convert this

energy and ideas from conflicting parties into benefits and positive outcomes for the organization and its members. Among the positive effects of conflict is alerting managers to evaluate work policies and procedures, motivating individuals to demonstrate their abilities and convince management of their capabilities. In other words, conflict can be utilized as long as it is controlled and directed in the right direction to be a constructive factor rather than a destructive one.

## 2. Negative Effects of Conflict:

### A. On the Individual Level within the Group:

- ✓ Feelings of frustration and inadequacy: Individuals may feel frustrated due to their inability to satisfy a need, emotion, or achieve a goal despite their efforts. This frustration can lead to anger, ultimately damaging the individual's psyche and motivation, potentially leading them to leave the organization (Mustafa and Ahmed, 2000: 441).
- ✓ **Consumption of management effort and time:** Conflict can consume the effort and time of management in addressing it rather than benefiting from it in productive activities.
- ✓ Impeding cooperative work within the organization: Conflict can hinder collaborative work within the organization. (Mehdi and Waheb, 2000: 232)
- ✓ **Erosion of trust and confidence:** Conflict can lead to a lack of trust and confidence among employees, widening the gap between conflicting parties within the organization.
- ✓ **Dominance of personal interests over common goals:** Conflict may prioritize personal interests over organizational goals (Madhoun and Al-Jazrawi, 1995: 197)
- ✓ Manipulation of information and dissemination of malicious rumors: Individuals may resort to distorting and spreading rumors to harm the other party, ultimately damaging the organization.

### On the Group Level:

- ✓ **Shift from participative to authoritative leadership styles:** Conflict between groups may lead leaders to shift from participative to authoritative leadership styles, reducing employee morale.
- ✓ **Increased hostility towards opposing groups:** Competing groups may view each other as enemies, fostering hostility and undermining professionalism and ethics (Idris, Thabit and Al-Marisi, 2002: 497).
- ✓ **Weakened communication between groups:** Conflict may weaken communication between groups, affecting decision-making quality and customer satisfaction levels (Idris, Thabit and Al-Marisi, 2002: 498).
- ✓ **Intensive monitoring of other groups' activities:** Conflict may lead to increased monitoring of other groups' activities, often with a negative bias (Idris, and Al-Marisi, 2002: 498).
- ✓ **Extreme focus on individual interests over organizational goals:** Conflict can drive each party to prioritize their interests over the organization's overall goals, leading to decreased productivity, dissatisfaction, negativity, and reduced cooperation, possibly resulting in organizational strikes (Idris, Thabit and Al-Marisi, 2002: 498).

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# SUICIDE FACTORS AMONG GIRLS IN TEBESSA STATE- ALGERIA: ANALYTICAL STUDY

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**Abstract:** *The research paper highlights the causes and factors of suicide among Algerian girls, through the selection of Tebessa province. The study assumes that the multiple causes of suicide among girls are mostly related to social aspects such as academic failure, social alienation, and failed romantic relationships, but does not exclude other reasons such as self-identity issues and rejection of others. The study conclude after presenting concepts related to the phenomenon, direct interview with some of the families of victims, and applying analytical methods to analyze the results, the study confirmed the hypothesis of multiple causes of suicide, especially those related to society. Therefore, the researchers recommend raising awareness and promoting dialogue, as well as providing psychological support for girls at this age.*

**Keywords:** suicide, girls, family dialogue, Tebessa state, Algerian society,

## 1. Introduction

The attempt to suicide cannot be considered as a single phenomenon associated with mental strikes or a subjective event, but it is related to significant changes in society. There are many factors interfere in such as family. It interferes as well in the formation of an individual's personality and the growth of the self-knowledge. So, any imbalance may lead to disorders and Schizophrenia. The more positive the family relationship gets, the more interdependent its members become. The opposite happens when parents, for instance, take control over their kids or on some another through harsh ways of discipline and guidance which their affects their psychological, aspect, especially females due to their sensitivity:

The study examines suicide among Algerian girls through the selection of Tebessa state, especially through the high suicide rates among girls which statistics indicate in both security and health institutions; these numbers predict the seriousness of the situation.

On the other hand, there must be a research on the causes as the first step towards the, headmen and reduction of the phenomenon, from which we have the right to ask what are the reasons behind Algerian girls committing suicide? And whether these causes are related to their psychological aspect or they are a consequence of family abuse.

In order to answer these questions and achieve the goals of the study, we should admit the fact that there are multiple, Causes of girls in Tebessa alternating.

Suicide is mostly relations to social aspects, such as academic failure, social alienation, and failed romantic relationships, but these do not exclude other factors such as self-identity issues and rejection of others. To confirmer the hypothesis, we rely on using interviews with some families of female suicide victims and applying analytical methods to analyser the results of 3 cases:

- Introduction.
- Concepts and methodological from works of the study.
- Suicide Causer among girls through analytical models from Tebessa province.
- Conclusion



## **Concepts and methodological frame works of the study**

### **2.1. The importance of the study:**

There is no doubt that girls suicide in the Algerian society deserves attention and *recherché*, and it turns out that there exist saver factors which are carried out by the diagnostic leading to prescribing the treatment, thus there is a high need to launch a study about the causes leading to teenage girls suicide. However attention to suicide resulted in some pieces of literature in multiples fields, such as, psychiatry, psychology, Sociology, biology and genetics (charouk, p55,2002), there exists a lack of understanding of girls peculiarity. That's why; we rely on interviews trying to listen to the girls. Sami lies. Most importantly, since the phenomena on of suicide requires necessity. Determining the factor batted white definitely paves the way to facilities the diagnosis the study be fundamental since it adresses a significant social issue.

### **2.2. Concepts of the study**

#### **2.2.1. The concept of suicide:**

##### **A- Denotative Definition :**

Suicide is derive from the verb “to suicide” which means “to bill”, that is to slaughter or kill himself / herself, and it is said that people are quarrelling that is to strongly fight (Ibrahim Anis et al p 906,197). The word “Suicide” is derived from two Latin syllables SUI means self. The word was first introduced to the French language by the father (Desfantaine) in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century specifically in 1737 (Mahram Simeon P54, 1864).

##### **B- Connotative Definition :**

The sociologist Durkheim defines it as all death events that are produced directly or indirectly about a positive or a negative act carried out by the victim himsell/herself. As well, he/she knows that this act ling him there to death (Meameria AP 248, 2007). The most important part of this definition is confirming knowledge and realizing the result that determines behaviours at a humanistic level which is distinguished than death at an animalistic level.

Karl Manger believes that suicide is the way in which an individual chooses to put an end to his life whether now or then.

This definition mixes other types of behaviors, such as for hostages and others. While Halifax defines suicide, as the state of death resulting from the victim's own act that means only killing himself /herself not sacrificing it for something else. In other words, it is a voluntary death that the individual offers saves himself /herself of his problems and unbearable difficulties that arose within his own circle (Al-Assibi po4, 2001).

The great encyclopedia of psychology defines suicide after as it is either carried out by an individual based on ethical, social, religious, philosophical, or act rational considerations or it is a pathological, act that occurs as a consequence of some mental disorders, such a (depression, chronic, delirium, dementia, and mental confusion). It may be caused by an existential crisis that is characterized by anxiety and aggressive orientation (p.911, 1999).

#### **2.2.2. The Concept of Trying to Suicide:**

It is carrying out the act without achieving the actual death. As for the concept of initiating to commit an attempt to suicide just a failure is a rejected matter by many specialists (Najd Eldjoyouche suicide is an unfinished act that doesn't end with the death (Makram Samoan p50, 1964). Since all attempts of suicide has become popular and important drives

those who try, to suicide to share their hardships and get the desire to make a change at the level of their behavior, whether this change is permanent or temporary.

### **2.2.3. The concept of suicidal behaviour:**

It is the series of actions that individual performs in an attempt to destroy his/her own life with no instigation or sacrifice for some social value (Shahin 1037, 1997). Modern researchers tend to collect the suicide, the threat of suicide, and equivalents of suicide, and for that, suicidal behaviour is a complex process of various stages, beginning with the perception of the latent suicide. Then, it improved to active suicide, and eventually all suicide attempts accumulate may cause fluctuation according to, the influence of biological, and social processes (Meameria p 178, 2007).

### **2.3. Literature Review:**

The study of Makram Samaan 1964. The problem of suicide: social psychological study. It is one of the first Arab studies that focused on the suicide. Behaviour's topic where the researcher tried to detect the psychologic and social factors driving to suicide in lairs including an in posing test that connects isolation, alienation, and suicidal behaviour. He also found an increase in suicide rates among males from (20–40) with decreasing portions as they get older.

Concerning divorced and unemployed, the presence of compulsive sense of isolation may be the reason.

Wale Abdel-Fatah al –Samaria's study (2006), "social, economic, and psychological characteristics for suicide among the Jordanian society from (1995 to 2004)." This study aimed at identifying the socio-economic and psychological characteristics of suicides among fundamental people from 1995 to 2004. The results have shown that the central region was occupied by the most committed suicides among young non-smoking people. As it showed that the social causes were rated the main in addition to using poison.

Amami et al (tentative de suicide du lycéen et de l'étudiant) (2013). This study aimed at revealing an epidemiological profile of suicide attempts through a study that extended from 1999 à 2009 at the mental medical of the city of fax, through the analysis of 61 cases. The results showed that the majority of suicide was girls who had academic and adjustment issues. That's why they turned to drug poisoning at home in an impulsive manner.

The previous studies are interested in examining the relational between despair, depression, and visualizing suicide among girl. This is exactly what our study aims at, that understands the real causes far from statistics super facility although we admit the high for these statistics.

### **2.4. Studies and statistics on the phenomenon of suicide in Algeria and the world:**

The report that came among from the regional office for the eastern Mediterranean of the world health organization reveals a series of statistics related to suicide in the Maghreb and north Africa where it recorded 677 cases in Algeria in 2012; among which 277 females and 400 males (The bet p39,40,2012).

Algeria was ranked the fourth among Arab countries according to the report prepared by the world health organization in 2019. It is still on the rise. As indicated by the RES archer in sociology Ratbi Mohamed Amine that Algeria witnesses 500 to 600 cases of suicide per year. As demonstrated by the world Health Organization that young men are more likely to commit suicide in Algeria, from which girl's rates have significantly increased lately. Ratbi Mohamed Amin declares that the primary reason behind young people committing suicides in Algeria is due to social pressure. He claims that unemployment, housing, and psychological issues are the most common reasons ahead (Mohamed Amine, <http://www.Alhurra.com> 09/02/2023).

According to the WHO (world Health Organization) report on suicide in Algeria that it is the second cause of death among between 15 and 29 years old. The organization has also pointed to the multiplying and evolution of the methods used to commit suicide in Algeria; they vary from drowning at the sea through illegal immigration, pouring gasoline on their bodies, dung poisoning, or even cutting bodies in to pieces, unlike previously, when they used to hang themselves or to drink chemical liquids. As it is mentioned that 55% of victims are unemployed and 32% of the work in free business while only 10% are employers, eventually students make up 6% (World Health Organization, <https://www.independentarabia.com>, 10/12/2019).

According to France, 24 september 2016, Algeria was ranked the fourth with 1299 cases of suicides. As well, Morocco is considered the only Arab country that has noticed a significant increase in the rate of suicide among females which exceeds 613 cases compared to 400 cases of males (<https://www.france24.com>).

The Statistics recorded since the beginning of 2022 until the middle of august of the same year Guelma, province revealed an alarm increase in suicides which reached record numbers lately. In the same Framework, the major Mohamed Ben Aouda, the civil protection of Guelma province, stated that the services has intervened 37 times for suicide in which along with 22 interventions that resulted in the rescue of 27 men and women ages between 27 to 51 years old distributed over a number of regions in the province, among which 16 attempts of suicide in Guelma, 5 cases in Ouadi Znati in addition to recording only one attempt in each of Medjaz Amman, Hamam Nbeel, Ain Mekchlouf, et Bouchegouf. He also declared that a number of these attempts were thwarted at the last moment, especially among girls who tend to choose drug poisoning. ([www.echourouk.online.com](http://www.echourouk.online.com), 31/08/2020).

A study presented by the hospital of “Mostefa Bacha” in Algiers indicates that suicides are widespread among people age between 15 and 44 years old, especially males who are considered the most recorded suicides, compared to women. Moreover, 75 percent of suicides have previous stated a desire to end their lives on contrary to the perspective which deodars that a suicide doesn’t authorize the act earlier. As it is shown, a suicidal person does ‘necessarily have to look lost, ye suicide can affect then families for the long run. (<https://www.aposts.com>).

Finally, according to El Watan Daily, October 2019, the Algerian Health Ministry recording 500 à 600 cases in Algeria annual young people between 16 and 20 years old make 53% of then. Furthermore, men occupy a higher percentage compared to women. Regarding female the series of suicides has noticeably since the beginning of 2019 among girls who use the veils to hang themselves to death. (<https://www.elwatannews.net>, 2019).

### **3. Causes of suicide girls Frome the Tebessa province:**

#### **3.1. Causes of girls suicide according to theoretical explications:**

The news of suicide in Algeria dominates the Media terribly. Since the attempts gets higher, the raison this act is due to d deteriorating of the social conditions. That’s why, experts warn of the social disintegrations the studies show that a day hardly passes without a suicidal record or the frustration of other attempts. In the light of this, responsible are still unable to determine the intrinsic reasons behind this phenomenon that threatens families and societies.

It has become more dangerous since young people start to protest and complain about social and economic problems, such as unemployment, lack of housing, and bureaucracy in general. Therefore, it becomes easier for people to express the social congestion and psychological suffocation they suffer from through threatening the government to tallow themselves from the roofs, sew their mouths, or cut off their arteries.

Furthermore, veils that are used by girls to cover their heads became a tool for suicide by young women and adolescents in different parts of the country according to the facts

reported by security authorities have raised many questions. As indicated by some local reports which stated that strange suicides which happened in various areas all over the country whose heroines were young girls introduced a state of harrow among several families 2019.

Some attributed the suicides carried by girls using veils to «some unknown applications. However, they are not yet known, they could reach a great number of single women specifically, so as to live in another world that provides them with whatever things they want or desire. Additionally, reports counted over 10 cases of suicides using veils last year's first months. The matter is really surprising as it raises the hypothesis of utilizing applications initiating to suicide, in duding what was known as "The blue whale Game"; it victims used the same technique that is to amputate the blood veins.

At the beginning of last year, two cases were witnessed the same way in two adjacent provinces. An eighteen-year-old-high school girl in Oum El-Bouaghi committed suicide hanging herself in her 100n using her own veil. At the same time, a twenty-one-year-old young woman hanged herself similarly in Bir-El-Eater-Tebessa. In both cases, those who knew the young girls testified to the kindness and mental stability.

In addition, a single woman on her 34<sup>th</sup> birthday from Taref committed suicide using her veil. Another 24-year-old university student from Mila put an end to her life using the same technique. In the same region, a single 32-year-old lawyer committed suicide at her sister's house in the city centre (Saber Bled p19,12/01/2020).

The major reasons that led to the spread of this phenomenon among girls are the following:

**A- Failed Romantic Relationship:**

Some girls resort to suicide alters emotional crises, where many of them struggle to make their relationships successful. Obviously the failure to maintain the stability drugs several girls to think of suicide; they venture to suicide thoughtlessly (Al-Razqi, p45,1999)

**B- Poverty and unemployment:**

These two factors among the reasons lead girls to commit suicide. Growing up in poor families pushes them to seek for job opportunities that guaranty a decent life and meet their meads. Thus, unemployment creates a terrible feeling of loneliness which lungs up family pressure that eventually leads to suicide especially if it is related to the idea of "marriage" that puts sounds stress on girls who get frustrated and then lives (Ali Abdel.wafi: 48).

**C- Social Isolation and loneliness.**

If a girl is socially isolated, her psychological state and mental health are affected since upbringing social interactions is a basic human need, and if it is not carried out to the fillet, the girl begins to feel lonely which in return gives then depression, and ultimately commit suicides (Chabib p23, 2007).

**D-Academic failure:**

The ghost of baccalareate exam remains one of compels reasons for the suicides of a large number of girls in Algeria. After their families spent a lot of money on private courses, and then dreams come to an end, their failure to reach their good drugs to commit a suicide. (Samaan: 1964)

**3.2. Causes of girl's suicide according to the applied study of Cases in Tebessa:**

**3.2.1. Method of the study**

The study uses the analytical method, which is defined as a method of analysis that focuses on sufficient and accurate information about a specific phenomenon, subject, and at specific periods of times, and then interpret them an objectively in a consistent manner with the data of the phenomenon.

The research tools were used to collect data from the informants is interviews which accompanied us through the stages of the practical research and the explanatory tour of the

study's location. The tool has enabled us to extract the indicators and problems of its reflection. It is important to get information about some of the results obtained which a researcher - cannot reach through typical scientific methods for many reasons pertaining the researched, case, the field of the study, and the various difficulties accompanying the process of research and fact-finding; therefore, this technique was really useful for us to describe the stages of research relying on the intentional sample so as to monitor the cases, especially in our interview application, where we addressed psychiatric patients from which we chose only 3 girls aged between 18 and 30 years old. Ultimately the interview is appropriate with the nature of the topic, as well; it is pertained to the case study approach in order to reach accurate information.

### **3.2.2. Results of the interview with the families of female suicide**

#### **First Case**

The first case is a 17-year old girl who has a baccalaureate level. She is an orphan whose father works as a green grocer. She lives with a 43-year-old stepmother, a sister, and a brother who works for the military. The interview was conducted with the adopted aunt of the suicidal girl, a 55-year old aunt from a low-income family.

The aunt states that the victim and her siblings live in terrible conditions with an inhuman stepmother who has never been merciful and the father who doesn't care about his daughter's psychological state, who has a desire to study so that she can ameliorate the family's income and satisfy her stepmother. However, the frequent quarrels with her stepmother due to her persistent desire to make an end to her stepdaughter's learning so that she does all chores and then to be prepared for marriage. This becomes a huge unbearable problem since the father only obeys her, order which leads him to force his daughter to leave the school.

The girl drinks a great portion of a liquid acid. The Victim admitted her will to commit suicide before her death, for she lost herself, dignity, and future due to the big number of problems with her stepmother and the father's oppression.

#### **Analysis of the first case:**

- **Loss of status and belongingness to the family:**

The interview shows that the case belongs to an isolated family environment concerning customs as well as Way of thinking - In addition, the family enjoys neither communication skills nor social integration.

Although a series of renovations has been made to promote females' roles in the society, families still treat girls as hind of slaves, and that her primary role is to stay home doing chores until she gets married, thus, the victim lives in a social isolation state.

- **The Oppressive Relationship with the stepmother:**

When we met the aunt, we got acquainted with several aspects of her personality whom was like a mother to the victim. On the other side, the father tot refused completely for his daughter to settle down with his sister he even followed his wife's perspective that forces her to live with her family which suits their customs, religion, and status. The aunt added that the stepmother lacked care and tenderness since she lived deprived of love and affection; her biggest goal was to create sedition and problems between the father and his daughter, and this is what made the suicide feel inferior and shunned by her stepmother.

- **Research on States and Self-realization:**

Though the interview with the aunt, it is recorded that the suicide tried to strive in studying to succeed and reach her baccalaurean degree, and this was proved for through all her results and marks of the school year. All efforts she was making aimed at succeeding to

reach her goal to go to university so that she graduates, and gets a job in order to get rid of her stepmother's Control and oppression.

### **Second Case:**

A 19 year old single girl, who left the middle school, is the second case. It is a member of a 9 individual's family, 05 boys and 4 girls. Their social status is average. The girl committed suicide out of her fear of scandal since she was pregnant. According to the interview, she committed suicide almost 3 years ago during corona virus period. After multiple mediations by the suicides friends, her mother finally agreed to have deep discussion on the motives of the case. The mother is 51- year-old-sewer, and the father works as an electrician. Besides, most of her male brothers work for the national army, except the fourth brother who works as a baker's assistant while the youngest is a scientific-stream first year pupil. Unlike the girls, they are all households who help their mother at chores and her sewing field.

#### **Analysis of the Second Case:**

##### **- Family conditions:**

The girl was living emotional insecurity, especially towards her mother who felt beating and treating her harshly. The tension between the family members created a gap and made them lose love and coherence. This effort lastly allows a new alien; who comfortably becomes a part of the girl's life.

##### **- Emotional Displacement:**

The relationship was a life plan that included thinking of marriage, escaping, and running out of home seeking for emotional stability. On the other hand, failure created a dinguses emotional dimension, related to the term "Scandal" and how to hide it from the family as well as the society. The relationship sought to full the unsatisfied parts from her mother's dominance which permitted her to hand her emotions over to others.

The mother states that her 19 year old daughter's personality was really different than her stable sisters. Unlike her sisters, the suicide used to get whatever she wanted through lying and selfishness to save herself from trouble.

She never cared about her brothers' threats and destructions in case she committed an ethical behaviour. The unexpected happened. The girls made a huge mistake that livings shame to her family. She kept crying and saying that nothing matters for her, but how comes? How comes that her brothers and father live from now on? The suicide used to pretend goring out to buy sewing. The mother added that she used to beat her and pull her hair, but the daughter hardly replied or said award. She used to ash for permission each time she got beaten, and then she went out again. The mother didn't imagine that her silly naïve daughter was having an illegal relationship with someone whom she never declared, and ultimately she carried his child.

##### **- Fear of Illusion:**

Although the suicide was wrong, she tried her best to find several solutions that remained unclear till now which lead her to suicide. The latter was a way out of the intractable situation and her fear of scandal, and bullying, which prompted her am to put an end to her life in a barbaric way.

### **Third Case:**

A teenager girl is a 14year old who used to study at middle school at the downtown of Tebessa. She threw herself from the sixth-floor building. The interview proved that the parents are in comfortable professional position; the girl was typical, and financially excellent.

The problem was that the girl was competing with her friend on the best average however her level was not excellent. She was trying to do her best, yet she violent. Although

she put all her efforts, she didn't get the desirable mark. The parents declared that they were trying their best to get her whatever she wants and needs, but she was obsessed with studying since her childhood. She was of average intelligent, but she often blamed us of that our stupidity that is the only positive thing she inherited from us. We tried to contact well-known psychiatrists in the city center. However they alerted us about her aggressive and critical behaviors, we were giving her excuses that she was young and she was not aware of what she was doing

The mother continues that her daughter was struggling with self acceptance. The girl used to in set all her time for revising and reviewing her lessons, so she moved and talked and started repeating tragic expressions about death and blackness. Life became meaningless for her. She used also to talk about the unknown, fear, and the fate she would face one day if she didn't reach an overwhelming success in the official Intermediate Educational Exam. She kept repeating words about death 17 days.

On Wednesday at 08:01 she was absent for school. She was sick. She changed her cloths, drunk a cup of water, and headed to the balcony as usual to put her shoes there. But, her mother heaved nothing more than shouting and Cars honking from the outside. She reported that she went out to check what was happening, forgetting that her daughter was on the balcony. She called her husband; as well, they took the victim to the hospital of (Alia Salah) where she passed away due to sheer neck's fractures. She added that till now she cannot understand what happened, but she believes that they lost her because of school failure.

#### **Analysis of the third case:**

We can analyze the situation with the fear of receiving punishment form parents on constructive basis; she lost trust among surrenders. Also, she strongly felt that failure would result in punishment, and punishment is no more than a humiliating and encircling factor on one's self. At this point, she became slave who obeys orders and cannot even defend herself. Since failure drained the victim, she chooses to commit a suicide so as to escape the psychological and physical punishment she was suffering from. Without forgetting to mention that the victim was not aware and that the environment she lived in was stable and balanced.

#### **The forth case:**

As for the forth case, I had ameeeting with the victm's family; the mother (S. SIHEM) and the sister named (S. Omaima), who is 20 years old. Omaima said that the victim (S.Hayat) is 17 years old, and her education level is first year middle school. She lives in a municipality in the state of Tebessa, which is 100 km away from the capital of the state. The sister and her mother said that their living conditions are good since they have all the means of relaxing. The father works as merchant, awhile the mother is a housewife.... When I asked the mother about her relation with her daughter n she said that her relationship was very bad, unlike her old sister. The mother said that Hayat was rebellious in relation to their society, because due to their rural area and the great importance to the traditions and customs. According to Sihem it is a shame for a girl at her age to finish her studies. But she must be prepared as a bride at the age of 17. According to what the mother and sister said Hayat had a bad relation with her family. Mother said: Hayat always keep repeating that .... You hat me.... You discriminating against my sister ...you are not good to me.... And the victim was feel sad and depressed, which prompted as to take her to psychiatrist, who told us: Hayat need attention and we must be careful of her aggressive behavior. The mother continued her talk that in a winter night, the mother said that she ordred Hyat to go to her uncle's house to help to prepare the bride and make some sweets, but she refused to go ...saying I am not a maid for them..... Sihem said that she prompted me to beat her with a broomstick and the aim of that was to discipline her and nothing else. Suddenly she said the victim in an isolated room drank a bottle of chemical product called Rouh EL Mileh that is used when cleaning the bathroom which leads to the immediate death of Hayat.

**Analysis:**

It appears from the content of the interview that the victim was subjected to great psychological stress at the time when she was in her teenage period, represented by the severance of the relationship she had with her family, especially her mother, whom she considered the center of her life, as she felt emotionally empty and unable to adapt to others because she was unstable initially with her family environment.

The victim experienced academic deprivation and lost self-confidence, self-actualization, and social identity, which had a negative impact on the victim's behavior. This was represented by her aggressive reactions to her family and under what is called rebellion, and this is what prompted the victim to commit the suicidal act, without thinking about anything else. Because of fear, anxiety, and the constant fear of existential alienation that resulted from not living her life normally, and this constituted an emotional, psychological and social shock for her.

Such reasons motivated the victim to put an end to her life, and therefore the way to escape from suffering is her self-belief

**4. Presentation and discussion of the results:**

Despite the seriousness and credibility of the suicide phenomenon, among the Algerian society, we cannot deny how difficult it is field due to its sensitivity and privacy which becomes secret and special. Thus, our urgent desire to study this kind of phenomena becomes strong. This is to find out why the youngest category of the society is the targeted one.

Through exposing the cases and analyzing the interviews, Conducted with the victims' families, we have found that families are the biggest factor behind young girls committing suicides. Severe social conditions mainly result in suicides and that is obviously since the family does not play the necessary role create healthy social cohesion.

We have come to this conclusion based on the interviews conducted with the victims' families. As well, despair, frustration, and social isolation create fragile and weal teenage girls who are vulnerable and unable to face the hardships of life. In addition to fighting, lack of affection, and communication, and the usual quarrels between parents or siblings that become a source of psychological problems. This ultimately creates an absolute masculinity, underestimating oneself, and a sense of in security and later violence that drug the teenager to commit a suicide.

**5. Conclusion:**

Based on the results of this sociological study, the causes behind girls' suicides is proved in which the phenomenon is aggravated among the Algerian society, thus the victims' rates are increasing. This is due the fact that the victims suffered from social pressure, including poverty, unemployment and severe psychological issues which are resulted from the hand socio- economic conditions of their families. Without neglecting the psychological motives that can be funneled down as emotional failure which manifests in establishing relationships those end up with carelessness. The latter highly affects the psychological and emotional state; this is clearly applicable with the sociological approach that we employed on the study. The overall results can be summarized as follows.

- The prevalence of the phenomenon of suicide that is a crime against the psyche and society.
- The spread of the phenomenon in the recent years is an indicator of social disintegration that represents an individual as well as a collective failure in adapting to social norms and restrictions, besides the separation of the individual from the group that prompts his lack of social acceptance.



- Through examining the causes of suicide, we find an answer based on the circumstances surrounding the phenomenon. Yet, there still remains a catastrophic mystery in which we are not able to dig into its causes.
- The reasons behind the phenomenon of suicide among Algerian girls differ, and they are mainly psychological, social, and mostly social pressures.

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# EMPOWERING THE WORKFORCE: THE IMPERATIVE OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN A TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN WORLD

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**Abstract:** *In today's rapidly evolving technological landscape, industries are increasingly dependent on advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and data analytics, which have reshaped job roles and created new professions requiring specialized skills. Despite these advancements, there is a significant skills gap within the workforce, which threatens both individual careers and organizational success. This article explores the critical role of professional training in bridging this gap, emphasizing the importance of technical training, soft skills development, continuous learning programs, and cross-disciplinary learning. Technical training in areas such as coding, data science, and cybersecurity ensures that employees remain relevant and competitive in the job market. Meanwhile, soft skills like critical thinking and communication are essential for adapting to the complexities of modern work environments. Continuous learning programs, supported by online platforms and micro-credentials, foster a culture of lifelong learning. The article also highlights the specific training needs in the South-West Oltenia region, where most companies recognize the value of training to support business expansion and maintain workforce readiness in the face of technological change. To remain competitive, organizations must invest in comprehensive professional training programs that prepare employees for both current and future challenges in a technology-driven world.*

**Keywords:** Professional training, technological advancements, skills gap, continuous learning, workforce development

## 1. Introduction

The rapid pace of technological change is reshaping the global workforce. Industries are increasingly reliant on advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, automation, and data analytics. These developments have not only transformed traditional job roles but have also led to the creation of entirely new professions that require specialized skills (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). The advent of digitalization, for instance, has revolutionized industries ranging from manufacturing to healthcare, necessitating a workforce that is adept at leveraging new tools and systems (Ford, 2015).

Despite the obvious benefits of technological advancements, they have also led to a widening skills gap within the workforce. A significant proportion of employees find themselves ill-prepared to handle the demands of modern job roles due to a lack of relevant skills (World Economic Forum, 2020). This gap poses a risk not only to individual careers but also to organizational success and economic growth. Companies that fail to invest in professional training may find themselves at a competitive disadvantage, unable to keep pace with more agile and tech-savvy competitors.

## 2. The Impact of Technological Advancements on the Workforce

The advent of automation and AI has fundamentally altered the nature of work across various industries. For example, in manufacturing, robotics and AI systems have taken over tasks that were once performed manually, leading to increased efficiency and productivity (Autor, 2015). However, this shift has also rendered many traditional jobs obsolete, necessitating a shift in the skill sets required by employees. The finance industry, too, has seen

significant changes, with algorithmic trading and automated financial advising systems replacing roles that previously required human intervention (Arntz, Gregory, & Zierahn, 2016).

As technology continues to evolve, job roles across sectors are being redefined. New positions such as data scientists, AI specialists, and cybersecurity experts have emerged, each requiring a deep understanding of complex technologies and systems (Bessen, 2019). Even traditional roles, such as marketing and customer service, now demand proficiency in digital tools and platforms, reflecting the broader trend of digital transformation in the workplace.

One of the most significant challenges posed by technological advancement is the rapid obsolescence of skills. Skills that were highly valued a decade ago may no longer be relevant in today's job market (Frey & Osborne, 2017). This phenomenon underscores the importance of continuous learning and adaptation, as employees must regularly update their skill sets to keep pace with technological changes.

### **3. The Importance of Professional Training**

Professional training is crucial in bridging the gap between existing employee capabilities and the demands of modern job roles. Training programs tailored to current technological trends can equip employees with the necessary skills to operate effectively in their roles. For instance, training in data analytics can help employees in marketing, finance, and other fields to harness the power of big data, leading to more informed decision-making (Davenport & Harris, 2017). Well-designed training programs can significantly enhance employee performance by providing them with the tools and knowledge they need to excel in their roles.

For example, training in the latest software tools can improve efficiency and productivity, while soft skills training can help employees better manage teams and projects in a tech-driven environment (Noe, 2017).

In the context of a rapidly evolving technological landscape, professional training has become a multifaceted endeavor, encompassing various types of training designed to address the diverse needs of modern employees. The following sections explore the primary categories of professional training that are crucial in this context: technical training, soft skills training, continuous learning programs, and cross-disciplinary training.

### **4. Technical Training**

Technical training focuses on equipping employees with the specific skills needed to work with new technologies. This includes training in areas such as coding, data analysis, machine learning, and cybersecurity. For example, companies may offer coding boot camps or data science courses to help employees develop the technical expertise required to handle complex tasks (Harris, 2020). One of the most significant drivers of technical training is the growing need for employees who can handle large datasets and extract actionable insights through data analytics.

As Davenport and Harris (2017) explain, "Organizations are increasingly reliant on data-driven decision-making processes, which necessitate a workforce proficient in data analysis tools and methodologies" (p. 42). Therefore, technical training in data science and analytics is not just a valuable asset but a critical necessity for companies seeking to maintain a competitive edge in their respective industries. Furthermore, the rapid adoption of automation technologies across various sectors has amplified the need for employees to acquire technical skills related to robotics, AI, and machine learning. As Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) highlight, "The pace of automation is accelerating, and with it comes the need for a workforce that can design, implement, and maintain these systems" (p. 65). Consequently, organizations are increasingly investing in specialized training programs that focus on these areas to ensure their employees can meet the challenges posed by automation.

The importance of cybersecurity training cannot be overstated in today's digital world. With the rise of cyber threats, organizations need employees who are not only aware of these risks but are also capable of mitigating them. According to Arntz, Gregory, and Zierahn (2016), "Cybersecurity training has become essential for all employees, not just IT professionals, as the human element remains a significant vulnerability in most cyber-attacks" (p. 97). This broad-based approach to technical training ensures that all employees, regardless of their specific roles, have a fundamental understanding of cybersecurity principles and best practices.

### **5. Soft Skills Training**

While technical skills are essential, soft skills are equally important in a tech-driven world. Training programs that focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and adaptability can help employees navigate the complexities of modern workplaces. These skills are particularly valuable in roles that require collaboration and innovation, as they enable employees to work effectively in teams and adapt to changing circumstances (Robles, 2012:455).

Critical thinking and problem-solving are particularly valuable in environments where employees must make decisions based on complex data and uncertain outcomes. Robles (2012: 458) argues that "In a world where technology can often create as many problems as it solves, the ability to think critically and solve problems creatively is a vital skill for all employees" (p. 458). This assertion underscores the importance of training programs that enhance these cognitive skills, enabling employees to navigate the complexities of technology-driven tasks and challenges. Communication skills are another key area of focus in soft skills training. As technology facilitates global collaboration, the ability to communicate effectively across different cultures and platforms becomes crucial.

Tannenbaum (2020) notes that "In an increasingly interconnected world, communication skills are not just about language proficiency; they encompass the ability to convey ideas clearly, listen actively, and engage in meaningful dialogue" (p. 212). Training programs that emphasize these skills help employees to collaborate more effectively in diverse teams, both within and across organizations.

Adaptability is perhaps the most crucial soft skill in a rapidly changing technological landscape. As Noe (2017) explains, "The ability to adapt to new technologies and work processes is essential for employees who must continually update their skills to stay relevant in their roles" (Noe, 2017: 134). Training that fosters adaptability helps employees to embrace change, learn new skills quickly, and apply them effectively in their work.

### **6. Continuous Learning Programs**

In a rapidly changing technological environment, continuous learning programs are essential. These programs encourage employees to engage in ongoing education through online courses, certifications, workshops, and other learning opportunities. For example, companies may partner with online learning platforms such as Coursera or Udacity to offer employees access to a wide range of courses that align with their career goals and organizational needs (Meister, 2013).

The rise of online learning platforms has made continuous learning more accessible and flexible, allowing employees to pursue education at their own pace. Meister (2013) observes that "Online learning platforms, such as Coursera and Udacity, have democratized access to high-quality education, enabling employees to acquire new skills without leaving their jobs" (Meister, 2013: 178). This flexibility is particularly important in today's fast-paced work environment, where employees may not have the time or resources to attend traditional in-person training sessions. Continuous learning is also supported by the increasing availability of micro-credentials and certifications, which allow employees to gain recognition for specific skills. As Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) point out, "Micro-credentials provide

a valuable way for employees to demonstrate their expertise in particular areas, and for employers to identify and reward these skills" (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006: 89). These programs often include a mix of self-directed learning, workshops, and collaborative projects, offering a comprehensive approach to professional development.

Moreover, organizations are beginning to recognize the value of fostering a culture of continuous learning, where employees are encouraged to take initiative in their professional development. Wesselink, Blok, and Ringersma (2007) argue that "Organizations that cultivate a learning culture are more likely to retain top talent and remain competitive in the long run" (p. Wesselink, Blok, and Ringersma, 2007: 346). By supporting continuous learning, companies not only enhance the skills of their workforce but also promote a sense of ownership and motivation among employees.

## **7. Supporting Career Development**

Professional training also plays a vital role in supporting career development. Continuous learning opportunities enable employees to progress in their careers by acquiring new skills and qualifications that are in demand in the marketplace. This not only benefits the individual but also the organization, as it helps retain top talent and reduces turnover (Saks & Burke, 2012).

## **8. Methods**

The research presented in this study was based on a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively analyze the impact of technological advancements on workforce development. The study aimed to assess the adequacy of workforce training and the readiness of employees to adapt to new technologies, with a particular focus on the South-West Oltenia region.

The primary data was gathered through a structured survey distributed to companies operating across various industries in the South-West Oltenia region. The survey targeted key decision-makers, including HR managers and senior executives, to obtain accurate insights into workforce training needs, business expansion plans, and employee readiness to use modern technologies. A total of 150 companies participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 78%.

The survey consisted of multiple sections, including questions on workforce size, employee preparedness for technology use, and the importance of specific skills such as digital competencies and managerial flexibility. Both closed-ended and Likert scale questions were employed to capture quantifiable data, while open-ended questions allowed respondents to provide qualitative feedback on their workforce development strategies.

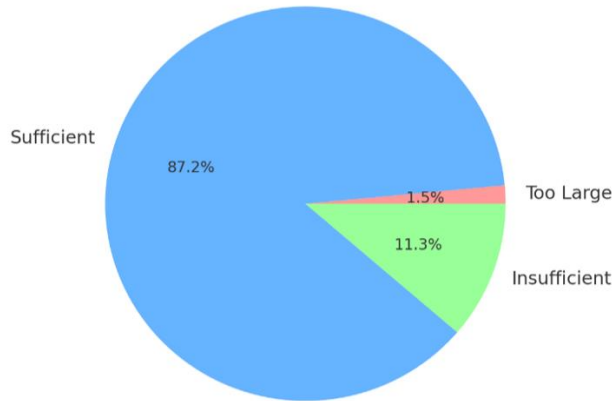
Quantitative data from the survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine key trends and percentages. This analysis allowed the research team to identify significant findings related to workforce adequacy, technological preparedness, and future training needs. The qualitative data were coded and thematically analyzed to complement the quantitative findings, providing deeper insights into company perspectives on training and technological adoption. The study acknowledges certain limitations, such as the focus on a specific geographical region and the reliance on self-reported data from respondents, which may introduce bias. However, the mixed-methods approach provided a balanced view of the challenges and opportunities facing the workforce in a technology-driven world.

## **9. Results of an empirical study. Professional Training Needs in the South-West Oltenia Region**

A majority of respondents believe that the current workforce size is sufficient for their company's needs, indicating a balanced alignment between human resources and business demands. According to the data, **87.2%** of respondents believe their workforce size

is sufficient to meet operational needs. This suggests that the majority of companies are confident in their current staffing levels and do not feel immediate pressure to increase or reduce employee numbers.

**Figure 1: Workforce Size and Sufficiency**



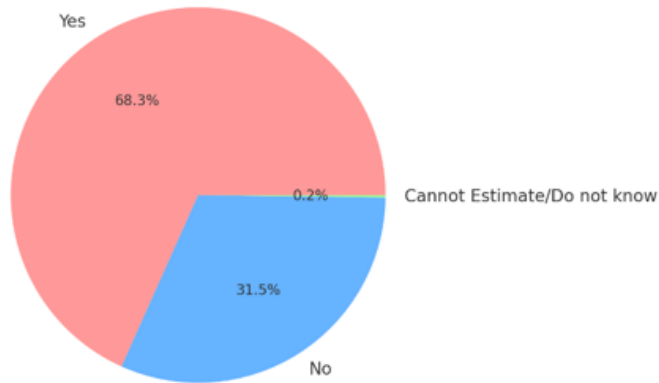
However, **11.3%** of companies reported that their workforce is insufficient, indicating that there is still a portion of businesses experiencing staffing shortages, which could potentially hinder productivity or limit growth opportunities. Only **1.5%** of respondents believe their workforce is too large, suggesting that overstaffing is not a widespread concern in this region.

A significant majority of respondents (68.3%) plan to diversify their business activities within the next 12 months, reflecting a proactive approach toward business expansion and adaptation to market needs. This highlights a general trend toward growth and the need for corresponding employee training to support new initiatives. This trend toward diversification also highlights the growing recognition that businesses must remain agile and adaptable in an increasingly dynamic and technology-driven environment.

As companies diversify, they are likely to encounter new operational challenges, such as integrating new technologies, managing more complex supply chains, or catering to different customer segments. Consequently, employee training will play a crucial role in supporting these diversification efforts. A workforce equipped with the right skills will be essential for successfully executing new business strategies and ensuring that employees are capable of handling new tasks, systems, or markets.

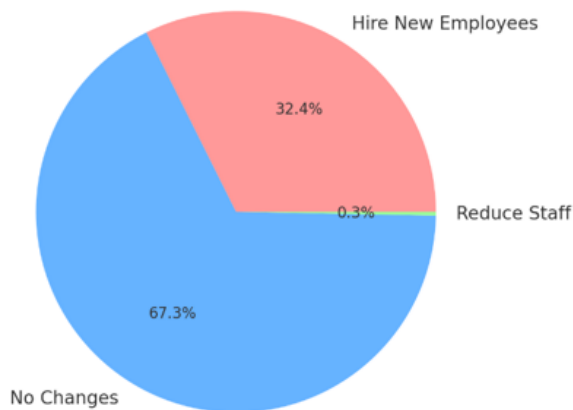
Moreover, this drive for diversification underscores the importance of continuous learning and professional development within organizations. As businesses venture into unfamiliar areas, employees will need to acquire new competencies, whether in technical skills, such as data analytics and digital tools, or in soft skills, such as adaptability and problem-solving. Therefore, companies will need to invest in tailored training programs that align with their specific diversification goals, ensuring that their workforce is both prepared and motivated to contribute to the success of these new initiatives. In this context, professional development becomes not only a tool for growth but also a strategic necessity for sustaining long-term business success.

**Figure 2: Plans for Business Diversification**



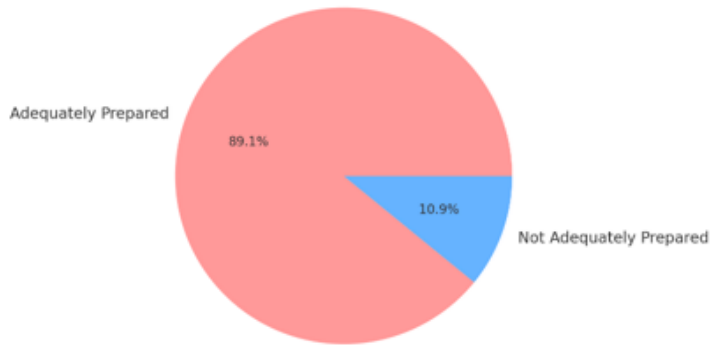
A large portion of companies (67.3%) do not plan to make significant changes to their workforce in the near future, suggesting stability in employment levels. However, some are considering hiring or reducing staff based on technological changes. However, this overall stability does not exclude the possibility of shifts in workforce strategies among certain companies. Some respondents have expressed intentions to either hire new talent or reduce staff in response to technological advancements and market demands. For instance, businesses that are integrating automation, artificial intelligence, or other advanced technologies into their operations may require fewer employees for certain manual tasks while simultaneously seeking to recruit specialists in fields such as data science, cybersecurity, or AI. This dual trend of reducing roles that are becoming obsolete and hiring for emerging positions illustrates the broader transformation occurring in the workforce due to rapid technological change.

**Figure 3: Human Resources Policies**



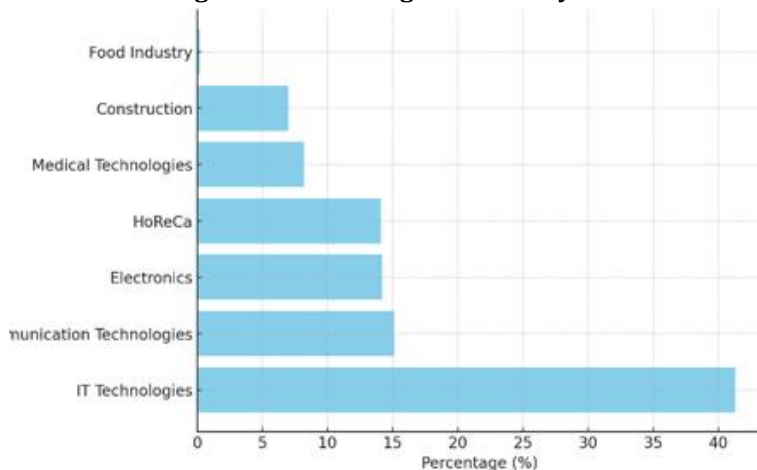
Most employees (89.1%) are considered adequately prepared to use the technologies available in their companies, which suggests a generally high level of technological competency among the workforce. The fact that a significant majority of employees are deemed capable of using the current technologies suggests that these organizations have already invested in appropriate training and development programs. This level of readiness indicates that companies in the region are likely to be more resilient to technological changes and can adapt more easily to new systems and tools as they emerge.

**Figure 4: Professional Preparedness for Technology**



Information technology (IT) is the most widely used technology, with 41.3% of companies identifying it as critical. Other important technologies include communication technologies and electronics. IT enables businesses to optimize their processes, enhance productivity, and facilitate seamless communication across different departments and locations. The critical nature of IT also reflects the increasing reliance on software tools, platforms, and systems that support everything from customer relationship management to supply chain logistics. In addition to IT, **communication technologies** and **electronics** were also noted as important by a significant portion of the respondents. Communication technologies, which include tools such as video conferencing platforms, messaging apps, and collaborative software, are crucial in today’s increasingly remote and globally distributed work environments. These technologies allow teams to collaborate effectively, regardless of geographic location, and play a key role in maintaining the flow of information within and between organizations. As businesses continue to expand their operations globally, the ability to communicate seamlessly across borders becomes a strategic necessity. **Electronics**, which encompass a wide range of hardware components such as sensors, embedded systems, and computing devices, are equally important in industries where automation, data collection, and machine control are integral to operations. For many manufacturing and tech-driven companies, electronics serve as the backbone for the integration of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, smart systems, and robotics, all of which are crucial for improving efficiency and driving innovation.

**Figure 5: Technologies Currently in Use**



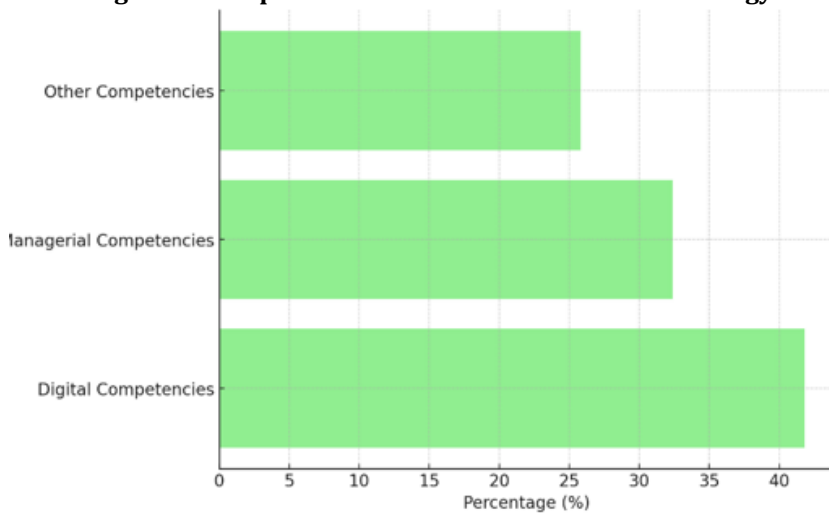


**Digital competencies**, especially in areas like **cybersecurity** and **internet safety**, are regarded as the most crucial skills for efficient technology use across industries. As businesses increasingly rely on digital platforms, data management systems, and interconnected devices, the risks associated with cyber threats have grown exponentially. Ensuring that employees are trained in cybersecurity protocols is not just a technical necessity but a strategic imperative for protecting sensitive data, maintaining operational integrity, and safeguarding customer trust. **Cybersecurity skills** enable employees to identify, mitigate, and respond to potential threats, thus reducing the likelihood of costly data breaches or system failures. With cyber-attacks becoming more sophisticated, organizations must ensure that all employees, not just IT specialists, have a basic understanding of **internet safety practices** to minimize vulnerabilities across all departments.

In addition to technical digital competencies, **managerial skills** that can adapt to both technological advancements and shifting market conditions are also deemed essential. As technology continues to reshape industries, managers are required to lead with agility and innovation. They must understand how to leverage new tools to streamline processes, improve decision-making, and foster a culture of continuous learning. These managerial skills include strategic thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to guide teams through periods of technological transformation.

Managers with these adaptive capabilities are better equipped to oversee complex digital projects, implement new systems, and ensure their teams remain responsive to change. They play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between technology and its practical application within the organization. Thus, training programs that focus on developing both digital competencies and adaptable managerial skills are crucial for organizations striving to stay competitive and resilient in today’s rapidly evolving technological landscape.

**Figure 6: Competencies Needed for Efficient Technology Use**



## 10. Conclusions

The accelerating pace of technological advancement has made professional training a vital component for ensuring organizational success and employee career progression. The integration of new technologies into workplaces has rendered many traditional roles obsolete while creating new demands for specialized skills. Thus, companies must prioritize professional training to not only bridge the skills gap but also equip employees with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in the digital age.

Furthermore, fostering a culture of continuous learning is essential for future-proofing the workforce. Companies that encourage ongoing education, through both technical

and soft skills training, position themselves to adapt quickly to technological shifts and market demands. By supporting employee development, organizations can retain top talent, reduce turnover, and maintain a competitive edge in an increasingly digital world.

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# JOB CONFLICT STRATEGIES AMONG THE ALGERIAN PUBLIC EMPLOYEE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO EFFICIENCY AT WORK A FIELD STUDY AT THE DIRECTORATE OF YOUTH AND SPORTS OF EL-TARF STATE

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the tactics employed by a public employee at an Algerian institution to handle different types of present or potential conflict and how these tactics impact the effectiveness of the institution. The study seeks to identify the different strategies employed within the organization and their application in conflict situations between individuals and the organization. The central question to be answered is: What is the correlation between a public employee's utilization of organizational conflict management strategies and their work efficiency? This study utilized Michel Crozier's strategic analysis model, employing an analytical approach. The analysis was conducted using a quantitative study on employees in the youth and sports sectors in El Tarf State. We surveyed a sample of 140 individuals using a validated research form. The study's findings indicate a correlation between the tactics used by public employees in conflict management and changes in job efficiency inside the institution, based on the validity and reliability of its aspects.*

**Keywords:** conflict, strategy, efficiency, public employee.

## 1. Introduction

Individuals in society view employment as a fundamental necessity that aligns with their qualifications, preferences, and physical and intellectual preparedness. Ensuring compatibility between the job and the employee is a critical consideration for organizations when recruiting people in Algeria, given the limited availability of permanent job possibilities, as evidenced by unemployment statistics. Given the absence of a robust economic system and its failure to create adequate employment opportunities, a significant number of individuals are inclined to pursue jobs in the public sector. This sector offers a sense of security in terms of livelihood, financial stability, and social well-being, particularly for recent graduates from universities, institutes, and training centers throughout the country. Joining a job involves various mechanisms and methods for selecting candidates from a large pool of individuals seeking employment. However, the actual experience of working in the public sector may differ from the employee's initial perception. They may realize that their goals are not being met within the organization or institution they are affiliated with or that the work environment does not align with their desired preferences. Additionally, they may struggle to find alternative job opportunities that enable them to fulfill their needs and desires. To address these challenges and fulfill their biological, security, achievement, appreciation, and self-actualization needs, individuals employ various strategies within their organizations.

## 2. Research Problem and Questions

In Algeria, the public sector is the most sought-after sector for employment due to its stable work environment, competitive wages, and extensive employee benefits. Employees receive these benefits throughout their careers and even after retirement, which include social security, health insurance, grants, and social services. To guarantee a satisfactory standard of living for its members, it is essential to have transparent and fair regulations that define the rights and responsibilities of employees towards their respective organizations.

Public sector employees in Algeria experience a significant decrease in their wages in relation to the high cost of living. This is due to a disparity between their financial earnings and their ability to purchase goods and services, resulting in employee dissatisfaction. This scenario is manifested in numerous instances. The initial stages of job conflict for Algerian workers in public institutions involve expressive behaviors that manifest as complaints, criticisms, and cheating in task performance. These behaviors often evolve into more complex forms that negatively impact both the employee's effectiveness and the institution as a whole. This is primarily due to the scarcity of permanent job opportunities, which forces employees to adopt strategies aimed at maintaining job stability and social equilibrium.

Based on this premise, the employee is confronted with two fundamental choices: either conforming to the job requirements or modifying the job to suit their needs. He employs defensive and offensive tactics based on the circumstances he encounters and the characteristics of the opposing side in the fight. The conflicts arising between an individual and an organization, individuals, or different work groups can hinder the productivity and task performance of various organizations. These conflicts are influenced by the cards possessed by the individual. The employee may occasionally engage in job refusal or do tasks superficially and routinely. This behavior can lead to tensions and disagreements with coworkers or superiors and may escalate into explicit conflicts between the employee and the organization, which can be more intricate. When an employee feels hostile towards the organization, they adopt various techniques based on their position in the conflict. The employee may utilize defensive methods, such as evading extra work tasks or maintaining employment neutrality, to further their interests and objectives. In certain situations, he may employ an offensive approach, such as utilizing bargaining tactics to safeguard specific benefits or investing in chances that allow him to enhance his earnings from the firm. He chooses his plan based on the situation he encounters, the intensity of the conflict at hand, and the dominant power center in the dispute. Each strategy employed by the individual has a tangible or intangible effect on their performance and contribution to the organization.

Therefore, we posed the following central question: What is the nature of the relationship between the public employee's use of organizational conflict management strategies and efficiency at work?

**A. Through this question, we asked the following sub-questions:**

- ✓ Is the use of defensive strategies by Algerian public employees related to the decrease and increase in efficiency at work?
- ✓ Is the use of aggressive negotiation strategies by the Algerian public employee related to the decrease and increase in efficiency at work?
- ✓ Is the use of offensive investment strategies by Algerian public employees related to the decrease and increase in efficiency at work?

**B. Study Hypotheses:**

To answer these questions, we put forward the general hypothesis of the study: There is a relationship between the Algerian public employee's use of conflict management strategies and productivity at work.

Partial hypotheses:

- ✓ There is a relationship between the public employee's use of the defensive strategy and the degree of increase or decrease in efficiency at work at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).
- ✓ There is a relationship between the public employee's use of the offensive negotiation strategy and the degree of increase or decrease in efficiency at work at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).

- ✓ There is a relationship between the public employee's use of the offensive investment strategy and the degree of increase or decrease in efficiency at work at the significance level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ).
- ✓

### **C. Study Objectives:**

This research aims to examine the relationship between the use of certain conflict management strategies by the public employee in the Algerian institution to achieve his goals within the organization and the degree of decrease or increase in efficiency in working in youth and sports institutions in the state of El Tarf.

### **3. Defining the concepts of the study:**

#### **A. Concept of conflict:**

is violence symbolic or material opposition, the existence or nature of the conflict is reflected first of all by the frequent observation in their witnesses' journalists, psychologists, and sociologists of a form of struggle or antagonism that can be more or less extensive, more or less explicit and conscious, conflict and a struggle for greater income, etc. It is here that the link between economic data and social data takes place because the income data itself must be dependent on the division of labor (Sump & Hugues, 1973: 65).

Conflict has been seen as a significant element that influences the effectiveness and performance of organizational collaboration. Conflict is awareness on the part of the parties involved of discrepancies, incompatible wishes, or irreconcilable desires (Joyce & Panteli, 2007: 6).

#### **Operational definition of functional conflict:**

It is an organizational conflict in which the employee is a party and the other party is the workgroup or administration, and in which the individual practices strategies to manage this conflict according to the conflict situation to achieve his goals through the organization.

#### **B. Strategy:**

is" a plan that you use in order to achieve something "(Worn, 1999: 742). Ancient times used the word strategy to denote preparation and readiness for war, detailing the general plan of army movements to achieve a specific goal. The origin of the word strategy goes back to the Greek word "strategos," which is composed of two parts, "Stratos," which means army. The second part, "agein," means leader, and the two parts combined mean military leader. With the same meaning, the term was introduced. In military dictionaries, it is the art of reconciling the military, political, and moral forces employed in the course of a war or in preparing the defense of the state (Hamama, 2022/2023: 18).

#### **Strategies for the individual's career conflict within the organization:**

The employee uses many strategies towards the institution to which he is affiliated that enable him to overcome conflicts, whether with individuals within the organization, groups, or administration, to achieve his goals, whether maintaining a certain status that suits his economic and social situation and achieves job stability, increasing gains such as obtaining promotions or material rewards or obtaining status and power through the organization. The concept of strategy is considered a meaningful behavior carried out by the actor within the framework of a system of actions to which he belongs as a result of his choices, and it can be classified into two categories that the actor follows in his relationship with the organization.

- ❖ **Defensive strategy:** the actor adopts towards the organization to preserve the privileges and gains that he believes constitute a bet for him, so he uses all the winning cards and resources he has for his position in the organization to remain with its current characteristics as it is (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977: 79).

- ❖ **Offensive strategy:** which the actor uses to obtain new gains within the organization. It is of two types:
- **Bargaining or negotiation strategy:** through which the actor seeks to obtain immediate and immediate gains in the form of a give-and-take, such as the worker's abstention from doing work that he considers to be outside the limits of his competence or professional requirements, but he expresses a willingness to do it on the condition of obtaining additional immediate and immediate privileges (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977: 72).
- **Investment strategy:** in which the return is post-hoc in the medium or long term, and this strategy is an optional behavior for actors who have professional status and includes the possibility of future rewards such as obtaining a professional promotion or increasing material rewards (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977: 79), which is often among managers and pedagogues.

**C. Efficiently:** "the efficient ability to work well without making mistakes or wasting time and energy" (Worn, 1999: 243), efficiently is defined as the extent of an organization's ability to achieve positive results compared to the capabilities and means that were harnessed to achieve them. This is measured by the ratio of the targeted result to the means for which it was allocated. It is also defined as the comparison between the result obtained and the results used (Bechichi & Medjellekh, 2017: 08). It is also known as the relationship between the achieved result and the size of the cost of the money invested, and it is linked to a group of elements represented in productivity, liquidity, effectiveness, efficiency, and profitability (Bechichi, Medjellekh, & Benyounes, 2021: 745).

Four fundamental elements can measure the efficiency of youth institution employees: work discipline, task and job completion methods, work relationships, and professional responsibility.

#### **4. Theoretical approach to the topic:**

The topic of "job conflict strategies among Algerian public employees and their relationship to efficiency at work" from the perspective of the sociology of organization and work is close to the model of strategic analysis of the French scientist "Michel Crozet," who believes that organizations are not completely rational, harmonious systems but rather systems in which individuals and groups are a space for maneuvers despite all the efforts made to control them, and there is continuous interaction between the organization and the main players in it. Crozet likened the organization to a playing field and said that people and individuals enter the organization with different positions or goals (Friedberg, 2014: 10).

Each of them uses personal strategies in order to protect his interests and goals, and Crozet shows through this how each specific group seeks to prevent and expand the areas of discrimination to reduce its dependence on others. This is what makes its behaviour hidden and difficult to predict (Dion, 1982: 86). Crozet also observes that the employee successfully adheres to the role's literalism. Also, through the use of and adherence to the letter of the law that the employee uses, especially in bureaucratic organizations, to protect himself from involvement in certain possible situations, Crozet revealed four basic characteristics that stand out in the organization:

- The expansion and spread of general rules of conduct that define various jobs in their finest details, whereby actions are subject to the greatest possible degree of possibility (Crozier, 1973: 218-219).
- Decision centralization, where decision-making authority tends to gather and place itself at the highest level, where preferences are naturally given to those who are fixed in the system more than they are given to the functional goals in the organization (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977: 67).
- Isolation of each hierarchy and the pressure of the group on the individual.

- The growth of parallel relations of influence may result in conflicts. On this basis, each system or group forms a bureaucratic organization whose balance is based on the existence of a series of relatively stable vicious circles within the organization that grow from a climate of generalization and centralization.

Michel Crozet also provides us with a set of basic principles on which strategic analysis is based:

- Man does not accept to be treated as a means or tool in the service of the organization, as each individual has his own goals and desires, focusing thus on the individual's position in the organization and his value.

- The existence of relative freedom for actors within the institution or organization means that the actor within the organization owns spaces or margins for action (Crozier, 1973: 218). This starting point is at the heart of Michel Crozet's strategic analysis.

- Rationality is limited because the actor predicts the strategies of others and the environment surrounding him, and the entry of actors into the environment of these conflicts makes their behavior directed towards achieving their goals. They possess special resources and develop strategies based on the data of others, such as competitors or colleagues, and the behaviors followed by the actors, which can be added as a third type of social pressure that occurs within the organization.

Any institution, as an organization, cannot exist without internal or external pressures. The first type of pressure originates from the work environment, which includes machines, routines, temperature, and timing, followed by work methodology. The more we get rid of manual labor, the more control by law increases. The second source of pressure is the different affiliations of individuals, such as economic, cultural, and social ideology. The third pressure stems from the experience of interactions within the organization.

Crozet also spoke about authority within the framework of the relations between the actors, which he considers not linked to the hierarchical status of the actors. Rather, Crozet believes that authority is a reciprocal relationship based on the principle of suspicion as a trump card for every actor in the organization and is not granted, meaning that the organization seeks to hide the area of suspicion to hide the flaw in the existing system (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977: 57). Highlighting the principles of democracy and justice and marketing them in a way that weakens and reduces the attempts of opponents and revolutionaries to organize in order to ensure the stability of the system (Ali, 2018: 149).

All of these relationships, according to Crozier, are subject to compatibility between the two parties, i.e., the subject and the subject, who does not accept the cycle of the condition of subjugation unless he has guarantees from the party to whom he is subject. That is, the exercise of power takes place through the existence of the principle of negotiation and beneficial exchange between the two parties, or the waiver of the right of one party to another party (Dion, 1993: 995). According to conditions and principles, and finally, Michel Crozier spoke about a new concept that he called "constructing a pattern of concrete action," which takes a central place in strategic analysis, and by which he means a structured human group, a social structure that coordinates the actions of its members, but the regularity in it is unnatural. Considering the intervention of a set of rules of the game in its formation, strategic analysis, according to Crozier, depends on a set of basic concepts, the first of which is the actor, then authority and the area of doubt, then the practice of defensive strategies, offensive strategies, and the pattern of concrete action. It can be said that strategic analysis was able to define the cognitive system of patterns of action, understanding, and expectation. Changes are better than other theories, so understanding the dynamics of coordination and the possible course of action requires studying the convictions of the actors, their bets, and their goals. He changed his understanding of the negativity of conflict in the organization and considered it to be an inherent condition of the organization and not harmful to its functions.

**5. Study Methodology:**

**A. Used Methodology:** The study relied on the quantitative approach, which is research that is concerned with collecting data through the use of statistical measurement tools that have validity and reliability and are applied to a sample of individuals representing the original community and then processing the data with statistical methods that ultimately lead to results that can be generalized to the original community. It is the total score obtained by answering the items on the scale of this concept” (Abdelkader, 2018: 239).

**B. Field of study:** This study was conducted in the Directorate of Youth and Sports of the State of El-Tarf, which is located in the far north-east of Algeria.

The Directorate of Youth and Sports for the state of Al-Tarf is a governmental administrative body that represents an administrative organization, consisting in its entirety of a group of individuals of a legal nature who enjoy full civil rights and are governed by administrative law in the hierarchy.

As the Ministry represents the guardianship at the state level, that is, it is an intermediary in implementing the law and programs for preparing youth and ensuring their progress with social changes. It is an organization of a social service nature at the local level. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, it works to promote youth activities culturally, scientifically, artistically, and sports activities for various social segments through its institutions spread across the territory of the state of El Tarf, which number 39 youth institutions, including 19 youth homes, 11 neighborhood sports complexes, 4 multi-activity halls, and 2 hostels. Youth, two youth camps, and a center for entertainment and scientific entertainment, supervised by the Office of Youth Institutions.

**C. Study Population:** The study population consists of all workers and executives of the Youth and Sports Directorate, which employs 69 pedagogical staff, 158 administrative employees, and 51 workers, meaning a total of 278 individuals, which is the total study population.

**D. selecting and determining the study sample:** This study relied on the stratified sampling method due to the large size of the population and the heterogeneity of its vocabulary. We limited the sample to 140 individuals, which included 35 pedagogical staff, 79 administrative workers, and 26 workers, representing 50% of the total study population. This was done using (K. Thompson, 2012, pages 59-60) as follows:

$$n = \frac{N \times p(1 - p)}{[(N - 1)(d^2 \div z^2)] + p(1 - p)}$$

**E. Study tools:** A questionnaire consisting of four axes was used in this study:

The first axis includes general information for the respondents about age, gender, seniority, wage, function, training, and educational level.

The second axis includes a study of the relationship between the use of defensive strategies by Algerian public employees and the decrease or increase in efficiency at work, and it contains four phrases numbered from 01 to 4.

The third axis includes a study of the relationship between the use of offensive negotiation strategies by the Algerian public employee and the decrease or increase in efficiency at work and contains four phrases numbered from 05 to 8.

The fourth axis includes a study of the relationship between the use of offensive investment strategies by Algerian public employees and the decrease or increase in efficiency at work and contains four phrases numbered from 9 to 12.

**F. Study Instruments:** The researcher utilized two instruments according to the study requirements:

**G-Scale used:** The researcher adopted the design of the questionnaire for the study to measure the answers of the respondents on a five-point Likert scale according to the following table:



Table (01): Response types and degrees used in the questionnaire according to a five-point Likert scale (I. Elaine & Christopher, 2007: 64)

Adoption Rate	Strongly Agree	Approve	Neutral	opposed	Strongly opposed
Estimation	1	2	3	4	5

Source: I. Elaine Allen and Christopher A. Seaman, Likert Scale Response Categories.

**H. Statistical Methods Used in the Study:** After the field application stage, the researcher processed the questionnaires using the statistical program SPSS version 23, applying the following statistical methods to answer the research questions:

- ✓ Frequency distribution and percentages to describe the responses of the sample individuals.
- ✓ Cronbach's alpha and Spearman's correlation coefficient for reliability and validity.
- ✓ Mean calculation for obtaining the weighted arithmetic mean.
- ✓ Standard deviation to measure the dispersion of the respondents' answers around the mean.

**6. View field data**

**A: Display data for the first axis:**

Table (02): Display data for the first axis

Gender					
	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	49	35,0	35,0	35,0
	Féminine	91	65,0	65,0	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	
Age					
	Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	From 20 to 30	17	12,1	12,1	12,1
	From 30 to 40	58	41,4	41,4	53,6
	40 or more	65	46,4	46,4	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	
Educational level					
	Educational level	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary éducation	3	2,1	2,1	2,1
	Middle éducation	17	12,1	12,1	14,3
	High school	60	42,9	42,9	57,1
	Université level	60	42,9	42,9	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	
Occupation					
	Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Worker	26	18,6	18,6	18,6
	Administrative employée	79	56,4	56,4	75,0
	Pedagogical Framework	35	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	
Years of professional experience(seniority)					
	Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	From 1 to 10	63	45,0	45,0	45,0
	From 11 to 20	55	39,3	39,3	84,3
	From 21 to 30	11	7,9	7,9	92,1
	31 or more	11	7,9	7,9	100,0
Wage					

Thousand dinars		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Little wage	35	25,0	25,0	25,0
	Average wage	90	64,3	64,3	89,3
	Good wage	15	10,7	10,7	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	
<b>Internal training</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	47	33,6		
	Internal training	93	66,4	100,0	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	
<b>External training</b>					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	93	66,4		
	External training	47	33,6	100,0	100,0
	Total	140	100,0	100,0	

Source: Prepared by researchers based on SPSS 23 output

Data from the first axis of the study questionnaire show that the number of females is almost twice the number of males, which shows that the percentage of demand for public employment among women is greater than that of men. We also note that the age of the majority of employees exceeds 30 years, and the largest percentage exceeds 40 years, while employees are less than 20 years old. The freezing of the recruitment process in recent years due to Algeria's austerity policy has resulted in a relatively small percentage of employees, estimated at 12.1%.

University graduates and those with a secondary level of education represent the majority of employees at a rate equal to 42.9% for each, and they represent both pedagogical staff and administrative workers. Those with intermediate and primary education, on the other hand, make up the smallest category of workers. The data also shows that most employees have less professional experience. 45% for 10 years, 39.3% for less than 20 years, and 7.9% for those with significant experience.

64.3% of employees consider that the wage is average, 25% of them consider that the wage is low, and 10.7% consider that the wage is good, which shows that there is a weakness in income for the majority of employees.

The training of employees on the job differs among them. Some of them received internal training at a rate of 66.4%, which includes recycling operations, training pedagogical frameworks, and the training of administrators. Among them are those who received external training at a rate of 33.6%, which includes graduates of vocational training and specialized institutes. Some of them received both, while a small number did not receive any training. He has no training.

### B. Psychometric properties of the study instruments:

**Reliability of the measurement tool:** We assessed the reliability of the measurement tool by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which serves as an indicator of the tool's consistency. The following table presents the obtained results:

Table (03): Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Reliability

Domains	Expressions	The Cronbach's alpha
Job conflict strategies	12	0,703

Source: Prepared by researchers based on SPSS 23 output

By employing Cronbach's alpha coefficient, we assessed the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items pertaining to employee conflict techniques and their impact on work

efficiency. The resulting coefficient was 0.703, surpassing the threshold of 0.70. Therefore, the measurement tool is characterized by honesty and stability, is suitable for data collection, and is capable of study and analysis.

Internal consistency: Internal consistency is based on the correlation between each item and the total score of the dimension. We calculated the Spearman correlation coefficient to assess its statistical significance.

**7. Description and analysis of data for the second axis**

Table (04): shows the correlation coefficients with the whole questionnaire

Expressions	Correlation coefficient	Expressions	Correlation coefficient	Expressions	Correlation coefficient
1	,715**	5	,778**	9	,674**
2	,454**	6	,550**	10	,745**
3	,524**	7	,419**	11	,756**
4	,691**	8	,627**	12	,753**

Source: Prepared by researchers based on SPSS 23 output

We note from Table 04 that all correlation coefficients are positive, which indicates the presence of a positive correlation, and that most of the paragraphs are close to +1. This shows that there is statistical significance at the significance level of 0.05.

**8. Analysis of the descriptive study results**

Table (05): Descriptive Statistics

The dimension	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Defensivestrategy	140	1,00	5,00	2,6536	,71065
Negotiatedoffensivestrategy	140	1,00	7,75	2,4304	,92966
Offensiveinvestmentstrategy	140	1,00	5,00	2,3589	,83763

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the outputs of the SPSS program.

It is clear from Table No. (05) that the arithmetic mean for all dimensions of employee strategies is close to the average value of the study scale, which is neutrality from the negative direction, that is, opposition to the statements to a slight degree, while the standard deviation for these dimensions did not exceed 1, which indicates responses from the respondents are close to the average measurement.

Table (05) shows that the average of employees’ responses to the dimension of using a defensive strategy is estimated at 2.65 out of 5 measures of severity, meaning that the percentage is less than the average and is negative 3, where the standard deviation is 0.71, meaning that the room to answer this question exists between the statements 2 in agreement and 4 in opposition.

As for the dimension of the negotiating offensive strategy, the arithmetic mean is estimated at 2.43 out of 5 measures of intensity, meaning that the percentage is less than the average, which is negative 3, as the standard deviation amounted to 0.929, which means that the range of answering this question is between statement 2 and agreement. Answer 4 is in opposition.

The average of employees' responses on the dimension of using an aggressive investment strategy is estimated at 2.36 out of 5 measures of severity, meaning that the percentage is less than the average and is negative 3, as the standard deviation is 0.837,

meaning that there is room to answer this question. Show statement 1.5 agrees or strongly agrees, and answer 3 is neutral or disagrees.

### **9. Results of the study**

Through the descriptive analysis of the study data and the responses of the sample members, it becomes clear that there is a strong, positive relationship between the public employee's use of conflict management strategies and a decrease or increase in efficiency at work, and that the employee does not use a single strategy in all cases but rather changes his strategy according to the conflict situation he faces, as the employee is always searching for the appropriate strategy that serves his goals, aspirations, and his relationship with work.

### **10. Conclusion**

The relative freedom of actors in bureaucratic organizations and their ability to manage conflict through their practice of different strategies is a fertile field for research into the various social, psychological, and economic aspects that guide the actions of individuals as an essential link in life and work. Therefore, interest in studying human behavior and its relationship to work needs more research. And auditing, despite the many contributions of researchers in this field, we have tried through this research to provide a descriptive study of the strategies that an employee in the public sector in Algeria uses to achieve his goals and the relationship of that to productivity at work according to Michel Crozier's strategic analysis model. We hope that this study will open a new field for studying the differences between different categories in using strategies or the relationship between the characteristics of the sample and the variables of the study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

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# “POWER DYNAMICS AND CONFLICT IN SMALLHOLDER PLANTATION AGRICULTURE: A CASE STUDY FROM MBANDJOCK, CAMEROON”

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**Abstract:** *This article investigates the power dynamics and conflicts arising in smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock, Cameroon. Smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock, Cameroon, has seen significant growth, yet the emerging power dynamics and conflicts within this sector have received little attention. Small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, and Cameroon engage in agriculture to ensure food security within their communities. The study examines the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of stakeholders involved in the emerging plantations in the region. It takes a bottom-up approach to explore the new sources of power and conflict introduced by smallholder plantations in Africa. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, data was collected from a sample of 131 informants among the estimated 4,250 smallholder farmers in Mbandjock. Data collection methods include interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and iconography. Content and iconographic analyses were employed. The research draws on theories of Social Representations and cultural dynamics of Georges Balandier to analyse the interactions between different actors and the impact on local communities. The findings shed light on the complexities of power relations and conflicts within smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock. The findings reveal that smallholder plantations have brought about new power dynamics across political, spiritual, economic, and social spheres, leading to significant lifestyle changes and contributing to food insecurity issues in the region. Land use conflicts have escalated due to rapid urbanization driven by population growth. Additionally, land grabbing has occurred under two distinct land tenure laws – customary and state laws – resulting in conflicts between administrative, political, and traditional authorities. This study highlights the complex interplay between power dynamics and conflicts within smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock, Cameroon. It emphasizes the necessity for further research and policy interventions to address these challenges.*

**Keywords:** power, conflict, land use dynamics, culture, smallholder plantations, food security

## 1. Introduction

Smallholder plantation agriculture in Africa, particularly in Mbandjock, Cameroon, has given rise to new power dynamics and conflicts that impact various aspects of the community's spiritual, economic, political, and social spheres. The presence of small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan African countries plays a crucial role in ensuring food security within their communities. George Rapsomanikis (2015) highlights that a significant proportion of the developing world's rural population, approximately two-thirds of 3 billion people, reside in around 475 million small farm households, operating on land plots smaller than 2 hectares.

In different regions across the globe, the size of smallholder farms varies significantly. In China, nearly 98 percent of farmers cultivate plots smaller than 2 hectares, while in India, around 80 percent of farmers are considered smallholders. Latin American countries exhibit a trend where smallholder farms tend to be larger, such as in Nicaragua with an average size of 5 hectares. Conversely, in Asian countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam, smallholder farms are notably smaller, averaging 0.24 and 0.32 hectares respectively, influenced by factors like soil quality, technology, and productive assets like irrigation.

In the African context, smallholder farms are relatively larger but still modest in size. For instance, Kenyan smallholders typically farm 0.47 hectares, while in Ethiopia, the average small farm size is 0.9 hectares. Countries like Egypt and Tanzania have a high prevalence of small farms, with Egypt seeing nearly 90 percent of farms being smaller than 2 hectares. In Tanzania, where agriculture contributes significantly to the GDP and a majority of the

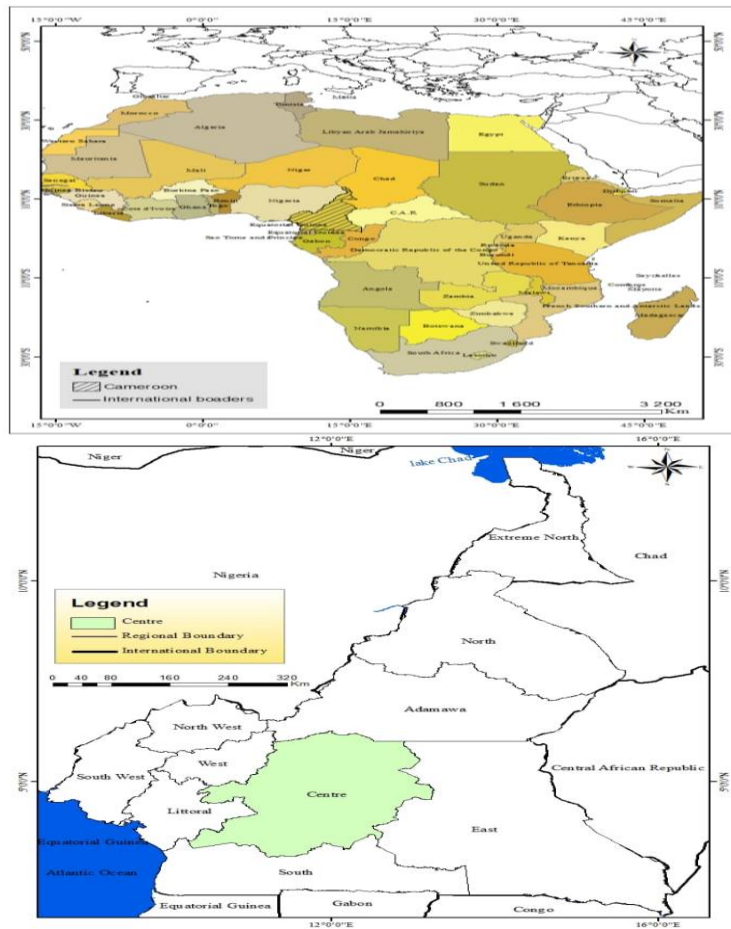
population resides in rural areas, there are approximately 3.7 million smallholdings, constituting 80 percent of total farms.

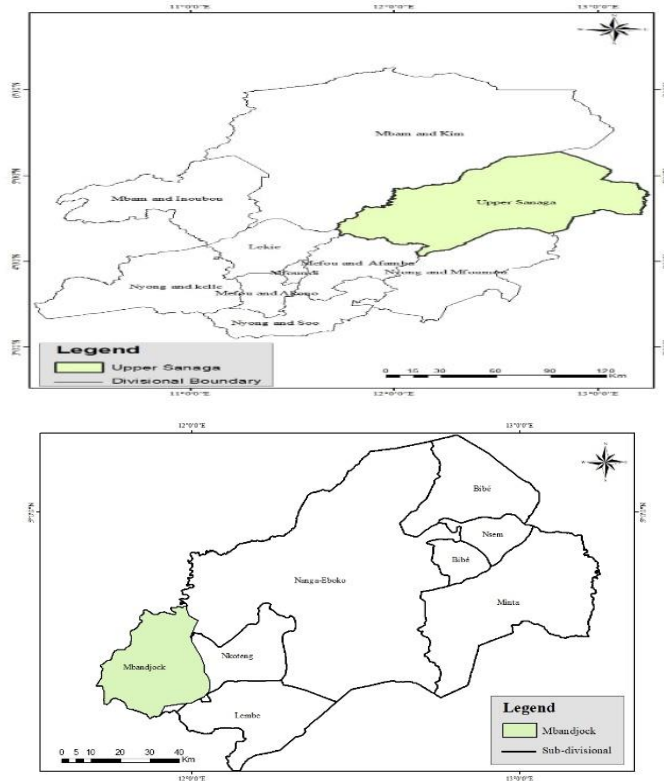
The coexistence of smallholder plantations alongside rapid urbanization and cultural diversity has led to land grabbing and subsequent conflicts in Mbandjock, Cameroon. This paper delves into the intricate power dynamics and conflicts arising from smallholder plantation agriculture in Africa and specifically in Mbandjock, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges faced by these communities.

## 2. Background of Research Area

Mbandjock, located in the Upper Sanaga Division of the Center Region of Cameroon, serves as the headquarters of the Mbandjock sub-division, encompassing nine villages across three groups: Ndjore (Mbandjock, Ndokoa, Minkouma, Nio Baboute, Ndjore I, and Ndjore II), Ndo (Biboto and Ndo), and Mekomba (Mendouga and Mekomba). Geographically, Mbandjock lies approximately between latitude 4.44° N and 11.90° E of the equator and longitude 11.54° E and 11.61° E. It is situated 78 km (48 miles) from Yaoundé town along the Yaoundé – Nanga Eboko highway. The population of Mbandjock is estimated to exceed 21,076 inhabitants, with youths constituting more than 60% of the population.

Figure 8: Localization of Mbandjock sub division in the central region of Cameroon in Africa.





Source: National Institut of Cartography (2021)

### 3. Literature Review

Power dynamics in agricultural settings have been a subject of interest for researchers across various disciplines. Authors such as Scott (1977) have examined the influence of power structures on smallholder plantations, highlighting how intergenerational wealth transmission impacts decision-making within farming families. Jonovic and Messick (1986) and Salamon (1992) have explored the socio-cultural factors that shape agricultural practices, emphasizing the role of socialization and off-farm work experience in revitalizing farm operations. In the same light, Gasson and Errington (1993) have also contributed to this field by discussing how power dynamics influence agricultural decision-making processes. Silva (1999) has provided insights into the impact of land tenure systems on power relations within farming communities, shedding light on the complexities of land ownership and its implications for farm management. Bennett (1982) and Lobley and Potter (2004) have highlighted the significance of power dynamics in shaping household-level motivations and farm management strategies. Maifert (2006) has also discussed the role of cultural values in influencing power dynamics within agricultural settings.

From another perspective, the cultural influence on smallholder agriculture is a multifaceted and dynamic topic, as demonstrated by a range of scholarly perspectives. Scott (1977) provides valuable insights into peasant behaviour towards smallholder plantations, emphasizing the intergenerational transmission of wealth and knowledge within farming families. Jonovic and Messick (1986), Salamon (1992), and Gasson and Errington (1993) highlight the socio-cultural factors that shape agricultural practices, including the socialization of heirs and the utilization of off-farm work experience to revitalize farm operations. Silva (1999) offers a distinct view on land tenure, emphasizing the social and operational boundaries that impact land use and transfer. This perspective sheds light on the complexities of land ownership and its implications for farm operations. Furthermore, Bennett (1982),



Lobley and Potter (2004), and Mailfert (2006) underscore the influence of household-level motivations, cultural values, and socialization on farm management and adaptation, emphasizing the balance between economic and non-economic goals in sustaining family farms. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) (2007) introduces the critical role of societal and cultural factors, particularly those influenced by farmer race and ethnicity, in shaping agricultural productivity. Their insights underscore the need to understand the unique historical and cultural legacies of different ethnic groups, which influence farm structures, resource access, and future aspirations. Additionally, NASS (2007) emphasizes the gendered values that impact farm structures, highlighting the increasing role of women in principal farm operations and their specific preferences for low-input production and direct marketing.

Chiappe and Flora (1998) and Trauger (2008) found that gender and sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping agricultural perspectives. Women, in particular, emphasize the environmental and economic benefits of sustainable agriculture, as well as the link between agriculture and community sustainability. Barbieri and Mahoney (2009) highlighted age as another influential factor in agriculture. Younger farmers, especially those new to farming, are more entrepreneurial and willing to take risks associated with innovation. However, older farmers may face obstacles due to limited skills and challenges in socializing older children into farming practices. Clark, Munroe, and Mansfield (2010) emphasized the impact of generational differences in farming. Multi-generation farmers and first-generation farmers may lead to specialization in specific production systems, affecting adaptation to new systems. Inwood and Sharp (2012) noted that multi-generation and first-generation farmers have distinct motivations and values. Maclean, U (1977) discussed sumptuous rituals associated with the first harvest in different cultures. The Greeks celebrated the "festival of flowers" in March, honouring the goddess of agriculture Demeter. Saharan African tribes marked First Fruits festivals in January. Shamans or priests oversaw these rituals, with a focus on fertility and rejuvenation of the growing season. Among the Kayan people of Borneo, priests held significant status and passed on knowledge orally. These diverse perspectives collectively underscore the complex interplay of cultural, social, and generational factors in smallholder agriculture. By integrating these insights into research and policy initiatives, it becomes possible to develop more holistic and contextually relevant approaches to sustainable agricultural development.

**Conflicts in smallholder agriculture**, power dynamics, land grabbing, and the emergence of new sources of power are critical issues that have been extensively studied in the agricultural literature. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for promoting sustainable and equitable agricultural practices. Previous studies have explored these topics from various perspectives, shedding light on the complex interactions between different actors in agricultural settings. One key area of research has focused on conflicts in smallholder agriculture. Smallholder farmers often face challenges such as limited access to resources, market uncertainties, and competition for land. These factors can lead to conflicts among farmers, as well as with other stakeholders such as agribusinesses, governments, and local communities. Studies have highlighted the role of power dynamics in exacerbating these conflicts, with more powerful actors often exploiting or marginalizing smallholder farmers. Power dynamics in agriculture have been a central theme in many studies, with a particular focus on how power is distributed and exercised within agricultural systems. Land grabbing, for example, is a manifestation of power imbalances where powerful actors acquire land from smallholder farmers through coercive or manipulative means. This phenomenon has been extensively studied in various contexts, revealing the detrimental impacts on smallholder livelihoods and food security.

Moreover, the emergence of new sources of power in agriculture has been a growing area of interest in recent years. With the rise of technologies, global markets, and changing

consumer preferences, new actors and dynamics are shaping agricultural systems. Agribusinesses, multinational corporations, and technology companies are increasingly influencing agricultural practices and policies, often at the expense of smallholder farmers. Studies have explored how these new sources of power are reshaping traditional agricultural systems and exacerbating existing inequalities.

Understanding power relations and conflicts in agricultural contexts requires a theoretical framework that encompasses various perspectives and dynamics. One key theoretical approach in this paper is the political economy framework, which examines how power is distributed and exercised within agricultural systems. This framework emphasizes the role of economic and political factors in shaping power relations, highlighting how powerful actors, such as agribusinesses and governments, influence and control agricultural practices, resources, and policies. Political economy analysis also considers the impact of power imbalances on smallholder farmers, often leading to conflicts over land, resources, and market access.

Another relevant theoretical framework is the social conflict theory, which focuses on the role of social inequalities and power differentials in driving conflicts within agricultural settings. This framework emphasizes the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, as well as the marginalization of certain groups, such as smallholder farmers, by more powerful actors. Social conflict theory highlights the importance of addressing underlying power imbalances to mitigate conflicts and promote more equitable agricultural practices. Furthermore, the concept of land grabbing can be analysed through a critical agrarian studies lens, which examines the historical and structural forces that contribute to the dispossession of smallholder farmers' land. This framework emphasizes the intersection of power relations, historical legacies, and global economic forces in driving land grabbing, shedding light on the detrimental impacts on smallholder livelihoods and food security.

Moscovici's theory of Social Representations focuses on how individuals and groups create shared meanings and understandings of their social world. In the context of this study, this theory helped us understand how power relations and conflicts are shaped by the collective representations and interpretations of different actors within agricultural systems in this locality. For example, smallholder farmers may have distinct social representations of land ownership and resource access compared to large agribusinesses or government agencies. These differing representations can lead to conflicts over land rights, resource allocation, and decision-making processes. Georges Balandier's theory of cultural dynamics explores the ways in which cultural practices, norms, and symbols influence power dynamics within societies. In this paper, it shed light on how cultural dynamics shape power relations and conflicts. For instance, cultural norms around gender roles and labour divisions influence power differentials between male and female farmers, impacting access to resources and decision-making authority in Mbandjock.

By integrating these theoretical frameworks into the analysis of power relations and conflicts in agricultural contexts, we gain a deeper understanding of how social representations and cultural dynamics influence the distribution of power, access to resources, and the emergence of conflicts within agricultural systems. This holistic approach allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the complex social, cultural, and symbolic dimensions that underpin power dynamics in agricultural areas in Africa, ultimately providing valuable insights for addressing conflicts and promoting more equitable agricultural practices.

#### **4. Methodology**

This study adopts an anthropological approach, specifically employing a descriptive qualitative design to explore and analyse perceptions, attitudes, views, and behaviours in response to significant events or circumstances. The primary objective of this research is to describe, interpret, and analyse the social representations and cultural dynamics within the

context under study. The data collection process encompasses various techniques, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and life histories. These methods were utilized to gather rich and nuanced data that provide insights into the complexities of the social phenomena being investigated.

The study was conducted over a period spanning from February 2018 to January 2022, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the evolving social dynamics and cultural practices within the research setting. Various tools such as interview guides, focus group discussion guides, observation checklists, and life history guides were employed to facilitate data collection and analysis. These tools were instrumental in guiding interactions with participants and capturing their diverse perspectives and experiences.

A total of 131 informants were purposefully sampled for this study, representing a diverse range of sociocultural backgrounds. The sample included individuals from indigenous ethnic groups such as the Baboute and Yezoum, as well as members of settler communities from different regions of Cameroon and beyond. Additionally, key stakeholders from government ministries (MINADER, MINCULT), local administrative authorities, traditional rulers, plantation owners, plantation workers, and village residents were included in the study. This diverse sampling strategy ensured a comprehensive exploration of the social representations and cultural dynamics across various societal sectors.

Both male and female participants were included in the research process to capture gender-specific perspectives and experiences. The data collection process continued until saturation point was reached, indicating that a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives had been achieved. This methodological approach enabled the research team to delve deeply into the social fabric of the studied communities, shedding light on the intricate interplay between social representations, cultural dynamics, and individual experiences.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process, with measures taken to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy and privacy. Limitations of the study included potential biases inherent in qualitative research, such as researcher subjectivity and participant self-reporting. Despite these limitations, the rigorous methodological approach adopted in this study aimed to provide a robust foundation for analysing social representations and cultural dynamics within the research context.

## **5. Findings**

### **Smallholder plantations and new sources of power**

The presence of smallholder plantation generally led to the emergence of new sources of power due to the creation of smallholder plantations. These economic activities come with growth in the population. The expansion of families increased the demand for the creation of smallholder plantations. With these plantations, the people will be able to feed and guarantee sustainable growth of the population. One plantation is found somewhere, there is the development of new power structures in the region. While spiritual powers are held by the local population, economic and political powers are wielded by the owners and operators of large-scale plantations and smallholder plantations. However, both the locals and smallholder farmers share social powers, emphasizing the diverse sources of power at play in Mbandjock sub-division.

This situation sheds light on the intricate power dynamics among stakeholders involved in smallholder plantation agriculture. It was revealed that smallholder plantation investors, despite possessing economic and political powers, heavily rely on spiritual powers for the protection of their farms, products, workers, and overall activities to ensure sustained production and reproduction. This crucial spiritual power is bestowed upon them by the chiefs and local population of Mbandjock, underscoring the significance of community cohesion and productivity. This goes in line with Gasson and Errington (1993) who propound how power dynamics influence agricultural decision-making processes.

However, conflicts often arise within smallholder plantation agriculture due to the competing interests of various stakeholders. As different parties navigate their roles and responsibilities, conflicts may emerge, highlighting the complexity of power dynamics in agricultural settings. Understanding and addressing these conflicts are essential for promoting sustainable development within the community. This implies that, recognizing the spiritual powers held by the local population and integrating them into smallholder plantation agriculture can enhance production and ensure food security. The incorporation of cultural practices, such as rituals and belief systems, into agricultural activities underscores the interconnectedness of social, cultural, and economic factors shaping agricultural practices. Preserving cultural heritage and traditions in agricultural activities is crucial for fostering community development and sustainability in smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock sub-division.

### **Spiritual power of smallholder plantations**

The spiritual power of smallholder plantations plays a pivotal role in ensuring the protection and productivity of farms. The chiefs and local population provide this essential spiritual power through their rituals and belief systems, which have been passed down through generations as part of the people's cultural heritage. These rituals not only contribute to the productivity of crops but also foster a sense of community cohesion and sustainability in smallholder plantation agriculture. Integrating these cultural practices into agricultural activities can further enhance food security and promote sustainable development within the community.

While smallholder plantation investors may wield economic and political powers, they also heavily rely on spiritual powers for the protection of their farms, products, workers, and overall activities to ensure sustained production and reproduction. This crucial spiritual power is bestowed upon them by the chiefs and local population of Mbandjock, underscoring the significance of community cohesion and productivity. However, Mbonji (2005) illustrated that culture is the ways of life of a given population of which they use in solving their daily problems of how to eat, drink, sleep, and make love, shelter... Therefore, culture refers to the actions, reactions, productions and all other elements that accompany a society in their daily life found in all age groups taught by the oldest to the youngest.

This implies that, community development and sustainability are profound. Recognizing the spiritual powers held by the local population and integrating them into smallholder plantation agriculture can enhance production and ensure food security. The incorporation of cultural practices, such as rituals and belief systems, into agricultural activities underscores the interconnectedness of social, cultural, and economic factors shaping agricultural practices. Preserving cultural heritage and traditions in agricultural activities is crucial for fostering community development and sustainability in smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock sub-division. Crop cultivation was intensified in Mbandjock when SOSUCAM and the people integrated in their culture. Hence, the older generations have been teaching the younger ones in these zones with crops cultivation. This is affirmed by Parson, T (1949) who said culture...consists in those patterns relative to behaviour and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes. The rituals practice in Mbandjock has been from generation to generation and has significant consequences on smallholders' plantations. A majority of smallholder farmers in Mbandjock sub division offer rituals to their ancestor in relation to crops cultivation.

### **Spiritual powers of fixing the farms**

The spiritual power of fixing the farm is some of the powers detained by the chiefs and indigenous people to guarantee food security in zone where smallholders are found. These are spiritual, rituals, traditions, in fact cultural values that the host community has over their land

which is their cultural identity and belonging. With this spiritual power, they are able to protect their crops and even workers against any eventual spiritual attacks. spiritual powers play a crucial role in production and reproduction within smallholder plantation agriculture areas.

In the Mbandjock villages, the chiefs and indigenous people hold significant spiritual powers that play a crucial role in smallholder plantation agriculture and the food security system. The *Kemoyiu* ritual, also known as the ritual of the end of the traditional year and the ritual of cleaning the graveyard, is central to this spiritual power. The sacrifices and rituals performed in the graveyards are aimed at obtaining blessings and protection from ancestors for production, reproduction, and the overall well-being of the community. This spiritual power gives them control over the growth of crops in smallholder plantations, providing blessings and protection for individuals, properties, and crop cultivation. There are three graveyards in Mbandjock village, the main graveyard is one where the very first chief of Mbandjock was buried. The ritual officially begins upon the arrival of the chief at the arena. The king makers, dressed in traditional regalia. The chief is accompanied by a traditional dance group animated by young boys. They animate with instruments like *tembé* and it is a dance group which come out during traditional ceremonies presided over by the chief. Another dance group called *Mekoumbou* also follows the ritual ceremony. This ritual performance is led by the Chief, followed by the first king's maker or notable and the other 15 notables with a calabash of raffia wine. Attendance is compulsory for all the local populations especially girls of reproduction age, farmers who wants favour from their ancestors, businessmen, in fact all those who may want favour from the ancestors. The wine and the food signify the unification of the villagers. One of our informants testify,

*The sacrifices and rituals we do or practice in our graveyards is to obtain blessings and protection from our ancestors, production and reproduction. The protection ranges from the protection of individuals, properties and even crops cultivation. By this ritual, all the notables, quarter heads and the villagers represent their respective quarters with a calabash of raffia-wine, at the main graveyard arena before the Chief, the king's makers and the villagers. When the items for the rituals are all checked, the ceremony begins in the early morning where all villagers are expected to be present with machete, hoes and other working tools for the cleaning of the graves of all those who have been buried in Mbandjock. (Interview conducted in Mbandjock, 05/04/2019).*

This revealed that the indigenous people's spiritual powers are instrumental in controlling crop growth in smallholder plantations. Through sacrifices and rituals practiced in the graveyards, they obtain blessings and protection from their ancestors for production and reproduction, as well as for the safeguarding of individuals, properties, and crop cultivation. Consequently, smallholder plantation owners often seek the blessing of these individuals for their farms and related activities. However, the photo below demonstrates this practice.

**Photo 1. Common meal at the ritual of cleaning of the graveyard in Mbandjock**



Source: Bonuh che, (Mbandjock December 2019)

This is followed by a tune and singing of a song by all presents which is only stopped at the request of the Chief. After a while, for the Chief to show the success of the ritual and end of ceremony, the chief passed his incantation to the ancestors and gods of Mbandjock as well as to the population. This is approved by a Chief informant of one of our interview, who said,

*I will ask for silence and transmit my message to the villagers followed by the announcement of the rest of the activities of the village. I talk of unity, fertility, good harvest of all the agricultural products. Nobody should lie to you about the death, the death is very strong, if you obey, remember, give them food and wine, everything you want they will give it to you.* Interview conducted in Mbandjock, 05/04/2019).

This means that, if one performed and participate in the ritual, the ancestors protect their properties and activities. For those who practice agriculture in general and crop production, when they take part and contribute toward these rituals, their crops are protected from the evil people. They are blessed with abundant harvest that can sustain their families and if for business purpose, will generate enough income for them. Hence, since smallholder farming in this area, it is not left out. Therefore, this ritual has a good and very important role in smallholder farming as the ritual brings about unity among farmers, good harvest and fertility for more children to be put to birth to work in the smallholder farmers' farms.

It implies that, the spiritual powers held by indigenous people plays a pivotal role balancing power between the stakeholders. Recognizing and respecting these spiritual powers is crucial for fostering community cohesion, sustainable agricultural practices, and overall well-being. Efforts to address conflicts arising from competing interests in accessing these powers should be undertaken to ensure equitable access and sustainable development within the community. Maclean U (1977) eminent that, agricultural festivals were where people gathered to plan and chart on the calendar future rituals. Sumptuous rituals are performed with the first harvest, the Greeks celebration was known as "festival of flowers" and was celebrated in March, coinciding with the spring equinox. The First Fruits festivals are celebrated in January by Saharan African tribes.

### **Economic power of smallholder plantations**

The economic power of smallholder plantations has a significant impact on power dynamics among different stakeholders. Various sources of economic power, including personal savings, bank loans, buyer's loans, and subsidies from governmental and non-governmental organizations, enable smallholder plantation investors to finance their operations. This economic power allows them to determine what crops to produce, how much to sell them for, and who should produce them. Smallholders wield this economic power by influencing what is cultivated, consumed, and the standard of living in the community. One of our informants testify that smallholders have the economic powers by saying,

*Smallholders in Mbandjock through their economic power determine what we produce, what we eat and even how much we sell and buy our farm out puts and inputs. When they start producing maize, we all will do so if not, you would not have the person that will buy the different product to cultivate. Since you eat what you produce, we only eat what we cultivated determine by the smallholder plantations. The selling prices of our crops determine by them, that is to say, if the fix the price of cassava at 10 000frs per bag and you do not want to sell at that price, your crops will be left with you and may definitely get bad. They even determine the standard of life of the people here. If they pay their workers well, they will live well but if they are paid low, their life standard will be low.* (Mendouga village, 20/11/2020).

These economic powers have degenerated to changes in this domain food crop and cash crops production in Mbandjock. Their powers have been able to influence from crop

types cultivated, techniques, period of cultivation, changes in farming methods, changes in tools used, changes in the market, changes in the source of finance and changes in the labour force. This implies that there are actually changes in smallholder plantations agriculture since most of the respondents admitted that fact.

Conflicts often arise from competing interests in smallholder plantation agriculture, particularly concerning pricing and market access. For example, if a smallholder sets the price of cassava at a certain level, farmers who do not agree may struggle to sell their produce. This can lead to tensions within the community and impact the livelihoods of local farmers. The economic control exerted by smallholder plantation owners can create power imbalances and disparities in economic opportunities.

This implies that, smallholder plantation owners own the economics power in Mbandjock. The culture of what to produce, how much it should sell and who to produce is determine by them. After harvesting, the problem of price fluctuation arrive which discourage most small planters to go in for plantation investment. Due to an improvement in the level of education by these investors, they have realized the importance of farmers' corporations which permits them to sell their output at better prices. For example, in Mendouga village, we can find the F.A.M (Femmes Active de Mendouga) cooperation which permits productive members bargain for better prices for their product and even have working equipment at low prices or at credit thought the cooperative representative. All these are more of economic strength of small plantation holders. It goes in line with George Rapsomanikis (2015), who indicated that, all stages of development, smallholders operate their farms as entrepreneurs operate their firms, or at least they try. They raise capital from multiple sources and invest in productive assets; for many of them even a spade or a bicycle are important assets. They make decisions and take both risks and profits. And agriculture involves many decisions: What to plant, which inputs to use and how, when to plough, to seed, to harvest; how much to keep for consumption in the household and how much to sell to raise cash, or how much to store. Smallholders often make these decisions in an economic environment in which markets do not function well, if at all, and which is also subject to many risks, such as adverse weather and price surges. And this has significant implications for their choices and their livelihoods. It also affects their choices on investing on themselves and their children on how to attain social and human capital objectives, such as education and health.

### **Social power of smallholder plantations**

Small scale plantation has also brought about a lot of changes in the social life of the people where smallholder plantations are found. Some if not all aspect of their culture is modifying in one way or the other. It happens as a result of the powers of smallholder plantations on the population. These things are easy to find in Mbandjock because many workers of the plantations come from different cultural settings with their different culture and blend with the culture of the people of Mbandjock to produce new cultures and ways of lives. Smallholder plantation is provided with labour force from the society at low wage rate which can be contractual. In Mendouga village, smallholder plantations usually undergo contractual agreements where an individual will work the farmland and he is remunerated at the end of the year or the harvesting season.

### **Small scale plantation power of changing local people's lifestyle**

One of the key characteristics of culture is the dynamic or elastic part of culture. Culture therefore is dynamic, learned, copy and transmitted from one generation to another. However, with the creation of plantations in Africa, the culture of zones of these plantations is gradually been modifying in one way or the other. Plantation agriculture influence movement of people in the area. These people come to work. At times they come and never goes back. They also come along with their culture. With the presence of settlers, their cultural activities drastically change the way of life of the indigenous people, who are involuntary adapting to

the new way of life proposed by the settlers. We observe a disappearance of food crops very often multifaceted in favour of monoculture which occupies a bigger part of the arable land. Then, all the residents who were once fishermen, sculptors, hunters, will forge by the desire for profit all become planters, which affect the diversity of trades. According to Awah PK (2017),

*a greater majority of the residents of cities come from some rural area and bring their cultures into the city. Culture is a continuous umbilical cord that links urbanites to their villages or tribes. When these cultures meet in town, they undergo transformations and new cultures emerge, for example amongst socio-professional and ethnic groups. At the same time, urban characteristics are spilling over into rural areas. My urban and rural comparative approach portrays the beliefs, understanding and behaviours that people in urban and rural areas have and share about cultural issues. These might not necessarily show a clear demarcation from a bird's eye-view, but closer attention shows that culture in the context of an illness carries a lot of meaning with it.*

This implies that, smallholder plantations and indigenous people food security system issues cut across cultures and need to be understood from both rural and urban perspectives so that solutions to the food insecurity can be more broad-based. It is thus not surprising that small-scale farming in Cameroon is largely limited to high-value and specialist ventures such as fruit, vegetables, flowers, intensive pigs and poultry; and where local processing plants, often fairly large-scale, are necessary for crops such as sugar cane, tea, rubber and coffee. These are cases where large capital investments are necessary, or where industrial organisation of production generates physical productivity that cannot be achieved on small units. The government of the state has encouraged young persons to go into agriculture. The aim of the plan was to promote private plantation development. Van Noordwijk et al. (2008) established that a divide between agricultural and forestry strategies has been recognized as a barrier for developing plantations practices that have smallholder farmers as the main beneficiaries of plantation. Therefore, they recommend more consideration be given to developing both national and international policy enterprises to achieve a 'level ground' for plantation and agroforestry management and seeing them as strongly synergetic management options. In their view, this would mean a shift from primarily supporting large-scale plantation operations to also giving support, in every probable form but not creating specific privileges, to smallholder farmers who grow trees in their own agroforestry systems.

### **The involvement of smallholder plantation in political dynamics**

Smallholder plantation implantation in many localities in Africa, comes with a lot of changes in political culture of the people. In these areas, plantation owners have a lot of influence on the politics of the municipality. Those who own the land and the plantations, have a lot of influence on political decisions of their workers. In African, your boss, is usually consider as your father, mentor and guardian. So, these group of people exhibit a lot of control and political decisions in these areas. They even at times control the political economy of the people from whom they grabbed land. They are so involved in the decision of who becomes the head in the local administration. They do this so that, their choice of local authority will in return protect their interest and vicious cycle continues. At times, these people even influence the choirs of who becomes the next traditional leader and even family heads influencing the culture of the people. This was confirmed to us by one of our respondents, who said,

*We already know here that if SOSUCAM and the other rich smallholder owners do not support you to stand as mayor, you can never be a councillor talk les of being a mayor in the Mbandjock council. The former and late Mayor of Mbandjock, chief of Ndjore was a SOSUCAM worker and member of the rich smallholder plantation group before becoming Mayor. He was*



*supported by SOSUCAM and he made over 30 years as mayor of the Mbandjock council. The new mayor who came up just last year is still a worker of SOSUCAM and equally a smallholder plantation owner who belong to common initiative groups. I am telling you all this to show you that our political power here is controlled by plantation owners. (Interview in Mbandjock, 15/01/2021)*

Based on the above statement, we can affirm that political power in Mbandjock sub division is in some way controlled by plantation owners. They even give money to sponsor their campaigns. In return, when those Mayors are in place, they only do what the smallholders owner want. If not, they will be change. Most smallholder plantation is granted subsidies or financial support, agricultural training seminars and population sensibilisation on eco-friendly agricultural practices that help them in one way or the other. For example, people in Yezoum and all Mbandjock nearby villages are free to ask for financial help from the Mbandjock council to finance their projects by providing tangible proves of the existence of their projects. The council determine the type of crops and areas they intervene in. Meaning the smallholders can only do what the council if they want support from the council.

### **Conflict and injustice in smallholder plantation areas**

When smallholder plantation agriculture established in locality, it is more likely to create conflict. This conflict can be in so many dimensions, but we shall treat four dimensions to know; land grabbing, cultural conflict, theft and farmers' grazers' conflict. Conflict may also arrive in farmland delimitation and this later applies mostly to the local natives. Provided that there are no appropriate land limit demarcations of each native, this tends to bring constant ownership conflicts among the village natives and this happens in every family and recurrently. According to Scott, J. (1977), once the centrality of the subsistence problem is recognized, its effects on notions of economic and political justice can also be seen. Scott draws from the history of agrarian society in lower Burma and Vietnam to show how the transformations of the colonial era systematically violated the peasants' *moral economy* and created a situation of potential rebellion and revolution.

### **Land grabbing conflicts issues**

Land grabbing is an act of taking control of a parcel of land forcefully.in areas where plantation agriculture is practice, land becomes more that gold to the stakeholders. In Africa, land is even considered as a cultural identity to the people. It is known that, the more land one has, the more wealth, power and even a more important social status he/she has. It is against this backdrop that business tycoons or administration either for agricultural, housing purposes or industrial development grab land from the local people who they consider to be their identity. This situation of conflict emerges because the people stand to defend their ancestral land handed to them from one generation to another and cannot just let it go. The tycoons on the other side need land for their businesses hence, conflict emanate. According to Nde Fru (2020), by prompting food security fears within the developed world, new found economic opportunities for agricultural investors are created, and this was radically promoted by the food price upsurge, which caused a dramatic spike in large scale agricultural investments, primarily foreign, in the Global South for the purposes of food and biofuels production. Although hailed by investors, economists, and some developing countries as a new pathway towards agricultural development, investment in land has recently been criticized by some NGOs and commentators who argue that it has had negative impacts on local communities. International law is implicated when attempting to regulate these transactions.

In areas where these plantations are found, land grabbing problem is usually from the political, economic elites, traditional rulers and administrative authorities. Those involved in the grabbing frequently do so by giving wine, food and small money for many hectares of land.

The indigenous people whose land is grabbed either for plantation agriculture or other economic activities are left with little or no land for their own plantations. Most often people grab the land so much so that the local populations do not even have where they can even do their own household agriculture.

*In fact, some unenlightened patriarchs of the village, some of whom are already dead today, in particular the heads of the 2nd degree, the 3rd degree, the political leaders of the village and some heads of families had sold out of ignorance or even deceived thousands of hectares of land. Forest including the rivers that join these forests to certain senior Cameroonian public administration officials including ministers, and law enforcement authorities whose investments in these forests bear the names of some of them. These have sometimes done so at the end of certain other families while forgetting to reserve some spaces for them to be able to continue their agricultural and agro-pastoral activities. This is particularly the case of the immense forest located in the village called Zili in which a Company has established its tourist side called Sanaga Camping beach. Thus, today, when the young people of the village, many of whom have completed their secondary and higher education, go to these lands to cultivate and exploit them, they are intimidated and threatened by its authorities. Some are placed in permanent custody in the cells of the police stations and gendarmeries of Nkoteng and Mbandjock. Worse still others are kept in pre-trial detention for months in the main prison of Nanga-Eboko for reasons such as: Destruction of goods, disturbances of use, thefts in co-action. (Interview in Mbandjock, 15/01/2021)*

This means that, land grabbing is an old age culture all over the world though a very new cultures in Mbandjock among the economic and political class. This is the contentious issue of large-scale land acquisitions, which is the buying or leasing of large pieces of land by domestic and transnational companies, governments, and individuals to show their level of wealth, power and prestige.

This problem takes us to another dimension when educated children of this region, after education come back to practice agriculture which they think can pay, usually do not have land and when it come to their notice that their many hectares of land was given out for mere wine, food and just small money, they wage war to regain their land which led to conflict. To testify how their land was solved very low prices, one of our informants testify that,

*To grabbed land in Mbandjock, the buyer comes few days with his representative and wine. The wine is for the notables and the person owning the piece of land. His representative is present in this process in other to accompany him and the village administration on the land in question and this is usually in the morning. After the, all the people present in the journey will seat and consume the wine. When this drinking is over, the willing buyer and the land owner will discuss aside for the price of the land concern and then asked to the chief what else is required to complete the deal (it is usually food and drinks that are been asked) that done, this buyer will give an appointment day in which he will come with the sum of money asked. The second stage is the pavement phase. This is done by providing the required amount of money and items asked to the buyer. The food is distributed to all the notables and elders and the money is given to the land owner. The chief can now sign the customary law waiver to this buyer but however the chief has a fraction of the paid money from the seller and this money is provided in order to finance the chief's transport to the divisional officer's place to give reports. This process applies to both small and large plantation holder (Interview in Mbandjock, 11/05/2021).*

This means that, with the common people faith, they believe that if the buyer does not satisfy the village natives, the land will not grow crops or will yield little output to the new land holder. So, since their culture is that their lands belong to them, they expect that you

continue to pay them as long as they live, this is usually one of the sources of conflict in plantation agriculture zones in Africa. Most of the enlightening youth when come back from school and wish to establish their own summer holder plantation agriculture becomes a very big problem as they find it difficult to happen. The political elites, the economic elites, traditional authorities in complicity with the administrative authorities would have sold the land and they will not have where to farm. Generally, these bring problems between these parties. One of our respondents explain that,

*The practical case is a recent case in Neo Baboute village. Where the local chiefs, seized more than half of the village land and when the brother was angry and wanted to agitate, he put him in police custody and thereafter in prison till today over grabbed family land. This has caused a lot of problem in the village so much so that the village is divided into two camps now. Those who are pro Ninja and those who are pro his brother. In fact, the village is all in chaos (Interview in Mbandjock, 11/05/2021).*

This means that it has become a way of live among the political, and economic class. Reasons why when some of this youth resist the authorities most often send them behind bars in police custody. It equally brings problem between the villages in Mbandjock. Why one local chief claim it is he or her village land the order chief equally claim the same. Even at the level of families. This problem is generating to families some family heads are usually as they sell land without telling and seeking concern of their family members. So, he's had brothers and sisters to fight him or her for having done that. It goes in line with James C. Scott (1977), who places the critical problem of the peasant household subsistence at the center of this study. The fear of food shortages, he argues persuasively, explains many otherwise puzzling technical, social, and moral arrangements in peasant society, such as resistance to innovation, the desire to own land even at some cost in terms of income, relationships with other people, and relationships with institutions, including the state.

### **Conflict of who owns the land**

Another area of conflict that come about that emanates from the presence of smallholder plantations in a locality, is the land grabbing conflict. It usually come about to situate who actually owns the land. When the economic importance of land is known to stakeholders, everybody has interest in controlling the land which come with a lot of power. This situation usually comes up times without number between chives, subjects, smallholder owners and the indigenous. In Mendouga one of the villages of Mbandjock sub division, we noticed that many Mendouga people sold the village lands without the chief's or any local authority's concern. So, when Mr. Ava Dieudonner was enthroned as chief of Mendouga village, he reclaimed all the lands occupied by non-locals. This brought about conflict between the chief and the local people who sold the village land without the knowledge of the village authorities. According to these peope,

*Chief Ava claimed land from Mr. Essola Gabriel. This claim was based on the fact that, Mr. Essola secretly sold a piece of land to Mr. Eyala a non-native. Mr. Essola on his part is pretending that he gave the piece of land to the later free of charge, however, he also tells the village that Mr. Eyala promised him to pay for the piece of land once he had enough funds but many decades now since the deal, nothing has been given to the chief to be distributed to the indigents as our culture demands. The chief conflicts with Mr. Essola claiming that he received the land payment if Mr. Eyala is exploiting the land for smallholder plantation and refuse to give the chief's and the village part. Following this issue, there has been conflicts between Mr. Essola and the chief who can't believe the word of Mr. Essola Gabriel. Many similar problems created conflict between the chief and the local. (Interview in Mendouga, 11/10/2021).*

This implies that, some of the conflict of land grabbing cause by smallholder plantations in Mbandjock is due to cultural bridging. Conflict raised most often in Mbandjock because of the violation of the culture of the local people by smallholder exploiters. The culture of the Yezoum like the Baboute warrens that when land is bought, the buyer especially a non-native, will need to give food to the local people passing through the chief to be distributed to the indigents as their culture demands. When is it not done, then conflicts come in between the chief, local people like with smallholder plantation owners.

Most small holders arrived many localities when the village was still very under populated and benefited from lands at nearly no cost or through selling contracts with the pioneer's settler without the chives concern hoping that when they will be payed appropriately the normal amount of land cost, they will let the call the chief's attention but this not always the case. When these natives become aware of the mistake they were subjected to, they go in for reclamations. Provided the investors is actively engage in his activities, they usually repudiate the claim. This brings tension between the two individuals.

### **Conflict over land between family members**

Smallholder plantations have also come with a new culture of land grabbing which cause conflict in smallholder plantation regions in Africa. Sometimes, these conflicts are among family members as who own which portion of land and or who is responsible for selling land. All of these cause a lot of conflict in Mbandjock. Even though the family lands in most localities are delimited, these land boundaries are not always adequately demarcated. This land limitation could be marked by flowers, trees, among others which are all ephemeral with a short life span. This contributes to the birth of tension when these limits become unremarkable and the concerned families will have to go in for land dispute usually at the land boundary between the two people concern. One of our informants indicated that,

*In May 2021, Mr. Essola had a conflict with Mme Zouga (a Matriage that reside in Obamassi. A village near Mendouga) over Mr. Essola's father farm land and here's. The latest had opposing points of view on the limits of their farm lands and this brought about disagreements. This problem was solved very rapidly in favour of the Matriage because as the custom says a child do not have to argue with a parent as did Mr. Essola with the Matriage Zouga. (Interview in Mbandjock, 12/10/2021).*

This means that land grabbing has brought about numerous conflicts among family members as who own which portion of land and or who is responsible for selling land. These conflict at times are engineered by smallholder plantation owners to exploit the situation and grabbed land. All of these cause a lot of conflict in the sub division

### **Stallholderr plantations Farmer's grazer's conflicts**

Farmer's grazers conflicts are another area of conflict present in areas where smallholder plantations are found. It is usually between farmers and grazers for one encroaching another's one space and vice versa, Cattle rearing have damaging effects on the smallholders' farm as it destroys crops that many at time lead to grazers /farmers conflicts. During this movement, cows get in to farms and destroy food crops while herdsmen set fire on grazing lands in order to regenerate new pastures. Worthy of note here is the fact that this poor practice by grazers has made farmer-grazers conflicts so rampant during the season. In the Sub-division, a majority of the population can boast of a land for smallholders' cultivation.

Moreover, after the dry season, when smallholders' farmers harvest their crops, the second season is followed by the cultivation of food crops which at times is often destroyed by the cows found in the smallholders' fields because most of the cattle are left *unherded* and there is often disregard for transhumance tracts to water points and dry season grazing areas. The consequences are trespassing into farmlands and crop destruction year in year out. It

should be noted here that while the cultivation of food crops is seasonal, grazing is not seasonal and is carried out throughout the year.

In recent times, measures have been taken by the government, traditional authorities, and NGOs to manage the rampant farmer-grazers conflicts in Mbandjock Sub-division. The proceeding paragraphs will explain the role that has been played by the above-mentioned actors in the resolution of conflicts between farmers especially smallholders' farmers and grazers. Nchang (2015) says the government of Cameroon in 1974 nationalized all farming and grazing land. So, farmers and grazers were only given due rights in their respective zones following the 1978 ordinance, that created the Agro-Pastoral Commission in all the Divisions and Sub-divisions of Cameroon. The fact that the commission was headed by the D.O actually helped in reducing farmer grazer's conflicts.

Moreover, a locally base NGO, FAP in collaboration with the SOSUCAM, MINADER, MINEPIA and MINATD have greatly helped in the eradication of farmer-grazier conflicts through the education they give the population of Mbandjock via programs that shows the importance of practicing sustainable agriculture. (FAPs report 2007). This report also shows how smallholders farming can co-exist with cattle rearing without any eventual conflicts. In addition, being the custodian of their lands, traditional leaders have over the years adopted measures to manage these conflicts in order to promote peace and food security in the plains. However, the traditional leaders of the villages that make up the Mbandjock Sub-division have actually restricted the Mbororos grazers from grazing around farmlands located.

### **The emanation of cultural conflict**

Culture diversity is another area where we find conflict because of smallholder plantation agriculture in several parts of the world. It is even more concern in Africa because, Africans love to keep their cultural identity and pass it down to future generations. In Mbandjock when these smallholder plantations were created, they need workers. These workers most often came from the three northern regions of Cameroon and the northwest region of Cameroon. These people equally have their own cultural treats. As they searched and have jobs, they travel along with their culture. When their cultures meet with the culture of the indigenous people most often it brings conflict. This is because most often in Banjo, the population of the local people less than the population of settlers. Most often the settlers do not want to respect those taboos, customs, Mbandjock an above all the way of life of the people. People He comes angry because of that into the conflict. Some of the cultural problems that we find in Mbandjock because of the presence of smallholder plantations are;

Respect of some cultural values of the indigenous people by the settling people. As the killing and eating of snake which is a taboo to the Baboute people who believes that the snake is their totem. It is a snake that helped them to cross the river Sanagal to their present side Mbandjock. One of our respondents told us that,

*Sometimes we may see non-native plantation holders performing certain activities in that may be a taboo to the natives of the locality and vice versa for example in Mbandjock tribe, it is forbidden to eat a snake but we may see many SOSUCAM non-native farmers eating snakes (Interview in Mbandjock, 08/10/2021).*

Based on the above, conflict here have varieties but the most encountered are include cultural divergence and neighbouring farmlands delimitation conflicts. Another cultural conflict area is at the level of festivals and rituals. Most of the settlers' populations disregard these festivals and rituals perform in the different villages of Mbandjock sub division. As many smallholders and large holder plantation in most if not all the rural localities are mixture of natives and non-natives, this brings about a variety of cultures which may be contradictory to each other. For Scott, J. (1977), insofar as all economic activities and relationships depend on moral norms and ethical dispositions. These norms and ethnics are found in the culture of the

people. As such when they are not respected it becomes a conflict between the parties concerned. All economies can be understood as moral economies, both market and non-market, capitalist and non-capitalist, modern and pre-modern, state and state-less, gift and household. First, capitalism is moral because unlike socialism it respects individuals, their rights, and their pursuit of happiness. In fact, capitalism requires this respect for individuals and rights. Therefore, capitalism often is defined as a social system, not an economic system, which protects individual rights.

### Conclusion

Conclusively, the findings in this paper shows that, there are new sources of power and conflict in Mbandjock sub division created by the presences of the culture of smallholder plantation agriculture in Mbandjock. These powers ranges from spiritual powers, economic powers, political powers and social life of the people involving their cultivation, farming life and changes that take place in these activities. Some of these changes in the smallholder plantations activities in Mbandjock are deliberate and conscious action by man while being rational as a member of the society. The aspects presented in this paper include the smallholders' power to changes in tools used, the sources of seeds, changes in the market and changes in the various sources of finances. It also presents feedings on smallholder plantations and conflict like land grabbing, farmer grazer conflicts. Further it shows that the farmers mainly sell their produce to the large cooperation's and the in the bigger markets in Cameroon and the most common source of finance of these small-scale farmers are their personal savings. Labour is mainly done by family, friends and hired labour at times. After harvesting and threshing, the crops are stored and prevented from attack by weevils. The crops remain fresh until they are all consumed. The most common preservation practice revealed by the participants is by hanging the maize, dry for things like cocoa and coffee. At times the seeds are mixed with the ash and stored into clay-pots and baskets. The seeds could last for more than five seasons. In general, in areas with little moisture, farmers prefer drought-tolerant crops (like sweet potato, cassava, millet, and sorghum), and management techniques emphasize soil cover to reduce moisture evaporation and soil runoff. This chapter let us to the conclusion of this thesis.

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## ADOLESCENTS ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR. COMPARATIVE STUDY BY GENDER AND AGE

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**Abstract.** *The theme addressed in this paper is one of great importance, antisocial behavior in teenagers being a sensitive topic. For this reason I wanted to research the differences that can appear depending on gender and age through its presence in adolescents. A sample of 76 students was assessed by self-administering a questionnaire on antisocial behavior and the characteristics that this type of behavior implies. The purpose of the present study is to examine and evaluate differences in antisocial behavior in adolescents according to gender and age. The results showed that there are significant differences in antisocial behavior by gender and age. The statistical results and the confirmed hypotheses are supported by the specialized literature, but also by my own opinion regarding the possible reasons. The understanding, support and affective communication offered by the family, social and school framework, as well as the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral and humanistic therapeutic methods, can have positive results in reducing this antisocial behavior.*

**Keywords:** antisocial behavior; delinquency; teenagers; family; social group.

### 1. Introduction

Since childhood, children can suffer a behavioral and emotional imbalance (Duarte et al., 2019), and from 10 to 14 years old, they go through a period of development, called age crises (Adams and Berzonsky, 2009). Age crises can be of 2 types (Cucer, 2022): of independence (stubbornness, negative attitude) and of dependence (on older people, uncontrolled submission). However, adolescence is when character takes shape, through which prosocial or antisocial behavior is formed (Cucer, 2020).

Antisocial behaviors have become a very common and discussed topic among teenagers (Savca, 2023). They may unconsciously infiltrate various antisocial activities, which are defined by behaviors that violate legal or social rules (Dishion and Patterson, 2006), aggression, impulsivity, drug abuse, alcohol (Sperry, 2018) and delinquency (Salceanu, 2015). Antisocial behavior appears around the age of 15, with a history of conduct disorder before this age. To be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, the individual must be over the age of 18 and have had symptoms of the conduct disorder before the age of 15 (American Psychiatric Association, 2016).

A number of factors that can produce such behaviors are:

- Neurobiological factors (Zibilianu, 2019): complications and low birth weight; drug use during pregnancy; chronic diseases; various brain and traumatic head injuries.
- Cognitive-behavioral factors: core beliefs (Beck, 2015); beliefs about self and the world (Mitchell, Tafrate and Freeman, 2015).
- Psychological factors (Savca, 2023): personality; temperament type; present impulsivity; lack of will and empathy.
- Biosocial and interpersonal factors: abuse, demandingness and neglect in childhood (Meloy, 1988; Benjamin, 2003; Gheorghe, 2002); the entourage (Engels et al., 2004 apud Vasile, 2010); inadequate level of school training; mass media (Sandu, 2008).

Antisocial behavior can be characterized by (World Health Organization, 2016; Murzea, 2015; American Psychiatric Association, 2016):

- Persistent irresponsibility and disregard for social norms and rules
- Indifference to the feelings and wishes of others
- Inability to maintain lasting relationships or socialize
- Low tolerance for frustration and control (violence, aggression, bullying, impulsivity)



- The inability to experience guilt
- School failure and school maladjustment
- Lying and manipulating others for fun or personal gain
- Consumption of alcohol or other prohibited substances
- Lack of empathy
- They consider themselves superior to those around them

These characteristics, in adolescence, can fall under the term of juvenile delinquency, being a related concept of school deviance (Neamțu, 2003). Juvenile delinquency is a phenomenon aimed at illegal activities committed by children and adolescents, the most common being: theft, robbery, rape and murder (Dobre, 2017). The notion of deviance was elaborated by Sellin (1938 apud Neamțu, 2003: 13) and defined it as the set of behaviors directed against the norms of conduct or the institutional order.

Stoian (1972) considers that there are 2 categories of delinquency: false juvenile delinquency (caused by an illness) and true juvenile delinquency (caused by a psychosocial abnormality). He believes that a big problem with delinquent behavior is the one who is formed along the way, not that due to a malfunctioning of the brain. In order for an antisocial act committed by a person to be affirmed as a symptom of a disease and not as a violation of the law, the individual must have no discernment (Vlad and Vlad, 1978), having an excuse to produce atypical actions (Banciu, 1992).

According to Oancea (2004), children can adopt such behavior if: they belong to the category of difficult-to-educate children; are adopted children (due to parents' expectations according to the child's temperament); are minors with behavioral disorders in crises (violence, quarrels and conflicts in the family); parents were overprotective.

Psychological factors do not act directly on the individual, but pass through the filter of his individual peculiarities, the roots of which are in the innate elements of the personality (Butoi, 2019; Mitrofan Butoi and Zdrengea, 1992).

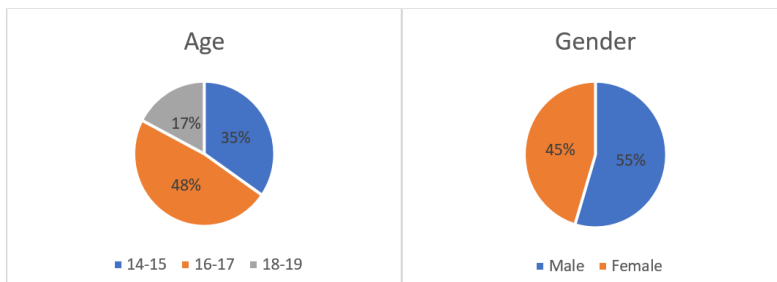
## 2. Research methodology

The main **objectives** of the study are: (1) observing the level of antisocial behavior in adolescents according to gender and age; (2) identifying significant differences in antisocial behavior between boys and girls.

The research has two **hypotheses**, namely: (1) it is presumed that adolescent boys have more pronounced antisocial behavior than girls; (2) it is presumed that there is an age difference which may influence antisocial behavior in adolescents.

The **sample** was chosen by the non-random method of convenience. This method is the most common in practice and the easiest. The non-random convenience method involves choosing subjects according to accessibility (Aniței, 2007).

**Fig. 1:** Graphic representation of the distribution of the group of participants



The sample consists of 76 students of which 35 are girls and 41 boys aged between 14 and 18 years: 26 children aged between 14-15 years, 36 aged 16-17 years and 13 aged

between 18-19 years. The subjects are students in the 9th - 12th grades at different high schools from both urban and rural areas in Romania.

The **instrument** used in the study was my own questionnaire. This questionnaire has 32 closed-ended questions - covering substance and alcohol use, hazardous activities, lack of empathy, superiority, failure and school maladjustment. In this questionnaire there are 28 questions that indicate antisocial behavior and 4 questions that reflect prosocial behavior.

The distribution being a normal one, we created the interval table presented below with the meanings of the scores, using the standard of 5 normalized classes:

**Table 1:** Calibration of the instrument

Normalized class	Interval	Meaning	Theoretical percentage	Actual percentage	Cumulative percentage
1.	30-39	Very low level	6.7%	5.09%	5.09%
2.	40-49	Low level	24.20%	18.39%	23.48%
3.	50-63	Medium level	38.20%	29.03%	52.51%
4.	54-89	High level	24.20%	18.39%	70.9%
5.	90-160	Very high level	6.7%	5.09%	75.99%

The real percentage was calculated by the following formula:  $X = 76 \times 6.7 / 100$ , where X represents the real percentage, 76 refers to the number of participants, and 6.7 means the theoretical percentage. Thus, the scores of the present instrument that evaluate antisocial behavior in adolescents are classified into:

- 30-39= Very low level
- 40-49= Low level
- 50-63= Average level
- 54-89= High level
- 90-160= Very high level

The quotation will be done in reverse for the items of items 7, 8, 25, 26 and for the rest of the items, the quotation will be directly. We used the Likert scale, with responses from 1 to 5 indicating the frequency of actions: 1= never; 2= almost never; 3= sometimes; 4= almost always; 5= always. The questionnaire items are:

**School failure and school maladjustment.**

1. My behavior was brought to my attention by the homeroom teacher or the principal.
2. I'm running late because I don't feel like going.
3. I get grades below 5 in school.
4. I was threatened with expulsion because of my grades.
5. I was threatened with expulsion due to absences.
6. I was threatened with expulsion because of my behavior.

**Lack of empathy**

7. I am interested in the wishes and feelings of the people around me. (R)
8. It bothers me when people around me suffer. (R)
9. I don't mind seeing someone suffer.

**They consider themselves superior to those around them.**

10. I like to order them around me.
11. I feel superior to those around me.
12. I feel like no one can rise to my level.

**Inability to maintain lasting relationships or socialize.**

13. Any relationship of mine doesn't last long.
14. I'm a loner, and I enjoy it.
15. I find it very difficult to make friends.

**Persistent irresponsibility and disregard for social norms and rules.**

- 16. I did things that are against the law.
- 17. I had trouble with the police.
- 18. I have fun doing illegal things.
- 19. I engage in activities that may be dangerous.

**Low tolerance for frustration and control (violence, aggression, bullying, impulsivity).**

- 20. If someone annoys me, I beat them.
- 21. I jump easily when something doesn't suit me.
- 22. I get angry very easily and act violently.
- 23. I take revenge on the people who wronged me.

**The inability to experience guilt.**

- 24. I do what I want without thinking about others.
- 25. I feel guilty after I upset someone. (R)
- 26. I am remorseful for my past behavior. (R)

**Lying and manipulating others for fun or personal gain.**

- 27. I threaten other people to get them to do what I want.
- 28. I use those around me to get what I want.
- 29. Telling lies seems normal to me.

**Consumption of alcohol or other prohibited substances.**

- 30. I used various prohibited substances (cannabis, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, opioids, etc.)
- 31. I consume alcohol.
- 32. I can't stand it without taking drugs.

Regarding the research design, the present study is an observational study that aims to compare the interpretation of the scores obtained by the participants. In this study, the own questionnaire containing 32 questions with closed answers on a scale from 1 to 5 is applied. It was applied to the subjects on November 6, 2023. The subjects were informed about the research and gave their consent. After applying the questionnaire, the data were downloaded into an Excel file, thus creating a database to be analyzed. Statistical data analysis was performed using SPSS Statistics version 26. The interpretation of the results was carried out between November 9, 2023 and November 21, 2023.

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms. The ethical aspects of a research with human subjects were taken into account, namely: the confidentiality of the data was ensured by anonymizing the answers, and the subjects were informed about the purpose of the research and gave their consent to participate in this study. Among the personal data of the subject, the initial anamnesis took gender, age, the high school where they study, the class they are in and the environment of origin.

**3. Results and discussion**

**Hypothesis 1:** It is presumed that adolescent boys have more pronounced antisocial behavior than girls

The first step of each research in quantitative data processing is the calculation of the starting statistical indicators that can be seen in table number

Table 2: Calculation of starting statistical indicators

Descriptives			
gender		Statistical	Std. Error
girls	Mean	50.80	1,551
	Median	50.00	
	Variance	84,165	
	Std. Deviation	9,174	
	Minimum	36	
	Maximum	70	
boys	Mean	64.73	2,723

Median	63.00	
Variance	303,901	
Std. Deviation	17,433	
Minimum	36	
Maximum	121	

As can be seen from the analysis of table number 3, the mean for the sample of girls is equal to 50.80, having a standard deviation of 9.174, and for the sample of boys, the mean is equal to 64.73, having a standard deviation of 17.344. Although the difference between the two samples is 8.17, we can see that men have a higher mean than women.

To decide which type of statistical coefficient we will use, we calculated the normality of the distribution in table number 4.

Table 3: Calculation of normality - antisocial behavior variable

Tests of Normality							
	gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistical	df	Sig.	Statistical	df	Sig.
antisocial behavior	girls	,108	35	,200 *	,960	35	,228
	boyish	,119	41	,154	,935	41	,021
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.							
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

In the Kolmogorov-Smirnov calculation, we obtained sig=0.200 > 0.05 for the sample of girls, which shows us that we have a normal distribution, and sig=0.154 > 0.05 for the sample of boys, which leads us to a normal distribution. In this context, we will calculate the differences between the means using the parametric method (the Independent-Samples T Test). The results of statistical processing are available in table number 5.

Table 4: Independent-Samples T Test for the antisocial behavior variable by gender

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
				F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
		Lower	Upper							
antisocial behavior	Equal variances assumed	8,267	.005	-4,250	74	,000	-13,932	3,278	-20,464	-7,399
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.446	62,433	,000	-13,932	3,133	-20,194	-7,669

Because normality has been respected, the second condition is to also check for homogeneity, which must be greater than 0.05. To check the homogeneity we have the "Levene" Test which shows us which line we will take later in this table to interpret the Sig. (2-tailed). In this test we see that sig=0.005, which is less than 0.05, which means homogeneity is not respected.

On the left side of the table we have 2 lines: "Equality of variances assumed" and "Equality of variances not assumed". When homogeneity is respected, we will look at the first line, namely "Equality of variances assumed". When the homogeneity is less than 0.05, then we will look at the second line, called "Equality of variances not assumed". Because, in this

case, the homogeneity is not respected, we will look at the second line to interpret the Sig.(2-tailed)/significance threshold.

For the hypothesis to be confirmed, the significance threshold must be less than 0.05. Otherwise, the decision is suspended, and the hypothesis is not confirmed.. In our case, Sig. (2-tailed) is equal to 0.000, which is less than 0.05, which means that there are significant differences in the sense that boys adopt more antisocial behavior than girls, that is, the hypothesis is confirmed.

Nowadays, behavioral deviance has gained a lot of momentum among teenagers, from an early age. It is known that boys are more prone to developing deviant behaviors or participating in various dangerous activities due to several factors that are to be presented in the lines below. Girls are subjected from an early age to certain general stereotypes about the female gender, standards that must be achieved. On the other hand, with boys, things are not the same, they have a more generous freedom from the environment from an early age. This may be a well-supported reason why boys may differ from girls in engaging in this type of behavior.

A very important factor in the achievement of antisocial behavior is the dysfunctional family. The first social group that every individual belongs to from birth is the family. This is defined as the place where the child develops both emotionally and socially (Baran-Pescaru, 2006). Thus, the family is the first to offer the child a type of education, being considered the first school the child attends (Mitrofan and Mitrofan, 1991). The foundations that the family provides to the child are essential factors in his adult life. They must be by their side, listen to them and explain to them the consequences of their actions from an early age, so that when they grow up they know what actions should be done and what should not be done. The education provided by the family, their support and presence speak for themselves during adolescence. If a 14-15-year-old child is treated with disinterest, scolded, assaulted or even made to commit various crimes for the family, when he turns 18, this activity will be normal for him as a person as well, there is a good chance that he will practice it and he with his family.

According to research, different studies have shown that: a child who was raised by a single parent (Cho et al., 2010), who was beaten or witnessed different types of violence (Wherry et al., 2015), who experienced antisocial parenting (Ručević, Farrington and Andershed, 2023) or an overly protective model (Vera, Granero and Ezpeleta, 2012), has a high chance of developing such behavior, especially boys.

One study showed that parental strictness and protectiveness towards an adolescent boy led to antisocial behavior a year later, and that girls responded much more favorably to these types of parental actions (Slattery & Meyers, 2014). This excessive protectiveness leads to a negative impact on the development of autonomy.

Another factor may be the group the boy belongs to. The group of friends is a critical element in the development of a boy's behavior. Out of the desire to impress his friends or other people, the child may end up doing certain activities that lead to the sphere of delinquency: smoking, drug use, robbery, violence. A longitudinal study conducted by Cook, Buehler and Henson, (2009) with a sample of adolescent boys and girls observed that by mid-adolescence, boys tend to choose the group of friends as a social influence and let themselves be guided by their actions. Another study conducted by Novacek, Raskin and Hogan (1991) noted that both middle and high school students used substances for various personal reasons, the most common responses from the surveys they completed being "because I was depressed", "to be recognized", or "because my friends were doing it too".

In a research carried out by Chen et al., (2018) they analyzed how pro-sociability and sociability can influence drug use and deviant behavior (lies, pornography, violence) in middle and high school students. Prosociality and sociability represent fundamental concepts of social competence that can greatly influence behavior. The results showed that

boys adopt such behaviors in greater numbers than girls. High scores of high school boys were found in substance use and deviant behavior.

**Hypothesis 2:** It is presumed that there is an age difference which may influence antisocial behavior in adolescents.

Table 5: Calculation of starting statistical indicators

Descriptives					
	Age		Statistical	Std. Error	
antisocial behavior	14-15 years	Mean	52.27	2,088	
		Median	50.00		
		Variance	113,325		
		Std. Deviation	10,645		
		Minimum	39		
		Maximum	86		
	16-17 years old	Mean	57.00	1,878	
		Median	55.50		
		Variance	134,000		
		Std. Deviation	11,576		
		Minimum	36		
		Maximum	78		
	18-19 years old	Mean	79.36	6,643	
		Median	89.00		
		Variance	485,455		
		Std. Deviation	22,033		
		Minimum	47		
		Maximum	121		

As can be seen from the analysis of table number 6, the average for the sample of teenagers aged 14-15 years is equal to 52.27, for the age 16-17 the average is 57.00 and for the last sample aged 18- 19 the average is 79.36. Thus, we can see that the 18-19-year-old group identifies with the highest average, which means that the scores obtained from the subjects also indicate an increased level of antisocial behavior.

To decide which type of statistical coefficient we will use, we calculated the normality of the distribution in table number 7.

Table 6: Calculation of normality - antisocial behavior variable

Tests of Normality							
	Age	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistical	df	Sig.	Statistical	df	Sig.
antisocial behavior	14-15 years	,136	26	,200 *	,901	26	,017
	16-17 years old	,087	38	,200 *	,971	38	,417
	18-19 years old	,215	11	,167	,925	11	,364
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.							
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

In the Kolmogorov-Smirnov calculation, we obtained sig=0.215> 0.05, respectively sig=0.136>0.05 and sig=0.087>0.05 , which leads us to a normal distribution. Because normality has been respected, the second condition is to check for homogeneity. For the homogeneity check we have the Homogeneity of Variance Test which is presented in table

number 8. In this test we see that sig=0.000 which is less than 0.05 which means homogeneity is not respected.

Table 7: Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistics	df1	df2	Sig.
antisocial behavior	Based on Mean	8,869	2	72	,000
	Based on Median	5,278	2	72	.007
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	5,278	2	39,472	.009
	Based on trimmed mean	8,976	2	72	,000

In this context, we will calculate the differences between the means using the parametric method (One-Way ANOVA Test). The results of statistical processing are available in table number 9.

Table 8: One-Way ANOVA for the antisocial behavior variable by age

ANOVA					
antisocial behavior					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5881,619	2	2940,810	16,744	,000
Within Groups	12645.661	72	175,634		
Total	18527.280	74			

In the table we can see the Sig which is equal to 0.000, which results that there are significant differences of antisocial behavior according to age. In this case the hypothesis is confirmed. To be able to specify between which groups there are significant differences, we analyze the Multiple Comparisons Table. In it, we can see that there is no significant difference between the age groups 14-15 years and 16-17 years, but between 18-19 years and the 2 age categories a difference is present.

Table 9: Multiple comparisons for the antisocial behavior variable by age

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: antisocial behavior						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
14-15 years	16-17 years old	-4.731	3,373	,345	-12.80	3.34
	18-19 years old	-27,094*	4,767	,000	-38.50	-15.69
16-17 years old	14-15 years	4,731	3,373	,345	-3.34	12.80
	18-19 years old	-22,364*	4,537	,000	-33.22	-11.50
18-19 years old	14-15 years	27,094*	4,767	,000	15.69	38.50
	16-17 years old	22,364*	4,537	,000	11.50	33.22

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The relationship between adolescence and antisocial behavior is considered by some authors to be: benefit which helps to develop adult behavior (Cormier and Mucchielli

apud Vlad and Vlad, 1978; Stoian, 1972), and by other authors considered harmful (Buentello and Spock apud Vlad and Vlad, 1978) as a result of certain factors listed previously.

A first factor could be this stage of development. Adolescence is the most difficult, disturbing and stressful period of all developmental stages. Changes occur with aging and can be emotional, biological and social (Sion, 2007). This age is a very challenging one, which leaves a deep mark on the individual, for this reason "it was also considered a second birth (Rousseau) or an essential moment in human psychic development (Lehalle, 1998, p.11)" (Crețu, 2009: 270).

14-15-year-olds tend to experiment with certain actions to see what it's like, out of a desire to feel more mature, or out of a need to fit in socially. However, 18-19-year-olds, and sometimes 16-17-year-olds, have reached a stage in life where they can tell right from wrong. Their actions are justified as being judged and thought, because it is assumed that at this age it is about the presence of discernment (Lupu, 2012). Discernment may be another factor that influences the presence of acts of antisocial behavior by age.

A third factor may be the identity crisis during adolescence (Crețu, 2009; Lupu 2012). In this crisis, teenagers go through an inner conflict with themselves, a conflict generated by various major changes that link adolescence to adult life. When they feel that they cannot cope with these changes, they have the impression that they are not enough or that no one is with them, they end up adopting different antisocial behaviors. Some children believe that by practicing such behaviors, they will get noticed and get the attention they need.

Another study that can highlight the fact that there is an age difference that can influence antisocial behavior in adolescents is the one achieved by Mota, Costa and Matos (2016) who had as participants 202 adolescents aged between 12-18 years. They wanted to research resilience and deviant behavior among children in special institutions. From the point of view of age, it was shown that teenagers aged 15-18 showed deviant, destructive and addictive behavior in much higher proportions compared to those aged 12-14.

#### 4. Conclusions

The importance of family and friend groups as a social influence remains one of the most researched areas, as both contribute to the development of behavior.

The majority of antisocial behaviors in adolescents occurred as a result of problems within the family, which were then observed through the interpersonal relationships of the individual and its way of manifestation in accordance with the environment.

The persistent development of this behavior can lead to other and more dangerous types of behavior. In such moments, the understanding, support and affective communication offered by the family, social and school framework, as well as the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral and humanistic therapeutic methods, can have positive results in reducing this antisocial behavior.

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## FROM POTENTIAL TO PRACTICE: ASSESSING ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS AND ACTIONS AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS.

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**Abstract:** *This comprehensive study explores the burgeoning intersection of medical entrepreneurship and medical education, shedding light on the entrepreneurial inclinations and endeavors of medical students. With the healthcare landscape rapidly evolving, the need for innovative, efficient, and patient-centric solutions has never been more critical. This research addresses a significant gap in existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the motivations and barriers that medical students face as they navigate the path to becoming healthcare entrepreneurs. The study employs an extensive empirical review, targeting medical students at various educational stages to delineate the factors influencing their entrepreneurial intentions. Key findings suggest that while there is a strong inclination towards innovation and the creation of novel healthcare solutions, significant barriers such as lack of adequate entrepreneurial training and financial constraints hinder progress. Data from the South West Oltenia region indicates that while some students are well-prepared to embark on entrepreneurial ventures, a substantial portion feels underprepared, underscoring the need for enhanced educational programs that integrate practical entrepreneurship training. The research concludes that medical schools are pivotal in fostering entrepreneurial skills, suggesting that curricular adaptations are necessary to equip future medical professionals with both clinical and managerial competencies.*

**Keywords:** medical entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial education, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial barriers; student motivations

### 1. Introduction

The transition towards medical entrepreneurship marks a pivotal shift in healthcare, emphasizing the necessity for innovative, efficient, and patient-centric approaches to medical service delivery. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, there's a growing imperative to explore the entrepreneurial inclinations and engagements of medical students. These individuals stand at the forefront of the next wave of healthcare innovation, poised to significantly impact the sector's future direction. The present study endeavors to fill a critical gap in existing research by offering empirical evidence on the entrepreneurial ambitions and endeavors among medical students, elucidating the motivators and deterrents that influence their journey towards healthcare entrepreneurship.

Fostering entrepreneurial competencies among medical students is paramount in an era where "technological breakthroughs and inventive strategies are essential for tackling intricate health dilemmas" (Jones, 2019: 244; Davi et al 2020). Medical entrepreneurship spans the creation of novel medical instruments, digital health advancements, and enhanced healthcare services, all aimed at elevating patient care and the operational efficiency of health systems. Despite the acknowledged advantages and surging interest in this domain, there is "a discernible paucity of knowledge regarding medical students' readiness, interest, and active engagement in entrepreneurial ventures" (Clark, 1998; Ferrante, Federici & Parisi, 2019: 1815).

By conducting an extensive empirical review of medical students at various educational stages, this research distinguishes itself by focusing on both prospective and actual entrepreneurs within this group. It identifies the principal elements that influence their entrepreneurial intentions and activities, thereby "offering crucial insights for integrating entrepreneurship into medical education" (Palalić et al. 2017: 400; Zhang et al., 2024). The study aims to guide educators, policy makers, and healthcare sector stakeholders in

recognizing the value of cultivating entrepreneurial talent among medical students as a means to spur innovation and enhance healthcare delivery systems globally.

The implications of this research are significant, shedding light on how educational frameworks and policy initiatives can be tailored to support medical entrepreneurship. By delving into the determinants of medical students' entrepreneurial aspirations and endeavors, the study provides a foundation for crafting strategies that encourage an entrepreneurial mindset among future healthcare practitioners. This approach has the potential to catalyze the development of groundbreaking healthcare solutions, thereby advancing the healthcare industry to meet the demands and challenges of the modern world (Veena & Gowrishankar, 2023: 121-147, Durrani, 2016).

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for examining medical entrepreneurship among students draws upon several key theories and concepts. At its core, the *Theory of planned behavior* (TPB) (Ajzen, 1990: 314-324; Conner & Armitage, 1998: 1429-1464) provides a foundational perspective, suggesting that an individual's intention to perform a behavior (in this case, engaging in entrepreneurship) is influenced by their attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. This framework has been widely applied in the context of entrepreneurship to understand the motivational factors that lead individuals to start their own ventures (Van Gelderen et al, 2018, Conner, 2020; Ramoni, 2016).

Additionally, the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) proposed by Shapero and Sokol (1982: 72-90) emphasizes the role of individual perceptions and the desirability and feasibility of starting a business as critical determinants of entrepreneurial intentions. This model complements the TPB by adding a dimension of personal propensity to act upon opportunities, which is particularly relevant in the dynamic and opportunity-rich field of healthcare (Rittippant et al., 2011: 20-21).

The concept of self-efficacy, introduced by Bandura (1978), is also integral to understanding medical entrepreneurship. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. In the context of medical students pursuing entrepreneurship, "self-efficacy influences their perceived ability to overcome the challenges associated with starting and managing a healthcare venture" (Madux, 1995; Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005: 1265).

Moreover, the role of educational support and "exposure to entrepreneurship education in shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions and self-efficacy cannot be overstated" (Fayolle, Gailly, & Lassas-Clerc, 2006: 511-512). Exposure to entrepreneurship education has been shown to "positively impact students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship and their perceived behavioral control, thereby increasing their likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activities" (Nabi, Liñán, Fayolle, Krueger, & Walmsley, 2017: 279).

## **3. Methods**

This analysis aims to dissect and understand the myriad factors influencing medical entrepreneurs in the South West Oltenia region, examining their motivations, the social impact of their enterprises, and the efficacy of their strategic approaches in navigating a complex and rapidly evolving landscape. The outlined objectives delve deep into the personal and professional impetuses for engaging in medical entrepreneurship, the societal ramifications of these commercial ventures, and the intricate web of interpersonal relationships that define the sector's collaborative environment. Furthermore, the hypotheses posited here present a structured inquiry into the dynamics between educational institutions, government support mechanisms, and the entrepreneurs themselves. They explore the assumed positive correlations between collaborative efforts, access to European funds,

previous experience, and the adoption of digital technologies with the success and sustainability of medical business ventures.

We present below the main **objectives and hypothesis** of our research:

01. Identification of motivational factors for entrepreneurship: Exploring personal and professional reasons that drive individuals to engage in medical entrepreneurship; Understanding the factors that influence the decision to start or support a business in the medical field.

02. Evaluation of the social impact of medical businesses: Analyzing how medical businesses affect the local community; Assessing their contribution to job creation, accessibility of medical services, and improving quality of life in the community.

03. Study of interpersonal relationships and collaborations: Investigating the relationships between medical entrepreneurs and other stakeholders, such as patients, healthcare service providers, or local authorities; Identifying factors that support or hinder collaboration among players in the medical field.

04. Analysis of development and innovation strategies: Identifying strategies used by medical entrepreneurs to adapt to changes in the field and to innovate; Evaluating the impact of innovations on the quality of medical services.

05. Investigation of barriers and risks: Identifying barriers that hinder the development of entrepreneurship in the medical field, such as regulations, financial resources, or competition; Evaluating the risks associated with starting and managing a business in this field.

06. Study of the impact of technology and innovation in business: Investigating how technology and innovation influence the way entrepreneurs understand and provide medical services; Assessing the degree of adaptation to technological changes in the field.

### **Hypotheses:**

H1: The degree of collaboration between higher education institutions and medical entrepreneurs in the South West Oltenia Region positively influences the development and innovation in the health sector.

H2: Participation in training and education programs in medical entrepreneurship is correlated with an increase in entrepreneurs' confidence in managing and developing their businesses.

H3: There is a positive correlation between the degree of collaboration between higher education institutions and entrepreneurial firms in the medical field and the level of innovation in the region's medical services.

H4: Government support through funding programs and tax incentives significantly impacts the growth and development of medical entrepreneurship in the region.

H5: Medical entrepreneurs who benefit from European funds are more likely to register significant business growth compared to those who have not accessed such funds.

H6: Accessing European funds is associated with increasing the sustainability of businesses in the medical field due to increased opportunities for investment in infrastructure and technology.

H7: Previous experience in the medical field or in business increases the likelihood of entrepreneurs succeeding in managing a business in the medical sector.

H8: Implementing digital technologies in entrepreneurial medical practice is associated with increased efficiency and quality of medical services.

### **The research sample. Socio-demographic Data**

The percentages regarding the age category distribution offer a clear picture of the demographic composition of the respondents. With 61% of participants falling within the 18-24 age category, there is a significant presence of young adults. Approximately 34.3% are

within the 25-34 age range, suggesting considerable participation from the immediately subsequent age cohort. Only 3.5% represent the 35-44 age range, indicating a lesser presence of older participants. These figures provide insight into the demographic diversity of the sample and can yield essential information for tailoring strategies and policies. The focus on young adults may suggest, for instance, a need for increased engagement in entrepreneurial activities and financial education programs, while the reduced participation of the older age group may indicate opportunities to develop specific initiatives to attract and involve them in the entrepreneurial environment.

#### **4. Results and findings**

From the data obtained by our research, the two obstacles considered most significant by entrepreneurs in Romania are:

- a) Access to financing (58,7%) - This aspect indicates that the majority of entrepreneurs consider difficulties related to obtaining financing to be a major obstacle in the way of developing their businesses.
- b) Education and entrepreneurial training (45.3%) - Entrepreneurs seem to recognize the need to improve education and training in the field of entrepreneurship, suggesting that insufficient resources of knowledge and skills can be a significant barrier in running a business.

Although not selected as one of the two main obstacles, the percentage of 39.5% indicates that a significant segment of entrepreneurs perceives excessive regulations as a relevant factor. This could suggest that a complex or rigid legislative framework may create difficulties for managing businesses in Romania. The percentage of 25.6% suggests that there is a significant proportion of entrepreneurs who consider competitive market conditions as an important factor. This may indicate a need for innovative strategies and approaches to cope with competition.

Healthcare is a crucial yet often complex sector that can present both significant opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurs. Opportunities may arise from technological innovations, specialized medical services, or innovative approaches to improving access to healthcare. Over time, the climate for medical entrepreneurs can evolve, influenced by legislative, technological, and social changes.

Approximately one-third of respondents (36.6%) believe that there are significant opportunities for medical field entrepreneurs in their country. This perspective may be supported by the increasing demand for medical services, technological evolution in the healthcare sector, and other factors that open up possibilities for innovation and development in this sector. Similarly, a comparable proportion of respondents dismiss the idea that there are significant opportunities for entrepreneurs in the medical field. Reasons for this perspective may include intense competition, strict regulations in healthcare, and other factors that can make entering and sustaining a business in this field challenging. A significant percentage of respondents (26.7%) are in a zone of uncertainty regarding opportunities for medical field entrepreneurs. This may reflect a need for additional information or indicate an uncertain or fluctuating climate concerning business possibilities in the medical field.

These challenges underscore the complexity of the entrepreneurial environment in the medical field, where innovation must be balanced with adherence to strict norms and regulations. Addressing these challenges requires well-thought-out strategies, including collaboration with regulatory experts, developing partnerships, and identifying suitable funding sources. A significant percentage (62.2%) indicates that one of the main challenges for entrepreneurs in the medical field is access to funding. The development and implementation of innovative products or services in healthcare can require significant investments, and obtaining funding can be difficult, especially in the context of strict regulations.

Another significant challenge is the process of approval and compliance with regulations. In a regulated medical environment, adhering to standards and obtaining

necessary approvals can be a complex and laborious process, which can slow down the development and launch of innovative products or services. Although mentioned to a lesser extent (33.7%), competition remains a significant challenge for entrepreneurs in the medical field. While innovation can provide a competitive edge, managing competition and differentiating in a regulated environment can pose significant challenges.

These motivations reflect a balance between the economic objectives and social aspirations of those involved in businesses funded by European funds in the medical field. It is evident that respondents want to build businesses that are both profitable and beneficial to society, by bringing innovations and improvements to the healthcare system.

A significant percentage (66.9%) indicates that an overwhelming majority of respondents are motivated by the opportunity to develop a sustainable and profitable business. This highlights the importance of financial sustainability and the economic success of the business. Another significant motivation (61%) is the desire to contribute to the improvement of the healthcare system. Being involved in a business funded by European funds in the medical field can be seen as an opportunity to bring positive changes and contribute to the provision of better and more accessible medical services. A smaller percentage (44.8%), but significant, indicates an interest in bringing innovations to the medical field. Participants see this opportunity as a way to introduce new technologies, processes, or business models that can have a positive impact on the healthcare system.

A significant percentage (68%) indicates that an overwhelming majority of respondents believe that current information regarding the benefits of participating in entrepreneurial training activities is insufficient. Reasons for this perception may include the lack of concrete resources, limited access to relevant information, or perhaps a distrust in the effectiveness of these activities. A smaller percentage (32%), but still significant, indicates that there are some respondents who consider the available information to be adequate. These individuals may already benefit from existing resources or may have a more optimistic perspective on the value that entrepreneurial training offers. This discrepancy in perception can have various explanations, including variations in access to resources, previous experiences with training programs, or the level of awareness regarding the actual benefits of participating in such activities.

Although a small percentage (12.8%), this group of respondents believes that the resources currently available are sufficient to support students in the process of starting their own businesses. This perspective might be associated with the presence of effective programs or initiatives that provide entrepreneurial support. Successful enterprises and concrete examples could contribute to shaping this positive sentiment.

A significant percentage (87.2%) indicates a predominant opinion among respondents that the current resources for supporting students in starting their own businesses are insufficient. This feedback may highlight the need to strengthen resources and support offered to students who wish to explore the path of entrepreneurship. Improving access to information, mentoring programs, and facilitating access to funding could be considered necessary.

A significant percentage of those who have participated in a professional training course in the entrepreneurial field (59.9%) indicates a substantial interest and involvement in developing entrepreneurial skills. Participation in such courses may reflect a desire to acquire the knowledge and skills essential for successfully starting and managing a business. A considerable percentage (40.1%) of those who have not participated in entrepreneurial training courses suggests that there is still a significant portion of respondents who have not accessed or deemed this type of training necessary in the last 3 years. Reasons for this could vary, including a lack of time, limited access to resources, or perhaps the perception that other methods of acquiring entrepreneurial skills are more effective.

This interpretation suggests that there is a significant level of interest and awareness regarding entrepreneurial training, yet there is still an opportunity to expand this

involvement and make these courses more accessible and appealing to those who have not pursued them in recent years. These results can provide valuable insights for the development and adaptation of entrepreneurial training programs to better meet the needs and expectations of potential entrepreneurs

The results show that an overwhelming majority, specifically 72.1% of respondents, feel the need for counseling to develop, implement a business plan, and manage their business, while 27.9% state that they do not feel this need at present. This finding indicates a significant demand for support and guidance in the entrepreneurial process, and analyzing these percentages can provide a deeper understanding of the context and motivations behind these responses.

Those who responded affirmatively, indicating a need for counseling, may have various reasons for this choice:

a. *Complexity of the entrepreneurial process* – the process of developing a business plan and managing an enterprise can be extremely complex, involving financial, strategic, marketing, and operational aspects. Many entrepreneurs may recognize the need for specialized expertise to successfully navigate these aspects and avoid potential pitfalls.

b. *Maximizing chances of success* – entrepreneurs may seek counseling to maximize their chances of success. Receiving advice from experts in the field can help develop a solid business plan, avoid common mistakes, and adopt effective strategies for implementation and management.

c. *Access to resources and networking* – counseling services can also provide access to networks, resources, and information that can be crucial for business growth. Experienced consultants can facilitate valuable connections and provide a framework for obtaining additional support.

d. *Adapting to market changes* – in the context of a constantly changing business environment, entrepreneurs may seek counseling to adapt to new trends, remain competitive, and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

On the other hand, respondents who indicated that they do not currently need counseling might be motivated by several factors:

a. *Previous experience* – some entrepreneurs might have prior experience and skills that make them feel confident in handling planning and managing the business without external support.

b. *Limited resources* – there may be financial limitations that lead some entrepreneurs to try to manage the business on their own, at least in the initial stages

## 5. Conclusions

Our study brought to light significant aspects related to the intersection between the medical field and entrepreneurship. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the results provide a detailed perspective on the attitudes, concerns, and expectations of healthcare professionals regarding entrepreneurship.

Medical professionals exhibit significant interest in developing entrepreneurial skills. Our research results showed an increased understanding of the impact that entrepreneurship can have on improving the healthcare system. The interest expressed in the survey suggests a shift in the traditional perception of the medical profession, where the focus was initially exclusively on clinical aspects. Currently, medical professionals wish to explore entrepreneurial opportunities to bring about significant innovations and improvements in the healthcare system.

This evolution reflects the recognition that entrepreneurship in medicine can not only lead to the development of successful businesses but also bring innovative solutions to the challenges faced by the medical field. Medical professionals see entrepreneurship as a way to actively contribute to the transformation and optimization of medical services, introduce new technologies, and more effectively meet patient needs.



The existence of various concerns, from improving access to medical services to developing technological solutions, indicates a diversity of entrepreneurial visions in the medical field. The presence of varied concerns among medical professionals, expressed through the desire to improve access to medical services and to develop technological solutions, underscores a remarkable diversity of entrepreneurial visions in the medical field. From patient-centered approaches that aim to improve the accessibility and efficiency of medical services to technological innovations that can revolutionize medical practice, this diversity reflects the complexity and dynamism of the medical sector. Medical professionals are thus exploring multiple directions, addressing various challenges and opportunities to contribute to the evolution and optimization of the healthcare system. This diversity of entrepreneurial visions in the medical field represents fertile ground for innovation and change, paving the way for creative and adaptable solutions to the continuously changing needs of the medical community and patients.

Significant percentages highlighting the lack of financial education and entrepreneurial training indicate the need for an adapted educational offering within the university. These results emphasize that medical professionals recognize the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills and understanding the financial aspects associated with managing a business. In this context, the university has a crucial opportunity to respond to this need by integrating specialized educational programs that provide practical knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship and financial management. Thus, adapting the academic curriculum to current entrepreneurial requirements becomes essential for preparing future medical professionals not only in clinical aspects but also in managerial and entrepreneurial aspects, contributing to the formation of a more comprehensive generation prepared to face the complex challenges of the healthcare system.

A significant percentage considers the future entrepreneurial environment to be uncertain or problematic. This perspective can be explored to identify and address potential barriers. Consultation sessions, debates, and support programs can be designed specifically to address these fears and to develop strategies that facilitate a safer and more promising entrepreneurial environment. Addressing this critical perspective can help create a framework in which medical professionals can approach challenges with more confidence, thus strengthening the viability and sustainable development of entrepreneurship in the medical field.

By encouraging innovation, developing entrepreneurial skills, and facilitating collaborations, the university can play an essential role in generating innovative solutions and preparing future generations of entrepreneurial medical professionals. This effort not only supports economic development but also contributes significantly to advancing the medical field and improving the quality of healthcare services.

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# VARIED METHODS FOR STUDYING THE INFLUENCES UPON THE CONSUMER DECISION

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**Abstract.** *The present paper is an application of the mathematical statistics methods in the information theory, with varied examples, including those emerging from author's researches. The objective is to prove basic results, referring to the trans-information, the information transfer, using different methods. Another objective was to demonstrate that most results regarding the system of the factors which act upon the consumer decision, justified by the energy formulas, have their homologues using the entropy formulas. For this purpose, it was used an Excel application, which includes informational statistics formulas, and starts from the 2<sup>3</sup> pseudo-experiment table. This application was translated in the mathematical language, using the probabilities formulas, leading to the multidimensional vectors analysis. Either using the information theory or the theory of communication, in spite of their different methods (one uses the energy transfer, the other studies the entropy of the signal transmission) both theories results leading to similar conclusions and are equally useful in applications. Analyzing the dynamic systems of impulses and their interactions, it could be applied any of these methods. The mathematical approach extends the informational statistics results and the connection of both theories leads to better understand and study the systems of influences.*

**Keywords:** influences interaction, trans-information, events probability

## 1. Introduction

Let's consider two events,  $x$  and  $y$ , with  $m$  possibilities, also  $m$  probabilities of them, for the first and  $n$  possibilities, also  $n$  probabilities, for the second. They can describe events, independent or not. Such a pair of variables  $(x, y)$  is called a *two-dimensional* vector.

The probability  $p(x = x_i, y = y_j) = p_{ij} = p(i, j)$  will be the probability of the occurrence of  $i$  for the first and  $j$  for the second. This probability is easier to calculate if events  $x$  and  $y$  are independent. So, in order to carry out the common distribution, they start from the tables of the two given variables:

$$x = \begin{pmatrix} X_1 & \dots & X_n \\ p_1 & \dots & p_n \end{pmatrix} \quad y = \begin{pmatrix} y_1 & \dots & y_m \\ q_1 & \dots & q_m \end{pmatrix}$$

with  $(p_1, p_2, \dots, p_n)$  and  $(q_1, q_2, \dots, q_m)$  -the *marginal probabilities*. Inside the following table, there are  $p_{ij} = p(x = x_i, y = y_j)$ , which form the probabilities of the intersection, or common for the two events. If  $x$  and  $y$  are independent, then  $p_{ij} = p_i \cdot q_j$ . Otherwise,  $p_{ij}$  are generally known, given. We assumed the notations:  $p(x_i) = p(i)$  for  $x$ , and also for  $y$ :  $p(y_j) = p(j)$ .

**Property 1:** *If we gather the common probabilities on the lines, we obtain the marginal probabilities. Same on the columns.*

$$\sum_{i=1}^n p_{ij} = q_j, \forall j = \overline{1, m}; \quad \sum_{j=1}^m p_{ij} = p_i, \forall i = \overline{1, n} \quad (1)$$

**Property 2:** *The sum of all probabilities is 1.*

$$\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^m p_{ij} = 1 \quad (2)$$

**Example 1:**

We considered two arbitrary events, forming a two-dimensional vector, denoted with  $(x, y)$ , to which we have calculated the conditioned probabilities, using the mathematical

statistics standard formula. We have verified that the events are not independent:  $p(1,1) \neq p(x=0) \cdot p(y=0) \iff 0.25 \neq 0.4 \cdot 0.6$

Table 1. Example of two-dimensional vector, with dependent components

	y		
	0	1	$p_i \downarrow$
x			
0	0.25	0.35	0.6
1	0.15	0.25	0.4
$q_j \rightarrow$	0.4	0.6	1

Source: author

$$p(x=0/y=0) = p(1,1)/p(y=0) = p(x=0,y=0)/p(y=0) = 0.25/0.4 = 0.625,$$

$$p(x=1/y=0) = p(2,1)/p(y=0) = p(x=1,y=0)/p(y=0) = 0.15/0.4 = 0.375,$$

$$p(x=0/y=1) = p(1,2)/p(y=1) = p(x=0,y=1)/p(y=1) = 0.35/0.6 = 0.58(3),$$

$$p(x=1/y=1) = p(2,2)/p(y=1) = p(x=1,y=1)/p(y=1) = 0.25/0.6 = 0.41(6)$$

It results the sum of the conditioned probabilities on columns:  $p(x=0/y=0) + p(x=1/y=0) = 0.625 + 0.375 = 1$ ;  $p(x=0/y=1) + p(x=1/y=1) = 0.58(3) + 0.41(6) = 1$ .

Similarly, for the sum of the conditioned probabilities on lines, which leads to the conclusion: Property 3: The sum on lines and columns of the conditioned probabilities, are equal with 1.

$$\sum_j p_i(j) = \sum_i p(i) = 1; \sum_i p_j(i) = \sum_j p(j) = 1 \tag{3}$$

**Example 2:**

From the considerations above, it resulted that if we know one variable values and the corresponding probabilities, also the conditioned probabilities of another variable, reported to the first, we can realize the joint distribution. (Shannon, 1948, pg. 6). Let's consider then, the

variable x, having the table:  $x \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ \frac{1}{3} & \frac{16}{27} & \frac{2}{27} \end{pmatrix}$  and the data in Table 2a).

Table no 2. a) The conditioned probabilities, referring to y; b) The joint probabilities

a)

$p_x(y)$	y		
x	1	2	3
1	0	0.8	0.2
2	0.5	0.5	0
3	0.5	0.4	0.1

b)

$p(x,y)$	y		
x	0	$\frac{4}{15}$	$\frac{1}{15}$
1	$\frac{8}{27}$	$\frac{8}{27}$	0
2	$\frac{1}{27}$	$\frac{4}{135}$	$\frac{1}{135}$

Source: author

The two-dimensional vector  $(x,y)$  has the common distribution formed with the joint  $p(i,j)$  probabilities. It results the data in table 2b):

$$p(1,1)=p(y=1/x=1) \cdot p(x=1)=0; p(1,2)=p(y=2/x=1) \cdot p(x=1)=\frac{8}{10} \cdot \frac{1}{3}=\frac{4}{15};$$

$$p(1,3)=p(y=3/x=1) \cdot p(x=1)=\frac{1}{15}, p(2,1)=\frac{8}{27}, p(2,2)=\frac{8}{27}, p(3,1)=\frac{1}{27},$$

$$p(3,2)=\frac{4}{135}, p(3,3)=\frac{1}{135}, \text{ which leads to the variable } y \text{ probabilities:}$$

$$p(1)=\frac{8}{27} + \frac{1}{27} = \frac{9}{27}; p(2)=\frac{4}{15} + \frac{8}{27} + \frac{4}{135} = \frac{16}{27}; p(3)=\frac{1}{15} + \frac{1}{135} = \frac{2}{27}$$

It was obtained  $y$  distribution, similar with  $x$  distribution:  $y \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 \\ \frac{1}{3} & \frac{16}{27} & \frac{2}{27} \end{pmatrix}$ .

Example 3:

Table 3. Example of two-dimensional vector, with independent components

	y	1	2	$p_i \downarrow$
x				
-1		0.12	0.28	0.4
0		0.06	0.14	0.2
1		0.12	0.28	0.4
$q_j \rightarrow$		0.3	0.7	1

Source: author

As it was mentioned in the beginning, for this type of two-dimensional vector  $(x,y)$ , the joint probabilities are as follows:  $p(i,j)=p(i) \cdot p(j)$  and is verified the relation:  $p_{ij}=p_i \cdot p_j$ . For example:  $p(1,1)=p(x=-1,y=1)=0.12=0.3 \cdot 0.4=p(y=1) \cdot p(x=-1)$ , and all the similar joint probabilities verify similar relations.

It was also defined the entropy of the joint event(Shannon, 1947, pg. 12):

$$H(x,y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \log p(i,j) \tag{4}$$

and the entropy of each event:

$$H(x) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \log \sum_i p(i,j); H(y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \log \sum_j p(i,j) \tag{4'}$$

Applying these three formulas to  $x$  and  $y$  events, from example 1, we are led to the following results:

$$H(x,y) = -(2 \cdot 0.25 \log 0.25 + 0.35 \log 0.35 + 0.15 \log 0.15) = 1.940645$$

$$H(x) = -(0.6 \log 0.6 + 0.4 \log 0.4) = 0.970951$$

$$H(y) = -(0.6 \log 0.6 + 0.4 \log 0.4) = 0.970951$$

Similarly, for the events in the example 3, which are independent, we have obtained:

$$H(x,y) = -(2 \cdot 0.12 \log 0.12 + 0.14 \log 0.14 + 0.06 \log 0.06 + 2 \cdot 0.28 \log 0.28) = 2.403219$$

$$H(x) = -(0.2 \log 0.2 + 2 \cdot 0.4 \log 0.4) = 1.521928$$

$$H(y) = -(0.3 \log 0.3 + 0.7 \log 0.7) = 0.881291$$

Following the calculus for these two events, it resulted:

$$\text{Example1: } H(x) + H(y) = 1.941901 \Rightarrow H(x, y) \leq H(x) + H(y) (1.940645 < 1.941901)$$

$$\text{Example3: } H(x) + H(y) = 2.403219 \Rightarrow H(x, y) = H(x) + H(y)$$

As consequence, we have concluded:

*Property 4: The sum of the two individual uncertainties is greater or equal with the joint event entropy, with equality when the events are independent.*

$$H(x) + H(y) \geq H(x, y) \tag{5}$$

It's known that:  $p(i) = \sum_j p(i, j)$ ;  $p(j) = \sum_i p(i, j)$  meaning that summing the joint

probabilities on every line it is led to the corresponding probabilities of the first variable  $x$ , namely the *horizontal marginal probability*, and similarly, the sum of the joint probabilities on every column, gives the corresponding probabilities of the second variable  $y$ , namely the *vertical marginal probability*. Taking account of the standard *conditioned probability* formula, it was obtained:

$$p_i(j) = \frac{p(i, j)}{\sum_j p(i, j)}; \quad p_j(i) = \frac{p(i, j)}{\sum_i p(i, j)} \tag{6}$$

Referring to the dependent type variables  $x$  and  $y$ , we have admitted the classical definition of the *conditioned entropy* of  $y$ , denoted  $H_x(y)$ , as average of the entropy of  $y$  for each value of the variable  $x$ , having as coefficient the probability of getting that specific value of  $x$ .

$$\begin{aligned} H_x(y) &= -\sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log p_j(j) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log \frac{p(i, j)}{\sum_j p(i, j)} = -\sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log p(i, j) + \\ &+ \sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log \sum_j p(i, j) = H(x, y) - H(x) \Rightarrow H(x, y) = H(x) + H_x(y) \end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

Similarly:

$$\begin{aligned} H_y(x) &= -\sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log p_i(i) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log \frac{p(i, j)}{\sum_i p(i, j)} = -\sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log p(i, j) + \\ &+ \sum_{i,j} p(i, j) \cdot \log \sum_i p(i, j) = H(x, y) - H(y) \Rightarrow H(x, y) = H(y) + H_y(x) \end{aligned} \tag{7'}$$

The general relation between the conditioned probabilities resulted symmetrical:

$$H(x, y) = H(y) + H_y(x) = H(x) + H_x(y) = H(y, x) \tag{8}$$

In the general case of the arbitrary events, it was denoted another entity, namely the *trans-information*, which gives the measure of the difference between the entropy and the calculated conditioned entropy:

$$I(x, y) = H(y) - H_x(y) = H(x) - H_y(x) = I(y, x) \tag{9}$$

## 2. Methodology

The paper is an approach based on information and probability theories, and studies the result of the influences interaction upon an arbitrary system, in particular, upon the consumer decision, applying Shannon(1948, 379-423) theory of signals transmission, modeled reported to Onicescu(1966, 1419-1420) information theory, using the entropy instead of the energy in order to obtain compared results.

### 3. Developing the research

#### 3.1 Analyzing the factors influences upon the consumer decision, using the informational statistics

Next numerical data are due to the author’s survey( Mihăiță and Cazacu, 2018) developed on the new market of the anime products. The respondents segment we referred in the following is the young. The studied interaction is between three factors of influence upon the consumer decision: X-the *surprising effect* upon the consumer, Z-the *dramatic quality*, and Y-the *educative influence* of the products, all these factors determining the decision of buying. Perception is an important endogenous influence in the formation of the decision -making the decision process. Consequently, this influence was studied through online polls made among the anime public in Romania, both to evaluate the impact of anime on the socio-cultural and economic levels, and to manage the anime e-marketing in the future. It was followed(Cazacu,2020a,pg.93) by the verification of the H<sub>1</sub> hypothesis, namely: the young segment in Romania, which represents most of the Romanian anime fans, was pleasantly *surprised* by this new art form, which they appreciate from the *educational* point of view. Between the two adjectives it was demonstrated addiction and association. In table 4, we have denoted as follows: X<sup>0</sup>,Y<sup>0</sup>,Z<sup>0</sup>= the number of negative responses in relation to the questioned quality(X<sup>0</sup>=numer of NOT surprised respondents) and X<sup>1</sup>,Y<sup>1</sup>,Z<sup>1</sup>= the number of the positive responses, as result of the author’s research.

Table 4. 2<sup>3</sup> pseudo-experiment for the determinant variables X,Z and the determined variable Y

SUBJECT: ARBITRARY DATA INTERACTIONS				
ENTERING NUMERICAL DATA :				
		NOT Y (B <sup>0</sup> )	YES Y (B <sup>1</sup> )	Total
X (C)	Z (A)	Y <sup>0</sup>	Y <sup>1</sup>	
X <sup>0</sup>	Z <sup>0</sup>	18	5	23
	Z <sup>1</sup>	9	4	13
Total X <sup>0</sup>		27	9	36
X <sup>1</sup>	Z <sup>0</sup>	13	19	32
	Z <sup>1</sup>	11	32	43
Total X <sup>1</sup>		24	51	75
TOTAL		51	60	111

Source: author’s research (Mihăiță& Cazacu, 2018)

For the evaluation of each factor influence, from the information theory point-of-view, the most significant was considered its global importance, calculated using the entropy(Shannon,1948) or the energy(Onicescu,1966) formulas.

We have denoted the global importance calculated by entropy with **I<sub>H</sub>**, or **H**-importance, compared with the global importance calculated by energy, denoted with **I<sub>E</sub>**, or **E**-importance.

For the beginning, the conditioned importance was represented by the two terms: **I<sub>Hv</sub>(X)** or **I<sub>Ev</sub>(X)**, meaning the importance of **X** conditioned by **Y**( or in the presence of **Y**), calculated with aid of entropy or energy. The formulas which were used, have been inserted in one Excel register with two files, one for entering data and obtaining results, the second, the auxiliary, for calculus(Cazacu,2020b).

$$IH = \frac{\sum_{j=0}^1 W_j \cdot R_H(X/Y^j)}{\sum_{j=0}^1 W_j} = 0.539972 \cdot R_H(X/Y^j) = \frac{1 - H(X/Y^j)}{2 - H(T)}, j = 0,1;$$

$$H_Y(X) = H(X/Y^0) = -\left(\frac{27}{51} \log_2 \frac{27}{51} + \frac{24}{51} \log_2 \frac{24}{51}\right) = 0.9975;$$

$$H_{Y^1}(X) = H(X/Y^1) = -\left(\frac{9}{60} \log_2 \frac{9}{60} + \frac{51}{60} \log_2 \frac{51}{60}\right) = 0.6098$$

$$IE = \frac{\sum_{j=0}^1 W_j \cdot R_E(X/Y^j)}{\sum_{j=0}^1 W_j} = 0.540025 R_E(Y^j) = \frac{E_a(X/Y^j)}{\sum E_a(X/Y^j)}$$

$$E_{Y^0}(X) = E(X/Y^0) = \left(\frac{27}{51}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{24}{51}\right)^2 = 0.5017$$

$$E_{Y^1}(X) = E(X/Y^1) = \left(\frac{9}{60}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{51}{60}\right)^2 = 0.7450;$$

$$E_a(X/Y^0) = 0.0035 E_a(X/Y^1) = 0.49$$

The calculations for the global importance **IH**, for **Y** factor, using the information entropy, and respectively, the global importance **IE**, using the information energy, led to the results presented in formula (10), suggesting the importance of the educational alternative: ( $W_0=51/111=0,46$ ;  $W_1=60/111=0,54$ .  $W_0+ W_1=1$ ). These results and all other similar are inserted in figure 1.

Figure 1. The results of global importance and relations between the factors

ENTERING NUMERICAL DATA :					
X (C)	Z (A)	NOT Y (B°)	YES Y (B¹)	Total	
X°	Z°	18	5	23	
	Z¹	9	4	13	
Total X°		27	9	36	
X¹	Z°	13	19	32	
	Z¹	11	32	43	
Total X¹		24	51	75	
TOTAL		51	60	111	
METHOD	IH=H-IMPORTANCE BY ENTROPY		IE=E-IMPORTANCE BY ENERGY		FORMULA
	IH(Z/X)	IH(Z/Y)			
	A from C	A from B			
SHANON	40.0349%	49.6922%			=W1·E(H(Z/Y1))+W2·E(H(Z/Y2))
	IE(Z/X)	IE(Z/Y)			
	Z from X	Z from Y			
ONICESCU	40.0921%	49.6945%			=W1·E(H(Z/X1))+W2·E(H(Z/X2))
	IH(Y/X)	IH(Y/Z)			
	B from C	B from A			
			C(X,Y)=	0.4794	
SHANON	44.2477%	50.3027%	RELATION K(X/Y):	0.6147	
	IE(Y/X)	IE(Y/Z)			
	Y from X	Y from Z			
			C(Y,X)=	0.4100	
ONICESCU	44.4280%	50.3013%	RELATION K(Y/X):	0.4787	
			C(Y,Z)=	0.4818	
			RELATION K(Y/Z):	0.4998	
	IH(X/Y)	IH(X/Z)			
	C from B	C from A			
			C(Z,Y)=	0.4784	
SHANON	54.0025%	50.3769%	RELATION K(Z/Y):	0.4940	
	IE(X/Y)	IE(Y/Z)			
	X from Y	X from Z			
			C(X,Z)=	0.5438	
ONICESCU	53.9972%	50.3736%	RELATION K(X/Z):	0.6211	
			C(Z,X)=	0.4796	
			RELATION K(Z/X):	0.4976	

Source: data from table 4

**K** coefficients, reflecting the relation between two factors have already been calculated (Cazacu,2020a) using the standard energy formula. In figure 1, we have displayed the results in the last column.



Using the global importance, the entropy results demonstrated insignificant numerical differences (there are some different decimals), which do not change the conclusions concerning the influences interaction obtained with the energy formulas (figure 1). The information theory formulas calculate the weighted average using the specific masses and the adjusted energies. We also have studied the trans-information, meaning the informational contribution brought by factor **Y** to factor **X**, with aid of the information theory formulas. For the variables entropies, we have obtained:

$$\begin{aligned}
 H(X) &= -\left(\frac{36}{111} \log_2 \frac{36}{111} + \frac{75}{111} \log_2 \frac{75}{111}\right) = 0.909022 \\
 H(Y) &= -\left(\frac{51}{111} \log_2 \frac{51}{111} + \frac{60}{111} \log_2 \frac{60}{111}\right) = 0.995253
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{11}$$

and for the conditioned entropies averages (same model as to the energies averages):

$$H_Y(X) = \frac{51}{111} \cdot H_{Y^0}(X) + \frac{60}{111} \cdot H_{Y^1}(X) = 0.46 \cdot 0.9975 + 0.54 \cdot 0.6098 = 0.787955$$

$$H_X(Y) = \frac{36}{111} \cdot H_{X^0}(Y) + \frac{75}{111} \cdot H_{X^1}(Y) = 0.32 \cdot 0.8113 + 0.68 \cdot 0.9044 = 0.874198$$

As consequence, the trans-information from one variable to the other, using the entropy, was calculated as follows, with identical results:

$$\boxed{H(X,Y) = H(Y) + H_Y(X) = 1.783208 = H(X) + H_X(Y) = H(Y,X)}
 \tag{12}$$

So, the informational contribution of one factor to another had also the same value:

$$\boxed{I(X,Y) = H(X) + H(Y) - H(X,Y) = H(X) - H_Y(X) = H(Y) - H_X(Y) = H(X) + H(Y) - H(Y,X) = I(Y,X) = 0.12106676 \approx 0.121067}$$

Comparing the informational gain  $\Delta v(\mathbf{X})$  value, calculated with the energy formula, and the trans-information  $\mathbf{I(X,Y)}$  value (the informational contribution brought by one factor to another) calculated with the entropy formula, the two entities having similar meaning, just a small difference was found:  $0.14 - 0.12 = 2\%$ .

### 3.2 Analyzing the information transfer using the mathematical statistics formulas

Table 5. Transformation of data from table 4, by replacing the absolute values with the corresponding probabilities

		NOT Y (B°)	YES Y (B¹)	Total	
X (C)	Z (A)	Y°=51	Y¹=60		
X°	Z°	0.16216	0.04505	0.20721	23
	Z¹	0.08108	0.03604	0.11712	13
X¹	Z°	0.11712	0.17117	0.28829	32
	Z¹	0.09910	0.28829	0.38739	43
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>0.45946</b>	<b>0.54054</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>111</b>

Source: data from table 4, replaced by the corresponding probabilities

We noticed that:  $0.45946 \cdot 0.28829 = 0.13246 \neq 0.11712$ , so it resulted three pairs of factors: (Z,Y), (X,Y), (X,Z), which are not independent.

Using the data presented in table 5, i.e. replacing the absolute frequencies with their probabilities (relative frequencies), we found the procedure much more simplified, and we also have obtained the correlation of two combined influences,  $\mathbf{X \otimes Z}$ , with the third-**Y**. We have denoted:  $\mathbf{x = X \otimes Z}$ , also:  $\mathbf{y = Y}$ .

Then, the three factors, **X, Z, Y**, are resumed to only two variables, **x** and **y**, which form a **two-dimensional vector**. These are the tables of the new variables:

$$Y \begin{pmatrix} 51 & 60 \\ 0.4595 & 0.5405 \end{pmatrix} \rightarrow y \begin{pmatrix} 51 & 60 \\ 0.4595 & 0.5405 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$X \otimes Z \begin{pmatrix} 23 & 13 & 32 & 43 \\ 0.2072 & 0.1171 & 0.2883 & 0.3874 \end{pmatrix} \rightarrow x \begin{pmatrix} 23 & 13 & 32 & 43 \\ 0.2072 & 0.1171 & 0.2883 & 0.3874 \end{pmatrix} \quad (11)$$

Figure 2. The results of global importance, using Shannon and Onicescu formulas

SUBJECT: ARBITRARY DATA INTERACTIONS						
ENTERING NUMERICAL DATA :					CARACTERISTICI NUMERICE	
		NOT Y (B°)	YES Y (B¹)	Total		
X (C)	Z (A)	51	60			32.1712 M(Z⊗X)
	Z°	0.16216	0.04505	0.20721	23	55.8649 M(Y)
X°	Z¹	0.08108	0.03604	0.11712	13	252.3784 529
	Z°	0.11712	0.17117	0.28829	32	81.8649 169
X¹	Z¹	0.09910	0.28829	0.38739	43	519.7838 1024
	Z°	0.09910	0.28829	0.38739	43	961.1081 1849
TOTAL		0.45946	0.54054	1	111	1815.1351 M(Z⊗X·Y)
IH= H-IMPORTANCE BY ENTROPY						
IE=E-IMPORTANCE BY ENERGY						
METHOD					FORMULA	1797.2381 M(Z⊗X)M(Y)
						17.8970 Covariation
		IH(Z/X)	IH(Z/Y)			1140.8919 M(Z·Z)
		A from C	A from B			1034.984255 M(Z)M(Z)
SHANON		40.0349%	49.6922%			105.9076 var(Z⊗X)
		IE(Z/X)	IE(Z/Y)			3141 M(Y·Y)
		Z from X	Z from Y			3120.8831 M(Y)M(Y)
ONICESCU		40.0921%	49.6945%			20.1169 var(Y)
						2130.5306 var(ZX)·var(Y)
		IH(Y/X)	IH(Y/Z)			CORRELATION
		B from C	B from A	C(X,Y)=	0.4794	0.3877 p(Z⊗X,Y)
SHANON		44.2477%	50.3027%	RELATION K(X/Y):	0.6147	46.1577
		IE(Y/X)	IE(Y/Z)	C(Y,X)=	0.4100	4.48518379
		Y from X	Y from Z	RELATION K(Y/X):	0.4787	10.29114364
ONICESCU		44.4280%	50.3013%	C(Y,Z)=	0.4818	
				RELATION K(Y/Z):	0.4998	
		IH(X/Z)	IH(X/Y)	C(Z,Y)=	0.4784	
		C from B	C from A	RELATION K(Z/Y):	0.4940	
SHANON		54.0025%	50.3769%	C(X,Z)=	0.5438	
		IE(X/Y)	IE(Y/Z)	RELATION K(X/Z):	0.6211	
		X from Y	X from Z	C(Z,X)=	0.4796	
ONICESCU		53.9972%	50.3736%	RELATION K(Z/X):	0.4976	

Source: data from table 5

Comparing the results of calculations for **IH, IE, C** and **K** coefficients, presented in figure 1 and figure 2, it is obvious they are almost identical.

So, the new composed variable, presented in table 5 was considered a **two-dimensional vector**:  $(X \otimes Z, Y) \rightarrow (x, y)$ . We have evaluated the most significant numerical characteristics of this new variable, using the mathematical statistics formulas (figure 2, last two columns, on the right):

$$m_1 = M(x) = M(X \otimes Z) = 23 \cdot 0.2072 + 13 \cdot 0.1171 + 32 \cdot 0.2883 + 43 \cdot 0.3874 = 32.1712$$

$$m_2 = M(y) = M(Y) = 51 \cdot 0.4595 + 60 \cdot 0.5405 = 55.8649$$

$$M(x \cdot y) = M((X \otimes Z) \cdot Y) = 23 \cdot 51 \cdot 0.16216 + 23 \cdot 60 \cdot 0.04505 + 13 \cdot 51 \cdot 0.08108 + 13 \cdot 60 \cdot 0.03604 + 32 \cdot 51 \cdot 0.11712 + 32 \cdot 60 \cdot 0.17117 + 43 \cdot 51 \cdot 0.09910 + 43 \cdot 60 \cdot 0.28829 = 1815.1351$$

$$M(x) \cdot M(y) = M(X \otimes Z) \cdot M(Y) = 1797.2381.$$

These calculations lead to the vector  $(x, y)$  main numerical characteristics evaluation.

**Covariation:**  $cov(x,y) = M((x \cdot y) - M(x) \cdot M(y)) \rightarrow cov(x,y) = 17.897$

**Variation:**

$var(x) = M(x^2) - (M(x))^2 = 105.9076$ ;  $var(y) = M(y^2) - (M(y))^2 = 20.1169$

**Medium square difference:**

$\sigma(x) = \sqrt{var(x)} = 10.2911$ ;  $\sigma(y) = \sqrt{var(y)} = 4.4852 \rightarrow \sigma(x) \cdot \sigma(y) = 46.1577$

**Correlation**

$r_{x,y} = \frac{cov(x,y)}{\sigma(x) \cdot \sigma(y)} = 17.897 / 46.1577 \rightarrow r_{x,y} = 0.3877$

We have concluded that there is a significant new *correlation of interest*, consisting in the combined influences of X and Z factors, in relation with the third factor Y:  $r_{x,y} = r_{XZ,Y} = 0.3877 \approx 0.4$ .

Table 6. The distribution of the two-dimensional vector (x,y)

x	y		p(x <sub>i</sub> )
	y <sub>1</sub>	y <sub>2</sub>	
x <sub>1</sub>	0.16216	0.04505	0.20721
x <sub>2</sub>	0.08108	0.03604	0.11712
x <sub>3</sub>	0.11712	0.17117	0.28829
x <sub>4</sub>	0.09910	0.28829	0.38739
p(y <sub>i</sub> )	0.45946	0.54055	1

Source: data from table 5

In order to verify the formulas in equations (8)-(9), for the new two-dimensional vector (x,y), we have obtained its distribution in table 6. There were needed only the relative frequencies of the components (the associated probabilities of every events instantiations). As the absolute values of the variables x and y do not participate to the entropy formulas, there was no need to mention them.

The calculations are similar to those in the previews section, using the data in table 6 and the entropy formulas ([8]):

$H(x) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log \sum_j p(i,j) = 1.8802$   $H(y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log \sum_i p(i,j) = 0.9952$

$H(x,y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log p(i,j) = 2.7398$ ;

Numerical calculus for the new vector components, using the conditioned probability definition:

$H_x(y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log_2 p_i(j) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log \frac{p(i,j)}{\sum_j p(i,j)} = -0.16216 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.16216}{0.20721} -$   
 $- 0.04505 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.04505}{0.20721} - 0.08108 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.08108}{0.11712} - 0.03604 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.03604}{0.11712} -$   
 $- 0.11712 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.11712}{0.28829} - 0.07117 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.07117}{0.28829} - 0.09910 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.09910}{0.38739} -$   
 $- 0.28829 \cdot \log_2 \frac{0.28829}{0.38739} \cong 0.8596$

results which can be obtained using the logarithm property:

$$H_x(y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log_2 p(i,j) + \sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log_2 \sum_j p(i,j) = -0.16216 \log_2 0.16216 - 0.04505 \log_2 0.04505 - 0.08108 \log_2 0.08108 - 0.03604 \log_2 0.03604 - 0.11712 \log_2 0.11712 - 0.07117 \log_2 0.07117 - 0.09910 \log_2 0.09910 - 0.28829 \log_2 0.28829 + 0.20721 \log_2 0.20721 + 0.11712 \log_2 0.11712 + 0.28829 \log_2 0.28829 + 0.38739 \log_2 0.38739 = H(x,y) - H(x) \cong 0.8596$$

Similarly, the conditioned entropy  $H_y(x)$  formula led to next results:

$$H_y(x) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log p_j p(i,j) = 1.7445; H(y,x) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log p(i,j) = 2.7398;$$

$$H(y) = -\sum_{i,j} p(i,j) \cdot \log \sum_i p(i,j) = 0.9953 \Rightarrow 1.7445 = 2.7398 - 0.9953$$

$$\Leftrightarrow H_y(x) = H(y,x) - H(y) \Leftrightarrow H(y,x) = H(y) + H_y(x)$$

We have numerically verified all the relations between the entropies and the conditioned entropies for the (x,y) components. We concluded that the symmetry demonstrated in relation (12) for the usual influences factors, remains also verified for the new vector (x,y) components (table 7):

$H(x,y) - H(x) = H_x(y) \Rightarrow H(x,y) = H(x) + H_x(y)$	(13)
$H(y,x) - H(y) = H_y(x) \Rightarrow H(y,x) = H(y) + H_y(x)$	

#### 4. Research results

Table 7. The entropy, conditioned entropy and trans-information of (x,y) vector

$H_x(y)$	$H_y(x)$
0.8595	1.7445
$H(x)$	$H(y)$
1.8802	0.9953
$H(x,y) = H(x) + H_x(y)$	$H(y,x) = H(y) + H_y(x)$
2.7398	2.7398
$I(x,y) = H(x) - H_y(x)$	$I(y,x) = H(y) - H_x(y)$
1.357	1.357

Source: data from table 6

We have to mention the equality between the two trans-information values, calculated from differences between the entropies and the conditioned entropies of the two-dimensional vector:  $I(x,y) = I(y,x) = 1.357$

In the next table we have also presented the energies differences for the variable (x,y) components. The calculated differences between the conditioned energy and the each component energy are almost equal, with 1% error.

Using the energy formulas, we have noticed the reversed relation between the energies and the conditioned energies.

Table 8. The energies, the conditioned and transferred energies for (x,y)

E(x)	E(y)
0.561722	0.503288
E <sub>y</sub> (x)	E <sub>x</sub> (y)
0.633214	0.582703
E(x)-E(y)	E <sub>y</sub> (x)-E <sub>x</sub> (y)
6%	5%
I(x,y)=E <sub>y</sub> (x)- E(x)	I(y,x)=E <sub>x</sub> (y)- E(y)
7%(y→x)	8%(x→y)

Source: data from table 6

The informational gain, which the component x brings to the component y, following the classic information theory, gave the next results:

$$\Delta_{x \otimes z} Y = \Delta_{x,y} = \overline{(E_x(y))}_a - E_a(y) = (2 \cdot \overline{E_x(y)} - 1) - (2 \cdot E(y) - 1) \cong 16\%$$

$$\Delta_{y \otimes z} X = \Delta_{y,x} = \overline{(E_y(x))}_a - E_a(x) = (2 \cdot \overline{E_y(x)} - 1) - (2 \cdot E(x) - 1) \cong 14\%$$

and was noticed the reversed inequalities:

$$E_x(y) \geq E(y); \overline{E_x(y)} \geq E(y)$$

$$E_y(x) \geq E(x); \overline{E_y(x)} \geq E(x)$$

It results the relations between the two forms of energy transfer:

$$\Delta_{x,y} = 2 \cdot I(y,x); \Delta_{y,x} = 2 \cdot I(x,y)$$

Referring to the numerical results obtained for the informational gain: the energy transfer appeared more powerful(16%) from the component x (combination of the *surprising* and *dramatic qualities*) to the component y( *educative quality*) than in reverse(from y to x, which was 14%).

### 5. ConclusionsJOURNAL

a. Considering two points of a channel, between which a signal is transmitted, and taking account of Shannon’s theory(1948,, the conditioned uncertainty can be associated with the correction of the transmission, meaning the amount of additional information necessary to be added per second at the receiving point to have a correct received message. Following the theory, the two entropies of the transmission channel are: **H(x)**-for the source, and **H(y)**-for the receiver. The conditional entropy **H<sub>y</sub>(x)** measures the ambiguity of the received signal. If there is message in return, **H<sub>x</sub>(y)** will measure the ambiguity of the returned signal.

So, when calculating **I(x,y)** for two distinct discrete variables, or for the two components of the (x,y) vector (each of them can be multidimensional), we have obtained, in fact, the rate of the signal transmission R:

$$R = I(x,y) = H(x) - H_y(x) = H(y) - H_x(y) = H(x) + H(y) - H(x,y) \quad (14)$$

The information theory (based on the Onicescu energy) refers to the trans-information **I(x,y)** as an informational contribution brought by y to x; on the other hand, the rate **R** of a signal/information transmission between two points represents its meaning in the context of Shannon’s transmission theory.

The entropy, in addition, is easier to use and can be included in many more formulas than the energy. The analogy which results between the transfer of system’s influences and the evaluation of the entropy during a transmission phenomenon, leads to better understanding of both.

In the paragraph 3.2, three factors were transformed in a two dimensional vector, which numerical characteristics can be analyzed with mathematical formulas and complete a file like in figure 2. It was verified that there are very small differences between the calculus results, using one or the other theory(Shannon, 1948; Onicescu and Mihoc, 1966) concerning the global importance.

As to the informational contribution of all system factors, it can be analyzed not only between influences of the same kind, but also between different factors which determine the consumer decision any other phenomenon.

b. The globalization includes every level of the countries outputs, from industry to agriculture, from culture to the social life. The culture, in the global context of communications, including e-marketing, becomes also an object of sale and buy, like most of other products. In the actual complex global market, if the consumer has a real interest for a product and can afford the payment, he would first test it, buying it for his own use, to find if it suits his needs and then he could decide to continue acquiring.

Table 9. Numerical data referring to the interest for the anime products, the purpose of buying them, their acquisition

a) The interest for the anime products

FINDING THE PRODUCT INTERESTING	SURVEY 1	SURVEY 2	TOTAL
YES	376	231	607=87%
NO	231	37	83=13%

Source: author's researches

b) The respondents score related to the anime products buying for their own testing and using

BUYING FOR HIMSELF	SURVEY 1	SURVEY 2	TOTAL
YES	308	167	475=71%
NO	101	92	193=29%

Source: author's researches

c) Acquisition of the anime products

ACQUISITION	SURVEY 1	SURVEY 2	TOTAL
YES	320	175	495=72%
NO	89	92	181=28%

Source: author's researches

d) 2<sup>3</sup> pseudo experiment implicating the three different factors

A INTERESTING		C BUYING FOR HIMSELF		B ACQUISITION	
				NO	YES
NO	83	NO	59	42	17
		YES	24	17	7
YES	607	NO	176	49	127
		YES	431	121	310

Source: data from a),b),c)

As an example, we have considered the endogenous factor of interest for the anime products, associated with an exogenous factor-the experience of buying them for his own use. These two factors were supposed to determine the consumer acquisition in the future. The numerical data are included in table 9a),b),c) and are provided from the author researches(Mihăiță and Cazacu, 2018,2019).

Table 9d) summarizes data and includes them in the 2<sup>3</sup> experiment. The determined factor is the final acquisition. Applying the same procedure presented in section 3 we came to the results presented in table 10.

Table 10. Including the pseudo experiment in the calculus register

a) Organizing data in the analyzing file

INTERESTING	BUYING FOR HIMSELF	ACQUISITION		Total
		NO	YES	
X (C)	Z (A)	Y°(B°)	Y <sup>1</sup> (B <sup>1</sup> )	
	Z°	42	17	59
X°	Z <sup>1</sup>	17	7	24
Total X°		59	24	83
	Z°	49	127	176
X <sup>1</sup>	Z <sup>1</sup>	121	310	431
Total X <sup>1</sup>		170	437	607
TOTAL		229	461	690

Source: data from table 9

b) Translating data from table 10a) in the corresponding marginal probabilities

x	y		p(x <sub>i</sub> )
	y <sub>1</sub>	y <sub>2</sub>	
x <sub>1</sub>	0.061	0.025	0.086
x <sub>2</sub>	0.025	0.010	0.035
x <sub>3</sub>	0.071	0.184	0.255
x <sub>4</sub>	0.175	0.449	0.625
p(y <sub>j</sub> )	0.332	0.668	1

We have reconsidered the factor significances: X=C=the interest for the anime products, Y=B=the acquisition of the anime products, Z=A=buying the products for testing, for his own use. The conventions in the above sections were the same: the superior index <sup>0</sup> is associated with the negative responses and the superior index <sup>1</sup>, with the positive responses.

The Excel application(Cazacu, 2020b) for analyzing data applying the information theory used the form presented in table 10a. It has transformed data in information and analyzed the relations between the involved factors, the same it was described in section 3 and 4. The most important result was measuring the combined influences of factors X and Z upon Y, using the energy transfer:

$$\Delta(Y/X, Z) = \Delta(Y/X \otimes Z) = \Delta_{x \otimes z}(y) = \Delta_x(y) = 8\%$$

meaning the two determinant factors for increasing the acquisition volume are the interest(X) for the product and buying it for testing or for own use(Z).

In table 10b, the numerical data are replaced by their percentages(*marginal probabilities*) and the three factors are resumed to x=X⊗Z and y=Y, components of the vector (x,y). Referring to the trans-information from factors X and Z, to factor Y, the obtained result, using the equivalent probabilities values, was as follows:

$$I(y,x)=H(y)-H_x(y)=6\%=H(x)-H_y(x)=I(x,y)$$

The mathematical approach is useful in analyzing the combined influences of two or more factors upon another. Many similar phenomena can be also studied, using the presented methods.

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# THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HATE SPEECH BETWEEN ALGERIAN LAW AND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

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**Abstract:** *Today, the world is witnessing intense competition to reach the audience or scattered recipients here and there, especially in the context of significant media openness. This competition, along with the noticeable proliferation of various communication channels in their multiple forms, both traditional and modern, might overlook various human values and the respect of human beings for one another in its quest for prominence. This indeed has prominently manifested itself in the media arena in what is known as discrimination and hate speech in our current days. Various national and international systems and laws have tried and continue to try to combat this through various texts and legislations. This forms the subject of this research paper, titled: "Criminalizing Hate Speech between Algerian Law and International Conventions". We will address this topic through the following elements: A brief overview of the concept of hate speech and what it entails; Hate speech from the perspective of Algerian law; Hate speech within international laws and conventions.*

**Keywords:** hate speech, Algerian Law, International Conventions.

## 1. Introduction

Today, the world witnesses intense competition to reach the audience in the context of vast media openness. This competition, amidst the noticeable spread of various communication channels in their traditional and modern forms, may neglect in its pursuit of prominence the diverse human values and the respect of human beings for each other. Indeed, this is what has prominently emerged in the media landscape today, known as discrimination and hate speech. Various national and international systems and laws have attempted and continue to attempt to combat this through different old and newly established texts and legislations. Balancing the concern for freedom of expression and the right of individuals to express their opinions without restrictions, and curbing any misuse of this freedom, many texts and conventions grapple with the concept of hate speech.

We will address this topic through the following elements: a brief overview of the concept of hate speech and its implications; hate speech within international laws and conventions; hate speech from the perspective of Algerian law.

## 2. On the Concept of Hate Speech

"The term 'hate speech' is an American term that has gained global recognition" (Ekaterina Balabanova, translated by Assem Sayed Abdel Fattah, 2017: 215).

"The first definition of hate speech was issued in the United States in 1993, describing it as speech that incites acts of violence or hate crimes, and creates a climate of prejudices that may encourage the commission of hate crimes. Typically, those who engage in such speech use various methods to make others feel unsafe, including violence, abuse, property destruction, threats, name-calling, sending suspicious mail, or belittling an individual or social group" (Al-Taai Mustafa Hamid Kazem, 2020: 41).

"Given that there is no universally agreed-upon definition of hate speech, its meanings can be summarized in a clear context as: 'Any demeaning speech based on verbal violence, aiming at the moral assassination and exclusion of the other, through calls for killing and violence, extending to insults, slander, defamation, and discrimination, as well as racism, intellectual bigotry, and arrogance'" (Salmani Hayat, 2021: 1420).

The United Nations defines hate speech as:

"Any kind of communication, in speech, writing, or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender, or other identity factors" (UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, p. 02.)

It is also defined as: "A state of mind characterized by intense and irrational emotions of hostility, hatred, and contempt towards the targeted group or person" (Ahmed Ezzat and others.)

### **3. Hate Speech in International Laws and Conventions**

"There is no clear definition of what is called hate speech in international law, making this topic one of the most controversial and disputed... The absence of this definition has led to confusion between speech that falls within the framework of freedom of expression and hate speech, which often results in the application of this concept in a way that imposes numerous restrictions on freedom of expression..." (AFTE, Foundation for Freedom of Thought and Expression: 7).

"Hate speech has not settled on a unified concept or a consistent designation at the international and national levels, nor even at the doctrinal level. It has been given various names such as 'hate speech' and 'incitement to hatred,' among other terms that convey the same meaning. In this context, Professor Claudia Haupt considers hate speech one of the most unstable and fluctuating concepts in the field of international human rights law, as its concept varies depending on time and place, and even in terms of the principles on which it is based..." (Salmani Hayat, 2021: 1418).

Most writings on the subject agree on the lack of a clear global definition of the concept.

The Herdo Center states:

"There is no universally accepted unified definition of hate speech that establishes its parameters and is globally adopted. However, we can define hate speech based on the general consensus as any type of speech or communication that involves an attack, incitement, denigration, or disparagement of a person or group of people due to the presence of a distinctive human characteristic such as race, religion, gender, disability, political opinion, social class, or sexual identity..." (Herdo Center, 2016: 06).

"In international normative standards and many laws, hate speech is equated with expressions that encourage incitement to harm a specific targeted group based on its belonging to a particular social category or community" (UNESCO Publications: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015: 26).

"Hate speech addresses contentious issues such as human dignity, security, equality among individuals, and freedom of expression. Hate speech is not explicitly mentioned in many international human rights documents and treaties, but it is referred to indirectly through principles related to human dignity, equality, and freedom of expression" (UNESCO Publications: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015: 32).

"Humanitarian law has seen significant legislative development towards criminalizing and deterring hate speech and incitement speech. This development is based on the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasizes equality and the rejection of discrimination" (Bougema Radwan, 2020: 16).

#### *A. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in its second article states: 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion...' Additionally, its third article guarantees the right of every individual to life, liberty, and security of person. Article 07 emphasizes that all people are equal before the law and are

entitled to equal protection of the law without any discrimination. They are all entitled to equal protection against any discrimination that violates this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (Walid Hosni Zahra, 2014: 51).

"In this context, it should be noted that the UDHR does not explicitly mention hate speech and its criminalization. At the same time, it does not impose any direct restrictions on freedom of expression according to Article 19" (Wafi Haja, 2020: 75).

Article 19 of the UDHR states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (Walid Hosni Zahra, 2014: 52).

"Several provisions of the UDHR have been interpreted to allow states to intervene to prohibit hate speech or speech that is provocative or incites hatred. While the UDHR does not explicitly address the issue of incitement to hatred or calls for it, the legal authority to prohibit hate speech is implicitly understood from Article 01 of the Declaration, which states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights without discrimination based on race, color, sex..." (Salmani Hayat, 2021: 1426).

"The UDHR was decisive in outlining the framework for human rights protection and setting the necessary agenda for it. However, the Declaration itself is not legally binding. Subsequently, a set of binding documents was established to provide stronger protection of rights" (UNESCO Publications: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015: 32).

#### *B. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966*

"Regarding the prohibition of hate speech, Article 20 of the ICCPR states:

Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.1

2. Any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence shall be prohibited by law." (AFTE, Foundation for Freedom of Thought and Expression: 12).

"Unlike the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICCPR is clear and explicit in its criminalization of hate speech on one hand, and its restriction of freedom of expression on the other" (Wafi Haja, 2020: 75).

"The ICCPR is the legal document most frequently referenced in discussions about hate speech and its regulations... A closer examination of the covenant reveals that the right to freedom of expression is not absolute; states may impose legitimate restrictions on it under certain circumstances" (UNESCO Publications: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015: 32).

"A critique of the ICCPR is that Article 20 focuses only on certain forms of prohibited discrimination, excluding other forms. This necessitates relying on a broad interpretation of the grounds for discrimination when citing this article to effectively prohibit hate speech" (Wafi Haja, 2020: 76).

#### *C. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) 1965*

"Article 4 of the ICERD explicitly prohibits hate speech, stating: 'States Parties condemn all propaganda and organizations based on ideas or theories of the superiority of one race or group of persons of one color or ethnic origin, or that attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form, and undertake to adopt immediate and positive measures designed to eradicate all incitement to, or acts of, such discrimination...'" (AFTE, Foundation for Freedom of Thought and Expression: 12-13).

"This convention also affects the definitions of hate speech, although it does not explicitly use the term 'hate speech.' It differs from the ICCPR in three aspects: First, its concept of hate speech is specifically limited to speech concerning race or ethnicity. Second, it

imposes a stricter obligation on the States Parties than Article 20 of the ICCPR, as this obligation includes criminalizing racist ideas that do not necessarily constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. Third, the concept of 'incitement to hatred' introduced by the ICCPR is more specific than the 'incitement to discrimination' mentioned in the ICERD" (UNESCO Publications: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015: 33.)

#### *D. The American Convention on Human Rights 1969*

"Article 13 of the American Convention directly prohibits incitement to hatred and violence: 'Any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to violence or any other similar illegal action against any person or group of persons on any grounds including race, color, religion, language, or national origin shall be considered offenses punishable by law' (Herdo Center, 2016: 8).

"This convention specifically stipulates the prohibition of hate speech" (Atif Abdullah Abdulrab, 2019, Issue 04: 285).

"International law, rather than explicitly prohibiting hate speech itself, prohibits incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence, which is referred to here as incitement. Incitement is a particularly dangerous form of speech because it explicitly and intentionally aims to provoke discrimination, hostility, and violence, which may also include acts of terrorism or heinous crimes. International law does not require states to prohibit hate speech that does not reach the level of incitement" (Atif Abdullah Abdulrab, 2019, Issue 04: 286).

"Examining the provisions of international human rights conventions reveals that they are not uniform in regulating the prohibition of hate speech. This may be because they suffice with setting the highest standards for rights, leaving national criminal legislation to define the acts that fall within the scope of hate speech" (Rizaki Nabila, Mohammed Abdul Karim Mahja, 2021: 25).

#### **4. Hate Speech in the Algerian Law**

In the Algerian legal context, hate speech has been a growing concern, especially in recent years with the widespread use of social media platforms. The absence of a legal text defining hate speech led to confusion between the concept of freedom of expression and its limitations and hate speech. Consequently, this confusion often resulted in imposing various restrictions on freedom of expression under the pretext of combating hate speech. This situation persisted until the year 2020 when Law No. 20-05 concerning the prevention and combating of discrimination and hate speech was issued.

Law No. 20-05, dated April 28, 2020, and published in the Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, Issue No. 25, consists of seven chapters. The first chapter, dedicated to general provisions, includes Article 02, which defines hate speech as:

"All forms of expression that disseminate, encourage, or justify discrimination, as well as those that include contempt, insult, enmity, hatred, or violence directed at an individual or group of individuals based on sex, race, color, lineage, national or ethnic origin, language, geographical affiliation, disability, or health status."

Scholars and academics have varied and differing opinions on this definition of hate speech introduced by the Algerian legislature. Some argue that the definition lacks precision and clarity, as it appears overly inclusive and may raise more problems than it resolves. Terms like "hatred," "enmity," "contempt," "insult," and "violence" require clarification, and the definition seems to focus more on providing examples rather than defining the concept itself. This approach may overlook many issues related to hate speech.

Moreover, the Algerian legislature introduced additional terms such as "contempt," "insult," and "hatred" in Article 02 of Law No. 20-05, which are not found in Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Some critics argue that the legislature erred by including these terms in the text of the law, as hatred, for instance, is merely a feeling

or idea that does not rise to the level of criminalization, despite being undesirable or unacceptable. However, when feelings of hatred evolve into hate speech directed at specific individuals or groups, it becomes a different matter, moving beyond the realm of personal freedom into the realm of crime.

The law also defines discrimination, which is inherent in the concept of hate speech, as:

"Any differentiation, exception, restriction, or preference based on sex, race, color, lineage, ethnic or national origin, language, geographical affiliation, disability, or health status, intended or resulting in the impairment or hindrance of the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life." (Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, Issue No. 25, April 2020: 06).

In Article 04 of the Algerian law, the legislature emphasized that "freedom of opinion and expression cannot be invoked to justify discrimination and hate speech." This article indicates that the Algerian legislature has established a clear boundary between the concept of freedom of expression and what constitutes discrimination and hate speech. It is well-known that the conflict between freedom and authority often leads to confusion between what is considered a right and what is considered a duty. The legislature's action in this regard is commendable because freedom of expression is frequently exploited as a pretext for spreading ideas that undermine societal stability and national unity.

Furthermore, the state works on developing a national strategy for preventing discrimination and hate speech by promoting a culture of tolerance, dialogue, and rejecting violence, as stipulated in Article 05 of Law 20-05. The state and public institutions take necessary measures to prevent discrimination and hate speech through various means, including:

1. Developing educational and awareness-raising programs
2. Promoting human rights culture and awareness.
3. Fostering a culture of tolerance, dialogue, and acceptance of others.
4. Establishing mechanisms for vigilance, warning, and early detection of the causes of discrimination and hate speech.
5. Conducting media campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of discrimination and hate speech and the effects of using media and communication technologies to spread them.

Moreover, the Algerian legislature established a National Observatory for the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech, which is a national body with legal personality, financial, and administrative independence. Article 10 of the law outlines the responsibilities of the Observatory, including:

1. Proposing elements of the national strategy for preventing discrimination and hate speech and contributing to its implementation in coordination with relevant public authorities, stakeholders, and civil society.
2. Monitoring early signs of discrimination and hate speech and notifying relevant authorities.
3. Reporting acts that may constitute crimes under this law to the competent judicial authorities.
4. Providing opinions or recommendations on any issue related to discrimination and hate speech.
5. Periodically evaluating the effectiveness of legal instruments and administrative measures for preventing discrimination and hate speech.
6. Developing standards and methods for preventing discrimination and hate speech and enhancing national expertise in this field.

7. Developing awareness-raising programs and coordinating awareness activities about the risks and effects of discrimination and hate speech on society.

Collecting and centralizing data related to discrimination and hate speech..8

9. Conducting studies and research in the field of preventing discrimination and hate speech.

10. Proposing any suggestion aimed at simplifying and improving the national legal system for preventing discrimination and hate speech.

11. Enhancing cooperation and exchanging information with various national and foreign institutions working in this field.

Through this reference to the tasks of the National Observatory and its role in preventing discrimination and hate speech, it becomes clear that its role is limited to the preventive aspect rather than the remedial aspect. The National Observatory does not have the authority to actively combat discrimination and hate speech; its role is restricted to notifying relevant administrative and judicial authorities to address the issue. Therefore, the National Observatory lacks many of the competencies granted to independent administrative authorities related to investigation, punishment, dispute resolution, and arbitration.

In the field of international cooperation to combat hate speech, as stated in the sixth chapter titled "International Judicial Cooperation," Article 43 stipulates that within the framework of ongoing investigations or judicial inquiries to examine crimes specified in this law and uncover their perpetrators, competent authorities may resort to international judicial cooperation while considering international agreements and the principle of reciprocity. Additionally, Article 45 of the law emphasizes the rejection of any requests for international cooperation if they undermine national sovereignty or public order.

The Algerian legislature has adopted an approach that reflects a sincere intention to confront hate speech crimes effectively. This is evidenced by the enactment of a specific law addressing crimes of discrimination and hate speech. However, despite the fundamental role of this legislative specialization in regulating various forms of hate speech, it remains insufficient due to some flaws in its texts. These flaws could affect the determination of criminalization standards and the regulation of appropriate penalties for these crimes.

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# **SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTION OF AI'S INFLUENCE ON THE ROMANIAN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM**

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**Abstract:** *The social assistance system is built in Romania largely on public institutions. The integration of AI solutions in the public sector is in its infancy, but the importance of digitizing some administrative functions cannot be overlooked. The challenges posed by AI can impact both social workers and beneficiaries. The threat of full AI substitution of social assistance attributions is not received by most respondents. Generating applications and validating the payment of social benefits can be the solution given by technology. Preserving the importance of social work does not mean conservatism, but adaptation to the new determined and AI.*

**Keywords:** social system, AI, changes, social workers, beneficiaries

## **1. Introduction**

Lately, the development of AI has generated in various forms changes in the system of public authorities. The social assistance system is part of the administrative structure of the Romanian state. It is organized in the form of a system of subordination relations between a central structure (National Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption-ANPDCA) and entities developing the activity in the territory (General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection-DGASPC) and respectively from a local coordination, only from a professional perspective between DGASPCs and SPASs (Public Service for Social Assistance), which are mandatorily organized at the level of each locality and financially, respectively administratively are under the authority of the City Hall.

Another institution that mainly carries out activities to support beneficiaries by granting social benefits is the National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection (ANPIS), which in turn has decentralized in the territory independent structures (County of Benefits and Social Intervention -AJPISSs). As such, the aim of the research will be to highlight the impact felt in this public social assistance system dedicated to vulnerable people. This approach is trying to identify whether the social worker could be supported by AI, respectively whether such a solution would be helpful to the beneficiary, what is the reality at this moment and what is the estimate for the near future.

## **2. Literature review**

In one of the recent studies, it is shown that the emergence of AI has also determined the appreciation of what is called the privacy policy of personal data. As an activity is increasingly automated, more affected by the use of software, the question arises of how to ensure the protection of data entered in that system. Transparency is also extremely important for there to be greater trust in such new solutions. The limits to which government can intervene in people's lives are also determined by their organized reaction. (Fontes et al., 2022).

At the same time, the effective protection of employees' rights in relation to the evolution of AI implementation should not be based on the permanent contradiction of the political decision-maker, but on the contrary on what is called a proactive approach, in which the solution is based on consensus, with renunciations from both sides. This is where the primary role of trade unions comes in. (Hyman, 2007).

Ethical principles must be a target for states to minimize the risk posed by a chaotic development of AI. However, there was no concrete effect on the software developer's decision, despite a multitude of ethical codes adopted. (McNamara, Smith. & Murphy-Hill,



2018). The safety and confidentiality of data, as well as the ability of certain beneficiaries to access them, have been constant challenges, in direct connection with the infrastructure created in the public sector. (Przegalinska, 2019).

The involvement of state authorities in relation to the effect produced by AI is sometimes non-existent, this passivity being determined by the technological developments that private corporations make in this regard. In another approach, political decision-makers can predetermine which efficient solutions will be supported in the future, from the perspective of their concrete applicability in social life (Oomen et al., 2022). Developing the solutions that the state expects from private organizations specialized in AI is problematic, especially when it comes to automating professionalized work. (Nguyen & Hekman, 2022). These tools, however, generate confusion, so the limits in developing these solutions must be predetermined.

Measuring how AI can be implemented appears realistically in Mikalef 2021's theory, thus managing to establish its limits. The fact that at the organizational level not every software can be integrated because there are impediments related to the conservatism of the individuals who compose that group will lead to slowing down the pace at which AI comes to take over society. (Van Noordt & Misuraca, 2020).

The acceptance by citizens regarding the incidence of AI in public administration is justified by the general nature of the operations that can be carried out in this way. Most cases in which there is refusal in this regard are motivated by fear of failure to solve the problem they face. In addition, that institution will register an administrative blockage and will additionally become responsible for the negative effect generated to beneficiaries. (Gesck & Leyer, 2022).

Deep technology-based learning leads to attitudinal changes (Ho et al., 2019), but these are not predetermined in public administration. Interacting with chatbots will become a challenge, however, given that for now there are many limits determined by the configuration of the human-robot. Those who will work with such solutions will have to acquire a series of skills themselves, which will become more and more specialized with the evolution of the system and implicitly with the integration of AI within them. (Dippold, 2023).

The acquisition of skills through a career development platform could also be achieved through chat-GPT. (O'Connor, 2023). If companies must have a high adaptability to the challenges posed by a new industrial revolution, thus discussing the need for "customer relationship management" (Chatterjee et al., 2021), in the case of beneficiaries of social protection systems, the evolution of AI will probably meet limits also due to the degree of instruction and understanding of this concept.

The support that AI can provide to the individuals to whom it is addressed should not be seen exclusively as a means of professional training, but also as a working time management solution, within which solutions capable of leading to work efficiency are offered (Winikoff et al., 2021). Digital innovation will face a number of divergences in the values promoted. Therefore, the relationship between the social worker and the client will have to be reappraised, but within certain limits, conditioned by ethics. The decision model in case management, for example, will be difficult to translate and apply in any geographical area, as the specificity of the area may be in contradiction with the standardization reflected by that model. (Ranerupa & Henriksenb, 2019).

Hybrid governance, driven by the interaction between humans and algorithms generated by AI, results in new attributions, but also challenges related to insecurity. However, the governance system for vulnerable children is far from being considered dependent on AI. At the same time, discrimination generated at individual, family or community level is often attributed by state bodies to the inefficiency of algorithms generated by AI. (Saxena et al., 2020). If a parallel is drawn between what happens in the healthcare system, respectively with what happens in the social assistance system, it can be seen that in

the first case the system is dependent on AI (Fox, 2020), but in the other case, we can only talk about individual estimates and perceptions.

However, the inconveniences observed in the medical system (distrust in the safety of data protection provided, sometimes lack of intuitive IT solutions for beneficiaries, limits of those working in the system to implement IT solutions at a high level) can also be transferred to the social protection system that the state must ensure. A rigorous control in this regard could be the solution. In other news, as in the medical system, employees do not have to fear that their workplace will disappear (Schwendicke, Samek & Krois, 2020), but will undergo radical changes to which they must adapt in the social protection system, employees will enjoy the same status. Here, too, AI will act assistively and not as a substitute.

The lack of citizen participation in the use of AI, as well as the lack of necessary skills at the level of professionals within the authorities that need to implement AI are clear barriers that must be understood by political decision-makers. (Robinson, 2020).

The digitalization industry certainly has its limits, moreover, it can generate a negative effect on employee psychology. These relate to job security, human dignity, confidentiality of inter-individual relationships between colleagues as well as their autonomy in the presence of excessive automation. (Grybauskas, Stefanini & Ghobakhloo, 2022). In public administration, the implementation of AI was supported at declarative level, but concretely, due to the prevalence of other roles, effectively e-government remained in a secondary plan. This is also influenced by the ambiguity and abstraction of declaring state-supported values (Rose, Persson, Heeager, & Irani, 2015).

From the perspective of beneficiaries of AI application in administration and in particular in social work, one can imagine a rapid evolution towards their adaptation to the new. If today the level of poverty does not absolutely exclude access to devices with which information and data are accessed, in the not too distant future it is acceptable that even the use of AI (adaptable to the individual) will no longer be a limit. The area of administrative management is the one mainly concerned by this adaptation. (Tayebi, 2013).

### **3. Research Questions**

- ⇒ Do social workers know the meaning of AI?
- ⇒ Can the work of the social worker be eased, or on the contrary permanently replaced by AI?
- ⇒ Can beneficiaries of the social assistance system use AI-derived tools?
- ⇒ What are the limits within which AI should be used in social work?
- ⇒ Will communication with the beneficiary undergo changes, taking into account changes related to AI implementation?

### **4. Method**

It was used to apply a questionnaire with 17 items, of which 5 with closed questions, the rest of the open questions being designed to obtain as much as possible more details regarding the perception of social workers on the issues caused by the impact of AI on the social system. Respondents numbered 55 out of a total of 70 proposed for the study. Some of the interviewees declined to answer these questions. The main categories of employees working in social assistance were represented, according to the description in the introduction, the chosen territorial area being represented by Arges county, out of a total of 40 counties of the country.

### **5. Answers**

1. Crucially, 17% of interviewed professionals do not know the meaning of AI. If social assistance specialists in Romania are confronted with ignorance of this concept, beneficiaries who are generally unschooled or poorly schooled will probably be difficult to integrate into such

2. In an overwhelming proportion of over 96%, respondents agree that bureaucratic work could be made easier for them if pre-filled documents, preparation of various statistical situations or using certain algorithms can be generated through AI facilities. an operational procedure.

3. In particular, the simplification of the social worker's work can be achieved through several alternatives, such as reducing the time allocated to drawing up certain documents (38%), using new tools that will replace the classic typesetting of documents (37%) or even the widespread use of technical software solutions that are of general applicability for the social worker (25%), regardless of his place of work (city hall, county social assistance directorate, state agency in the field of social protection).

4. Most social workers in the public system (69%) consider that beneficiaries cannot cope with using the facilities provided by AI in completing an application or, for example, in obtaining an explanation regarding the route of documents for the use of a right.

5. Social workers (31% difference from the previous point) who considered that beneficiaries could still rely on AI intervention in their interaction with social protection institutions conclude that the existence of qualified staff meant to support beneficiaries in using AI tools (73%) represents the predominant reason for that answer, respectively another justification is based on the fact that the IT infrastructure and equipment owned by the authority where respondents work are recently purchased and support such implementations (27%).

6. Changing the reality represented by the fact that beneficiaries of the social assistance system have limits in accessing the facilities that AI could provide can be achieved from the perspective of social assistance workers by: access by the public authority within which the respondent works of a project with dedicated non-reimbursable European funds (67%), attracting a private partner together with the social assistance unit in the public sector where we identify the respondent (29%) and respectively the direct budgeting by the public social assistance authority from which the respondent comes of the resources necessary for the implementation of AI (4%).

7. Chatbot assistance is not considered feasible for the social assistance beneficiary because empathy cannot be adapted to the specifications of a robot, the particularities of each beneficiary can be a real challenge for AI developers, and the details involved in the intervention of the social worker cannot be obtained in virtual reality, especially since it will not be possible to obtain the beneficiary's trust in such a discussion "partner". The chatbot will not be able to adapt to the differentiated level of training of beneficiaries and could not provide contextual solutions, closely related to their life (99.98%). Only one respondent believes that if it is a new system, it can be integrated more easily by a new generation of individuals.

8. Through a projection in the future, considering a fulminant evolution of AI, the beneficiary's counseling through such a solution can be accepted limited, only in hybrid format (human and robot) or in another vision. The change of this relationship can also be determined by the skills held by the social worker who should interact with the beneficiary. The complex approach to the case requires in some cases the intervention of the multidisciplinary team, so encompassing these skills in a single AI solution is difficult to imagine. Only 5% of respondents agree with such a possibility of developing AI applied in the Romanian social system.

9. In a substantial majority, the social workers included in the study claim that they do not feel in competition with AI and that they do not consider themselves threatened in any way by the implementation of these solutions (over 98%). The threat still exists for some respondents (2%), but it is not an urgent issue at the moment. The elimination of classical methods of counseling will be a solution only when others specific to algorithms developed in AI and which have proven their effectiveness are promoted. However, even those who are skeptical about the compatibility between the social system and AI admit that the job

description of the social worker will be adapted in a not-too-distant time horizon, correlative to these changes. In terms of assistance, the substitution of the social worker is largely possible through innovative technological applications, being possible to appear new related fields where the human being-social worker is still the first option for the vulnerable person.

10. Regarding the definition of limits regarding the development of AI in social work, respondents recall two categories of limits. One of them refers strictly to the extent to which the social worker is willing to cede competences (strictly in the administrative-bureaucratic part); for data collection and processing through software and with the support of new generation equipment. The second category refers to the limit determined by the possible violation of human rights (both of the social worker to be replaced and of the potential beneficiary), ethical issues imposed by GDPR and beyond, the level of understanding of the language used through AI solutions that impose age limits, intelligence, training, etc.

11. If the development of AI would lead to the emergence of a new system of thinking and eventually to certain feelings, it is possible that the informal support offered to the beneficiary through such an innovation would be at least at the same level as that generated in the relationship between the social worker and the beneficiary. The determination of the degree to which such a thing will be possible is influenced by the capacity of the human being to be competitive in relation to technology, which is supposed to be replaced, by the permissiveness of the ethical system assumed in the social welfare system, by how much AI will be extended in the social protection system – its development may have no boundaries even from the perspective of the imagined hypothesis. These opinions are subsumed by a small percentage of respondents (18%), the rest considering that the affective plan will not be conceivable as functional in the case of AI implemented in social work.

12. The language used in the work of the social worker differs from case to case, but the possibility of adaptation for AI will be difficult given that the proposed interaction will be made with people without education or with limited level of training. Expression is all the more precarious given that a particular language for a particular rural area may appear in everyday speech. Technology expansion may be the key to effective AI communication with beneficiaries, say some respondents (17%). Sending a message is not enough. It is important for the recipient to fully understand the significance of the communicated data and to be able to send feedback. Too abstract or elevated terms can lead to blockage for the beneficiary. The social worker has the ability to offer solutions precisely because he has a well-defined relationship with the community to which the beneficiary belongs. A person is definitely more open when interacting with someone they know, not with a robot that will surely generate fear, especially when it turns out to be performant.

13. The interaction of the social worker with various types of beneficiaries is superior in principle to alternative intervention through AI because it uses special communication techniques, verified over time. Active listening is hard to imagine through technology because it has to take into account many coordinates (family environment, existence of a job, health status of the person concerned, etc.) all of which are up to date. The field work of the social worker, collecting data, understanding the recent changes in the beneficiary's life may require differentiated approaches, thus highlighting the experience of the respective professional and the good practices he has developed. Respecting human dignity from the interlocutor's perspective means accepting the beneficiary's condition, support provided by the social worker even when the vulnerable person has a reaction of rejection of the assistive form, or in some cases even aggressive behavior. Such diligences, including from a deontological perspective, are, at least at present, unsuitable for solving them through AI.

14. The application of new AI-specific solutions is differentiated in the private environment compared to what happens in the public sector. An important part of respondents believe that the efficiency of the social assistance system will be below the level that automation, robotization, dedicated applications are found in the case of private companies. (26%). Insufficient budgeting, lack of tradition regarding investment in

professional development of available human resources, large differences between social assistance and other areas (especially industrial and trade) regarding the possibility of adapting to state-of-the-art technological solutions justify such a position. Interestingly, some respondents refrained from making assessments, claiming that they do not know what happens with AI in the private area (11%).

15. Regarding the changes that would occur in the relationship between the employee in social assistance and the employer's representative when the former would be substituted by AI, the following were stated: relational blockage due to the lack of dialogue between the two parties, generation of standard reports, objective impossibility to achieve a classical control over the subordinate's duties, increasing the rigor of the hierarchical boss over other human employees, starting from the fact that AI generates only errors determined by algorithms and not due to the causes identified in the case of human work (it will compare man with robot much more often), the gradual disappearance of the hierarchy, the risk of being eliminated / replaced and the boss or representative of that entity. This item was correctly understood only by a small number of respondents (40%).

16. The number of institutions operating in social assistance is considered insufficient by an important number of specialists in the field (40%). The solution could consist in developing social services for various vulnerable categories, in setting up more small group homes, where children under a special protection measure can enjoy the new quality standards (the space available to each client of the social system and especially the ratio between the number of dedicated social workers and the number of beneficiaries), in the administrative reorganization of the country and collateral in the transfer of services dedicated to the elderly in the competence of SPASs within city halls, keeping coordination and methodological guidance through DGASPCs. Most of those who consider that the number of institutions is sufficient, point out the impediments created by the inadequate number of employed people who specialize in social work. The limits of human resources provided in the system, as well as restricted budgets, especially at the level of rural communities, certainly have repercussions on the quality of services that vulnerable people could enjoy. At the same time, the use of professionals who have proven efficiency through field work, the simplification of bureaucratic procedures in which that time could be used in counseling beneficiaries as well as the rethinking of activities dedicated to them (focused on support, guidance) would no longer raise in concrete terms the problem of insufficiency of social assistance institutions and partially no incidence regarding the qualified personnel employed in the system.

17. The existence or emergence of a social welfare authority or institution that is predominantly or exclusively created on the basis of AI cannot be imagined by a significant group of respondents. (42%). The others offer middle solutions (online platforms for validating the procedure for granting benefits, hybrid solution: people with AI, etc.) or imagine existing authorities such as AJPIS (which mediates social benefits) or residential centers for people with mental disabilities to deliver social services in such a way. References are also made to other institutions that are not related to social assistance, but which could adapt work for vulnerable people by using AI (public population registration services for issuing or exchanging identity cards). Several people involved in the study give confused answers to this item (7%).

18. The good practices of the social worker highlight a series of advantages that AI cannot assimilate or overcome: empathy with the beneficiary, evaluation of people with special needs, elaboration of conclusions and recommendations following a psycho-social investigation, psychological supervision of school minors, assistance of minors in police judicial proceedings (preventing trauma generated by contact with state bodies). One of the specific activities of social work, namely the collection of field data, is incompatible at least at this moment with the adaptation of AI to such an operation.

## 6. Discussion

The premises of the analysis concern, on the one hand, the social worker in the system, and on the other hand, the beneficiary.

Bureaucratic activities have always been a hindrance to efficient time management for any public sector authority. The integration of AI solutions into the social assistance system could prove to be the key through which professionals in the field will have more time available for direct work activities with the client. The automation of such administrative skills is desirable, especially since field work should prevail here and not office work.

A recent comparative analysis of how AI comes to be implemented in public administration versus private organizations establishes that in the first case changes are slower. Despite all platforms, which try through the high volume of data that is transferred, to replace or substitute a number of tasks of officials. (Wirtz et al.,2022).

The universality of some technological tools at the exclusive reach of the social worker in all state institutions can be a target for the benefit that AI can bring. How much AI will be allowed to substitute for the social worker's work remains to be seen, depending on which state policy will have to set limits on this. Ethics will have an extremely important role, defining the principles that will guide the evolution of this phenomenon, being alongside GDPR the element that will be able to control the uncontrolled and threatening development of AI. These limits must be built both to protect the workers in the system and for those to whom they are dedicated, i.e. beneficiaries. A customized solution regarding data security, dedicated to local realities and not an extremely general one will have to be considered as not only the European GDPR regulation but also a new understanding on the content of human rights (especially freedom of movement, opinion, at work) appears. (Mantelero,2018).

Vulnerable people are generally people who are poorly educated or have not undergone any training at all, so they are quite difficult to adapt to the use of technological equipment to provide them with social assistance rights faster. However, such skills are much easier to learn compared to education skills, so there may be surprises in a short space of time, despite the estimates made in the study.

On the other hand, it must also be taken into account that AI involves investments, and in principle the funds from the budgets of rural local communities are extremely small, which leads to the idea that only European projects or the development of partnerships with non-governmental organizations can bring a plus for beneficiaries in this regard. The chatbot cannot innovate, adapt to the answer that the beneficiary gives, does not have the synthesis capacity and in no case can not make a complex analysis, based on the observation made in the field in advance (family, school, neighbors, work, etc.). However, a recent analysis argues that mindset and even emotions may be a goal for AI to solve as a dedicated coach for a particular type of group. ( Cranefield et al., 2022).

The active listening to the social worker is incompatible with predefining algorithms to react to requests or answers given by the beneficiary. Trust in your dialogue partner cannot be obtained from a robot. Nor is it easy for the social worker to adapt to the person with special needs or to the minor who graduated from school and who is in a family-type home, residing outside the family.

However, the right language and specific techniques solve such problems through the social worker, but a high-performance software that incorporates not only theoretical notions but especially practical experiences that cannot be standardized is difficult to conceive.

The individual is unique in his behavior, and this reality also causes obstacles in defining AI in this attempt to initially complement and ultimately replace the professional in the social system. Moreover, person-centered intervention requires a multidisciplinary analysis, which in many cases would mean additions to technology in order to compress the good practices of the psychologist, doctor of a certain specialty (psychiatrist when dealing with mental disability for example), physical therapist, ABBA specialist, etc.

The message also plays an extremely important role here. Aggravated or sometimes confusing language (work with people with diminished or abolished discernment, toxic-dependent people) cannot allow the extraction of sufficient information for an initial evaluation, as well as for comparisons made during the period in which it is observed, unless there is a history of cases stored in the experience of the social worker. AI can't be that versatile.

The decision of a private entrepreneur can never be compared to the decision taken by a public authority. Therefore, promptness, flexibility and ensuring the financing of AI alternatives from the private sector cannot be found identically in the public sector, and social assistance cannot be the exception, on the contrary.

One can also imagine the opposite situation in which the development of AI would be such as to dismantle all the assumptions made in the present research. There is talk in another study of tertiary emotions as the place where AI can develop. In other words, primary intrafamily emotions will remain unaffected, as well as secondary emotions related to interindividual relationships, but the so-called ultrasocial domain will allow such development.

There is also a discussion between the plane of natural intelligence and that specific to artificial intelligence, with reference to the three types of determined emotions. (Navarro & Marijuan, 2023). Even if such a point of view were embarrassed, the obstacles related to approving the necessary acquisitions and ensuring the budget will always keep this delay in the public administration. If the substitution of the human being in direct social work with AI is imagined, the substitution of those who lead the respective structures of the social system must also be accepted, until the idea of administrative hierarchy disappears.

## **7. Conclusions**

Creating a generally valid code for setting limits to AI deployment in the public sector must be a goal for the state. The social assistance system will be oriented in the same way, keeping its particularities. Administrative reorganization, which has been a target for public policy in Romania for some time, can also partially solve the problems faced by social assistance. At the level of local communities, especially those in rural areas, the lack of funds or their limits lead to the non-existence or precariousness of social services dedicated to vulnerable people.

The transfer of responsibility from the county level (DGASPC) to the local one (SPAS) once the necessary funding is provided will allow the partial replacement of social workers in the system with AI solutions. Part of the service personnel at DGASPC level can migrate to SPAS until the entire personnel structure here is ensured, and in parallel at DGASPC level we can outline bureaucratic-administrative activities that are suitable for technology developed through AI.

Intuitive online platforms can also be a start in terms of serving beneficiaries remotely, when dealing with the establishment and payment of social benefits. AJPIS is an institution that manages a multitude of such social allowances, where office work is predominant. In fact, this institution was indicated in the answers given in the study as a possible authority in the social system that could become entirely directed by AI.

## **8. Limits**

The issues debated in the present research face a number of limits, the low number of those questioned being the main cause. Extending the study to a wider geographical area can consolidate a number of constants and discover others. At the same time, it must be admitted that in certain situations there is a poor understanding of the meaning of the questions by respondents, especially those who are part of SPASs located in rural areas.

The competences implied by the status of social worker are not always possessed by those working in the system, especially since at community level the persons designated for

this purpose have mainly or secondarily other duties imposed by the reduced staff structure. One example is the question in item 8 ( It can also be categorized as a control question) which can be viewed in parallel with the meaning of question 7 (the percentage of answers obtained are somewhat different, although the meaning of the questions is close).

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# THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS. CASE STUDY: TIMIȘOARA, BRAȘOV AND BUCUREȘTI

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**Abstract:** *Artificial intelligence has become a powerful tool of innovation that has significantly impacted various areas of business, including human resource management. This study aims to analyse how artificial intelligence has been adopted and contributes to improving the recruitment and selection process in companies in Timișoara, Brașov and București. We investigate how AI is reshaping the job market by altering demand for certain skills and creating new professional roles, and the implications of AI on personal data protection within the recruitment and selection domain. By employing semi-structured interviews with HR and AI professionals, the study captures nuanced insights into the practical implications of AI in the workforce. Results indicate that AI significantly streamlines the recruitment process, enhancing efficiency and potentially reducing biases. However, concerns regarding data privacy and the depersonalization of the hiring process have been noted. Conclusions suggest that while AI can revolutionize recruitment and selection, a balance must be struck between technological benefits and human-centric approaches to workforce management. The study advocates for ongoing dialogue between HR and AI fields to navigate the ethical and practical complexities of AI in recruitment.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), recruitment and selection process, human resource management, semi-structured interviews, advantages, disadvantages, job market, efficiency, biases, ethical complexities.

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, artificial intelligence (AI) has become ubiquitous, evolving into a global phenomenon. The rapid expansion has been driven by advancements in hardware technology, the ongoing development of machine learning algorithms and neural networks, as well as substantial investments made by technological corporations in research. Owing to its notable efficiency and increased precision, predictive capabilities, and constant availability, artificial intelligence has emerged as a potent instrument of innovation. It has significantly impacted various fields of activity, including human resource management, marking a profound footprint in the professional landscape.

The integration of AI into recruitment practices represents a paradigm shift. As organizations seek to optimize their talent acquisition processes, AI emerges as a disruptive force. Its ability to analyse vast datasets, recognize patterns, and make data-driven decisions surpasses traditional methods. The recruitment landscape is no longer confined to manual screening; AI algorithms now evaluate candidate profiles (Vedapradha et al., 2019), efficiently match skills to job requirements without discrimination (Ore & Sposato, 2022), and predict candidate success.

AI streamlines recruitment workflows by automating repetitive tasks. From resume parsing to initial candidate screening, algorithms work tirelessly, freeing HR professionals from mundane chores. However, the promise of efficiency comes with a caveat: the risk of perpetuating biases. AI models learn from historical data, which may encode biases present in past hiring decisions. Vigilance is essential to ensure that AI-driven processes remain fair and inclusive (Albassam, 2023: 11-12).

## 2. Literature review

Artificial intelligence is not a phenomenon that suddenly appeared in our lives, but the reality is that it has existed since 1950, with the emergence of several significant events that have brought us to this turning point. The concept of artificial intelligence emerged in 1950 when the Turing Test was invented by Alan Turing. This test was created to determine if a computer could surpass a human in terms of written linguistic fluency (Turing, 2004: 433). However, the term Artificial Intelligence was first used formally in 1956 by John McCarthy during the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence (DSRP AI) (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019). Although there were other proposals or counterarguments for the use of this term, in the end McCarthy's proposal prevailed, and the expression is still used today (McCorduck et al., 1977). Nine years after the creation of the Turing Test, the term machine learning was invented, which spread widely in organizations. Later, in 2006, at the University of Toronto, some fast-learning algorithms were invented, which became the term deep learning. Deep learning was created to explain how artificial intelligence based on machine learning can learn as the human factor. The turning point was in 2014, when the Generative Adversarial Network or GAN was created, which confronts two neural networks. In fact, it represents a game created with the purpose that a network imitates a photo, so that the other network, the adversary, deceives it, believing that the photo is real (Janiesch, 2021: 3).

In recent years, the recruitment and selection process within organizations has witnessed an impressive evolution, a stage referred to by specialists as digital recruitment 3.0 (Black & Esch, 2020: 218). Digital recruitment 3.0 emerged after 2015, coinciding with the introduction of artificial intelligence, which contributed to streamlining the process across stages such as candidate preselection, job vacancy publication and promotion, subsequent evaluation of selected candidates, and their integration within companies. Artificial intelligence naturally became a pivotal development in recruitment and selection, driven by recurring demands from employers.

As the application process has become fully digitized and simplified through the emergence of online career portals that use AI by each company, as well as the evolution of recruitment channels such as e-jobs, BestJobs, and hippo, the number of applicants has significantly increased (Van Esch et al., 2019). Once CVs are electronically submitted by candidates, the human resources manager or recruiter faces the task of screening them – a step that has become extremely time-consuming due to the large number of applicants. Consequently, the need for a screening tool to reduce the time spent on this activity has intensified.

Textkernel was the first company to build an AI-based system capable of scanning a multitude of CVs and automatically inputting them into a database, identifying suitable candidates based on job requirements and saving time. Globally, recruitment agencies such as Manpower, Randstad, Quanta, and Teaching Personnel have integrated this system. Kathrin Starke emphasizes the importance of having a tool that swiftly identifies the best candidates, given that recruitment sources and candidates themselves are becoming increasingly diverse (Starke, 2023: 2).

Another example is Dora, the first recruitment robot launched in Romania in 2018. Dora utilizes artificial intelligence to identify individuals seeking employment across various social networks. Dora features customizable conversation systems that recruiters can set up, allowing asynchronous mini-interviews based on candidate availability. The purpose of these initial interactions is to clarify job specifics for the candidate and assist the recruiter by collecting preliminary information and directing candidates to subsequent stages in a much shorter time frame. Additionally, besides generating candidates through marketing campaigns, Dora can also interact with existing candidates in company databases (Ștefănescu, 2023: 1).

Skilld by e-jobs, another intelligent recruitment service in Romania, accelerates processes and facilitates the rapid identification of relevant candidates. It leverages the e-jobs

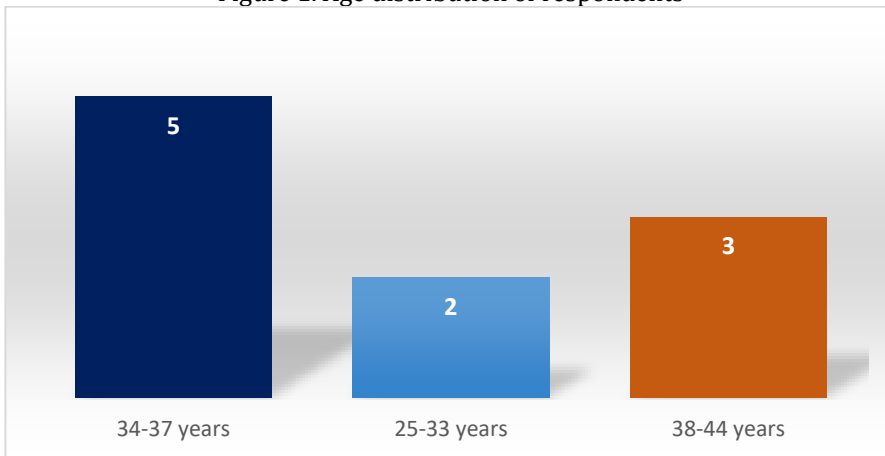
candidate database with over 4.9 million CVs and client data (Uzun, 2023: 46). Essentially, the preselection process (identifying relevant candidates, conducting interviews, and managing salary expectations) is fully supported by Skilld’s business model, enabling recruiters to focus on the shortlist of candidates who perfectly match the job requirements.

### 3. Research methodology

The research is based on a qualitative approach, using the semi-structured interview as the main tool for data collection from specialists in the fields of human resources and artificial intelligence from various organizations in Timișoara, Brașov, and Bucharest. The general objective of the research is to investigate the perceptions of human resources and artificial intelligence specialists on the impact that AI has on the recruitment and selection process within organizations in these three urban centres.

To understand the behaviour of companies adopting AI and the impact that modern technology has brought, we will follow, by exploring the perspectives of human resources and artificial intelligence specialists, the scientific objectives: investigating the role and degree of use of artificial intelligence in the recruitment and selection process, identifying the advantages and disadvantages of using AI, identifying the impact of AI on job market and personal data, including in the field of recruitment and selection. The research question is: *How does the use of modern technologies based on artificial intelligence influence the processes of recruitment and selection of personnel within organizations in Timișoara, Brașov, and Bucharest?*

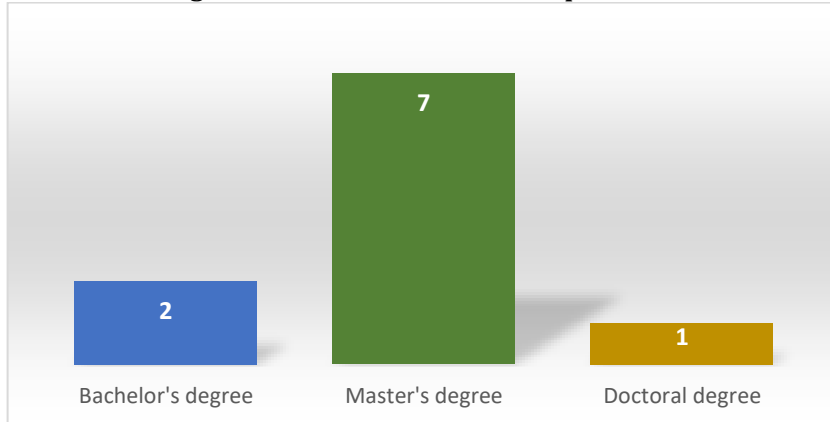
Figure 1. Age distribution of respondents



The population of the study consists of adults aged between 25 and 44 years, graduates of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral studies in the field of human resources and IT, residents of the cities of Timișoara, Bucharest, and Brașov. The level of experience of the participants is between 5 and 20 years, in the aforementioned fields.

Regarding the interviewees of the study, three people are part of the IT field, holding the positions of AI engineer, Machine Learning engineer, and university professor in the department of mechatronics and robotics. The other seven people who belong to the human resources field hold positions of human resources manager, human resources specialists, recruitment specialist, and digital recruiter.

**Figure 2. Educational level of respondents**



#### 4. Finding and results

Most specialists have defined the concept of artificial intelligence as a tool created by humans based on algorithms and statistical models with the purpose of imitating human-specific cognitive functions.

*There are computer programs built on algorithms that attempt to replicate human-specific processes of perception, cognition, and action because, without undue modesty, we are the most intelligent species on this planet. Therefore, the objective of artificial intelligence would be to reproduce these cognitive processes that unfold (S4, 43 years old, Doctoral level of education, Timișoara).*

The above definition, given by the interviewee, can be found in a similar form in the literature by the researcher Patrick Henry Winston, a prominent figure in the field of artificial intelligence, who explained in his paper how a computer can reason and perceive as a human factor (Winston, 1993: 5).

Regarding future trends in AI usage, another interviewee highlighted the strong evolution that will occur in the coming years:

*Currently, it is a tool, but it will become more than just a tool; I believe it will become a force to be reckoned with in all fields, not just in human resources. I think AI will become a partner in our work, not merely a tool to facilitate our tasks (S3, 40 years old, Brașov, Master's degree).*

Discussing the role of artificial intelligence in recruitment and selection processes, specialists consider it an instrument that assists them in various activities within the process. They have integrated AI into their daily tasks to streamline work and achieve better results.

When asked if they use AI-based recruitment systems to aid in hiring, 9 out of the interviewees responded affirmatively. Recruitment specialists utilize AI in the preselection stages of candidates, identifying the most suitable CVs based on well-defined criteria. For instance, they rely on tools like Skilld, which identifies the best-fit candidates from the pool based on selection criteria.

Beyond candidate preselection, most interviewees also use chatGPT for drafting job descriptions. These descriptions are essential for each position within the company and need to be updated based on job analysis. Specialists also employ AI for creating and publishing job advertisements, preparing presentations, producing promotional videos for positions, attracting candidates through social media posts, crafting direct outreach messages, providing feedback (both positive and negative), and making job offers. Additionally, AI assists in scheduling interviews with recruiters and administering technical or psychometric tests.

As for the job categories, most specialists contend that artificial intelligence is significantly more effective for white-collar positions. They argue that more intricate technical

or psychometric tests can be applied, and analysis can be conducted based on multiple data points from candidates:

*For office roles, AI proves exceptionally valuable, even extending to management positions. As one advances to more complex roles, AI becomes increasingly beneficial (S6, 35 years old, Timișoara, Bachelor's degree).*

However, for blue-collar positions, automating the recruitment process presents challenges. The difficulty arises from the lower level of digital skills among blue-collar workers, making it impractical to fully utilize AI-powered recruitment platforms:

*Not all individuals are proficient in computer usage or test administration, rendering complete automation unfeasible. Instead, a dedicated center with personnel who can guide candidates through the testing process, ideally including a psychologist, is necessary (S6, 35 years old, Timișoara, Bachelor's degree).*

Regarding the types of AI they use, specialists mentioned Large Language Models (such as chatGPT), artificial neural networks for object identification, presentation creation tools like Gramma App and Road Map for word analysis, and ATS (Applicant Tracking Systems) that incorporate AI for CV screening. Common recruitment channels like e-jobs, Best Jobs, hippo, and LinkedIn Recruiter also leverage AI in their processes.

Interviewees were asked to provide examples of advantages and disadvantages/challenges they have observed through the use of modern technologies. Additionally, they were questioned about current concerns in HR regarding AI utilization. Among the advantages, interviewees highlighted the improvement in employee experience within organizations that employ artificial intelligence. Efficiency and time savings are increased, leading to enhanced productivity. In recruitment and selection, AI has the capacity to process large volumes of candidates in a very short time, surpassing human capabilities. One participant stated:

*An advantage is that recruiters could process big data, meaning a large number of candidates, and efficiently select the optimal candidate (S4, 43 years old, doctoral educational level, Timișoara).*

Recruiters also noted significantly reduced hiring process duration and improved candidate experience. This aspect is crucial, especially for current generations that expect recruitment processes to be fully digitized, with rapid decision-making. Technology enables real-time responses to candidates and transparent access to information.

In addition to time saved in talent identification, recruiters feel better informed about the roles they are recruiting for. AI-based tools provide rapid access to relevant information and data. More than half of the participants confessed to using ChatGPT for research:

*It helps me understand the specific position and gain more knowledge. It's part of the research process before taking on a role (S7, 34 years old, Master's degree, București).*

Identified disadvantages include reduced human interaction in recruitment and selection, potentially resulting in an impersonal experience for candidates. Participants emphasized that candidates still require this interaction. Furthermore, the lack of empathy at various stages can lead to misunderstandings of applicants' needs and experiences. One respondent expressed concern that excessive use of modern technology may increase isolation, depression levels, perfectionism, and the desire to conform to employer requirements.

Another highlighted disadvantage is the inadaptability of AI systems to the complexities and nuances of human behavior. The human eye and experience are constructed differently and can observe aspects that AI might miss. Specialists fear neglecting uniquely human and difficult-to-quantify aspects, such as creativity or emotion.

In discussing the possibility of humans being entirely replaced in the recruitment and selection process, 8 out of 10 respondents shared their perspective based on their HR experience. They believe that artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment doesn't replace the human element but rather enhances capabilities, making processes more efficient.

Despite being expressed by only two interviewees, the primary concern among human resources professionals remains the potential job loss due to artificial intelligence. Experts assert that this apprehension has become widespread among their colleagues as AI adoption continues to grow globally:

*In my perspective, recruiters may eventually become obsolete. I envision a scenario where a holographic image of a person conducts interviews, asking more relevant questions than we currently can* (S3, 40 years old, Master's degree, Braşov).

Drawing parallels to Erving Goffman's social dramaturgy, we can view AI as actors playing roles in social interactions, fulfilling various tasks for humans. Similar to social dramaturgy, AI adapts behavior to context and can learn to understand specific circumstances for more relevant outcomes. Another similarity between the dramaturgic model and AI lies in feedback adaptation – AI can improve results based on received feedback and project a desired image for users (Vasiluță-Ştefănescu, 2018: 48). However, human judgment remains central to AI progress.

When asked about the impact of AI on organizational culture, respondents emphasized organizational efficiency and social impact. AI contributes to increased employee performance and revenue. It not only helps each employee add value to their communities but also supports profitability – an essential consideration for companies implementing AI.

Despite these advancements, respondents believe that the recruitment and selection process cannot be entirely automated. The interview stage remains crucial, and human intervention is indispensable. Some interviewees tested AI-analyzed video interviews but didn't continue using this tool due to the need for more humanity.

Regarding the impact of AI on job market, including HR, most respondents anticipate significant changes. While some jobs may disappear, new ones will emerge. As AI continues to evolve, we can expect job roles unimaginable today. Subject 6 predicts a transformation in every organization, with leaders focusing on productivity rather than simply increasing or reducing job numbers.

Another specific objective of the study aimed to identify the impact of AI on job market, including in the field of human resources. To achieve this objective, interviewees were asked: *Which domains and employee categories will be most strongly affected by these technological changes? And how do you keep your job in the era of artificial intelligence? What are the solutions?* The majority of interviewees stated that, through the use of artificial intelligence, there will be a significant impact on existing jobs in the coming years. Thus, even though certain jobs may disappear, new ones will emerge:

*With the help of AI, probably in 5-10 years, there will be jobs that we cannot imagine today* (S5, 34 years old, Master's degree, Bucureşti).

Subject 6 believes that there will be a transformation in every organization, and leaders' focus will be on increasing productivity rather than expanding or reducing the number of jobs:

*You don't lose a job because you've introduced AI, on the contrary. It's being used by the person you employ to produce more money for you as an employer.* (S6, 35 years old, Bachelor's degree, Timișoara).

Furthermore, the time saved by AI in performing repetitive and operational tasks will be channeled into other activities that add value to both jobs and organizations. Therefore, interviewees have not pinpointed a specific category that will be more or less impacted; rather, this transformation will be felt based on individual responsibilities – what can be automated and the level of engagement and desire for continuous development from each employee.

Specialists emphasize the importance of openness to modern technologies:

*It is crucial to be well-informed and have an appropriate level of interest in this subject. I believe people need to learn a great deal about how to work in a world where things are streamlined through artificial intelligence* (S7, 34 years old, Master's degree, Bucureşti).

Essentially, recruitment specialists observe a significant gap between the skills demanded by employers and those possessed by job seekers or current employees.

One of the challenges faced at the national level is that technologies, such as artificial intelligence in data automation and analysis, evolve so rapidly that they outpace the capacity of educational and training programs to keep up with labor market trends. As the industry experiences increasingly diverse requirements and changes, flexibility and agility become essential. This means individuals must be open to adaptation not only in their work roles but also in their personal lives, allowing the skills they acquire to be transferable across multiple domains.

John C. Maxwell challenges the popular belief that people are born with natural talent, asserting instead that deliberate practice is the key to excellence (Maxwell, 2008: 97). The skills gap in modern workplaces is a significant present-day issue that needs normalization and transformation through requalification, and AI is an instrument that can aid in personalizing this individual development.

Regarding the reluctance of companies in Romania to implement AI-based systems in their operations, most specialists believe that the impact of new technologies has only recently begun to be felt, and the advantages offered by this technology are not yet widely spread. Another reason cited is the high cost of direct implementation. Therefore, many firms prefer to acquire subscriptions for various platforms that utilize artificial intelligence. When asked about the implementation of an AI system, approximately half of the respondents consider it a fairly complex transformation process.

First and foremost, it involves a business technology strategy with clear priorities and objectives. A thorough analysis of business processes must be conducted, and it is essential to determine which processes can be automated and optimized through artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the respective company needs to be prepared to utilize a data platform at its disposal. Whether migrating or modernizing to a new technology, AI specialists argue that:

*To implement an AI-based system, one must understand the necessity of data. In general, this aspect is not well understood. There is no AI software that can do what you want without having data. It is necessary to clearly define our expectations from AI to avoid errors (S2, 25 years old, Master's degree, Timișoara).*

Interviewed AI engineers emphasize the importance of integrating a customized solution for each organization, as artificial intelligence allows for personalized interactions based on individual preferences. Therefore, having a clear operational model in place with the entire team is crucial, and the organizational culture should be agile and ready to embrace AI transformation.

On the other hand, when asked to argue for or against the importance of specific professional training for specialists who use or plan to use AI in their work, only two interviewees stated that they do not necessarily consider training necessary. They find the usage intuitive and believe it can be learned over time:

*Things are intuitive. I think all technology-related aspects are designed to be as simple and understandable as possible for everyone (S8, 25 years old, Master's degree, Timișoara).*

*I don't find any tools that require specific training...it's quite easy to play around with such applications and understand what they can do (S10, 33 years old, Master's degree, București).*

The last two questions in the interview guide aimed to identify the impact of artificial intelligence on personal data in recruitment and selection. Ensuring security and ethical use of AI becomes increasingly important, even crucial. This is especially true when you belong to a human resources department that inevitably handles confidential and sensitive information.

All study participants emphasized the significance of educating staff on securing information and personal data. The leadership team must be aware that these data cannot be used for just anything in their operations; they should only be utilized for clearly defined purposes with user consent. Respondents stress the importance of organizations providing





## 5. Conclusions

Following the analysis of the research results, we can confidently state that both the specific objectives and the main objective presented in the methodological chapter have been fulfilled. The study observed a growing presence of AI in recruitment and selection, leveraging machine learning algorithms and predictive analysis. These advanced tools enable organizations to efficiently process large volumes of applicants, providing enhanced capabilities for filtering and evaluating candidates during the preselection stage. Additionally, AI facilitates the conducting of technical and psychometric tests, the creation, targeting, and publishing of job advertisements, the drafting of job descriptions, and the provision of feedback to candidates.

While AI has potential uses in interviews, most participants have not yet adopted such systems. They argue that human interaction is essential during interviews, as aspects like human complexity, empathy, and emotion are challenging to quantify for AI. The potential of AI to transform recruitment is recognized, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that combines technology with human expertise. Human resources professionals must adopt and adapt to new technologies, as supported by the interviewees. AI will assist recruiters who embrace this change, while the real risk lies in being left behind by not fully leveraging modern technological potential.

Regarding the impact of AI on jobs, it is evident that AI will reshape the labor market by automating repetitive tasks and creating new roles. This impact will depend not only on the specific tasks of each job but also on the engagement and continuous development of each employee. Currently, in the field of human resources, AI can assist specialists but cannot completely replace them.

Concerning the impact of AI on personal data, the study highlights that data protection in AI-assisted recruitment remains a major concern, necessitating strict regulations and transparency in algorithm usage. At the conclusion of this study, we can affirm that recruitment and selection are dynamic and complex activities, representing a crucial part of human resources specialists' work. Artificial intelligence is a result of progress, and the solution is not to oppose technology or reject the assistance it can provide. Instead, we should adapt and recognize its advantages.

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# SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORKERS' CONTINUING EDUCATION DEMAND

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**Abstract.** *Over the last century, social work has spent a lot of time justifying itself as an independent professional field but the pandemic period has intensified and diversified the social problems and created new vulnerable groups, so that practitioners have had to become more responsive to the community and to its current needs. In this context, social workers need continuing professional development. On the one hand, through high quality academic education – the stimulation of a continuous dialogue with academics staff in order to learn new theory, intervention methods and techniques, and on the other hand through social education - a lifelong process, similar in part to the empowerment because the individual constantly exercises and refines skills, particularly social skills. Given this context, the aim of this study is to identify the range of problems faced by practitioners in the field of practice and also the knowledge that professionals and students need, and last but not least, the set of skills that are needed for the purpose of meeting the demands of employers. Therefore, the present study is based on a theoretical framework and the analysis was carried out through qualitative research methods, using the method of focus group. The group was attended by specialists working in the field of social work, from various institutions in Argeș County, and academics from a Social Work program. This method wanted to stimulate the discussion and exchange of ideas necessary to maintain the connection between theory and field practice, to expand the curriculum according to the interests of specialists in the social welfare system and to support the continuing education. The results of the study reveal that there is a need for more flexibility in social work curriculum in order to meet the current demands of society, the organization of professional development workshops and the provision of continuing education opportunities throughout the career of all social welfare professionals. We also need to create and disseminate innovative forms of social work practice, theory and research so that we can build more types of continuing education opportunities and provide them to practitioners throughout their careers.*

**Keywords:** continuing education, curriculum, current issues, field practice, social workers

## 1. Introduction

Social change is a natural state of society, it differs from one era to another, and it has a significant impact on social work practice and education. These structural and demographic changes affect all sectors at the same time, generating demands for previously unanticipated social services. The pandemic period has also intensified and diversified the problems of social work, so that practitioners have had to become more responsive to the community and to its current needs. For example, communities with deeply entrenched poverty, overcrowded housing, and limited employment flexibility (communities where individuals are unable to work from home, miss a day of work, or face long and crowded commutes), or homelessness, disability, older age, or poor mental health, increased the risks individuals face (The Lancet, 2020). In these communities COVID-19 exacerbated already extreme social inequality (Graham, 2020). Also the COVID-19 pandemic have entailed major changes for many children and their families, not just because of the lockdown, restricted measures, social isolation, changing demographics and the reduction of available health services (Peterman, et al., 2020) but also due to the sudden and possibly long-term increase in child poverty and family uncertainty.

Furthermore, we live in an era of contradiction in which social needs appear to be relentlessly growing while social programs designed to address these needs continue to experience financial cutbacks (Matsuoka, et al., 1993).

Thus, social work is dramatically affected on several fronts: the problems faced by social workers in communities are new problems with a strong impact at the individual, family and community level, the workload has increased considerably, the requests for social benefits and services have increased, hiring and promotions to a higher level in the system are done with difficulty, and the allocated budgets are insufficient. These factors present a formidable challenge to social service professionals who must ensure the well-being of vulnerable groups.

In this context, schools of social work have a responsibility to take the lead in anticipating, understanding and analysing these changes. They can modify their educational programs to incorporate new knowledge and approaches to practice so that their academic programs respond to new societal issues and circumstances. But practising social workers also need professional development, the stimulation of a continuous dialogue with academics and career advancement through high-quality continuing education programs (see for example, Levesque and Panet-Raymond (1994) and Renaud (1997).

## **2. Education in social work**

Social work education does not take place in a vacuum, its form and substance are inevitably influenced by a country's history, culture, politics, economy and social circumstances (Lorenz, 1994).

The key to exploring the future of social work education requires an understanding of the larger context in which such education occurs. Social work can be perceived as being situated at the crossroads between university and society, with multiple facets and connections (Shera and Bogo, 2001). This interference with society occurs at the level of several sectors including governmental, non-governmental organizations and Public Social Services in the community. Education in social work must face the demographic reality (the changes that occur due to the ageing of the population), the change in the structure of the family and the household, an increasing growth of the multicultural society (Raffoul and McNeece, 1996) and the change and diversification of the roles in the family and in society. In its capacity of enhancing social and individual well-being, higher education has been considered a human right and a public good, thereby making it a public responsibility (Nyborg, 2003).

But, although is in a process – continuing – of reformation and innovation, joining the Bologna Process (1999) specialized higher education from today's Romania can be described and marked using terms of two sets of main features: in-put indicators (opportunities of education, offers, resources, networks, access, politics, etc.); out-put indicators (innovative character, programme correlation with social issues, curriculum homogenisation, harmonizing contains with job market, partnership with beneficiaries, adaptability at a society based on knowledge). So, the analysis of academic training system in social work domain becomes extremely complicated (Neamțu, 2012).

Regarding the educational system approach, we can distinguish between the academic model, where the focus is laid on strengthening the link between theory and practice, and the practice learning, with the latter being oriented towards modelling graduates who are well-prepared to apply knowledge and skills in the “real world”, but also in future management activities and practice, thus contributing to the development and social well-being of vulnerable communities. More than that, social workers, who was already working in various social services, plays the role of a true barometer, which indicates the existing weaknesses in a human community. The direct experience and personal observations represents an advantage of the eyewitness who develops the legitimacy to convey the best feedback (Fitzek, 2014) to the political system and also, to educational system. In this context the curricula can be modified so that future social workers have a greater range of “skills” and the more options they will have, the higher the quality of the services provided.

Education in social work provides a level of qualification that is based on common occupational standards and requirements, set by the authorities, and includes a combination

of generic and specialized teaching. The correlation of the Professional Standards with the Occupational ones was regulated in The Order of Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport no 5703 from October 18<sup>th</sup> 2011, regarding the implementation of National Qualifications Framework from higher education (Neamțu, 2012: 41). And one of the aims of the updated Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training launched in 2020 by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) are those related to supporting the next generation of social workers to have access to high quality learning opportunities, including knowledge deriving from practice (Rentea, Lazăr, et al., 2021). Therefore, students have the opportunity to do internships in various state and private institutions covering a wide range of social problems of vulnerable groups. This practical training is extremely important in this profession because it provides students with the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and methods of intervention, ethical values and standards for their further professional practice. In this context, the Global Standards states that practice supervisors should benefit of orientation and ongoing supports, including training and education (The International Association of Schools of Social Work, The International Federation of Social Workers, 2020).

Therefore the performance in social work education ultimately involves the ability to impact the community by training social work professionals who are prepared to meet the challenges of such unpredictable and difficult times.

If we examine the relationship between the educational system of social work, the challenges of contemporary society and the existing social and health services we can distinguish three perspectives: firstly, schools of social work are expected to contribute to the acquisition of knowledge by developing and testing innovative approaches to the challenges emerging and current societal issues, with the objective of addressing critical questions related to practices and policies. Secondly, schools of social work have a responsibility to respond to the need for change in the social and health services of communities, as well as to the realities, constraints and limitations of everyday practice. Thirdly, given the increasing competition for scarce resources, organizational survival depends on providing social work education that is relevant and essential (Matsuoka, et al., 1993).

Hartman (1990) described the four major drivers that shape social work education: society, the academia, the profession, and students. Although in recent times academia has been considered the main pawn, various specialists (Globerman, Bogo, 1996; Hartman, 1990) support the idea that the future of the social work profession depends on the ability of schools to provide leaders for effective practice and critical evaluation of policies and social programs, while taking into account the reality on the ground - in the community and the family.

Social work educational programs must maintain contact with managers of institutions providing social services, social work practitioners, professional foster carers, students, social researchers, representatives of non-governmental organizations. These groups can contribute to the continuous evaluation of the curriculum and make adjustments, additions to the school curriculum and also proposals for improving the study program. This exchange also helps to make practitioners aware of the practical reality, the fact that political and economic changes can influence the provision of social services, and other aspects that can influence social work (CSWE, 1994).

More than that, professions have different values, beliefs, and approaches on how they should use their expertise. Because of this, different segments of each profession have different expectations on how they practice, how they use knowledge, and how new knowledge should be integrated into professional practice. These differences contribute to the social and professional agendas in creating systems of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) (Coady, 2016). The systems of CPE, is a particular branch of education and learning which has gained a vital importance in the life of working professionals and has the potential effects on social and economic life. In speciality literature (Madden, 1993, Jarvis, 2002, Stern,

1992) we observe some of the vital points which could be termed as common for various definitions:

1. Essentially it is continuing education for professionals who have earned professional qualification and are working.

2. It is formal and systematic (though in practice, this may not be the case).

3. Along with professional development, it has to look after development of personal qualities.

4. It encompasses range of different facets in a single definition (Friedman, 2012).

- maintenance of knowledge, skills and competencies;

- improvement and broadening of knowledge, skills and competencies;

- development of personal (and professional) qualities such as integrity, as well as flexibility and openness to new technologies and services.

Therefore CPE is a *must have* for social work professionals, through which they can meet their professional development and career advancement needs by means of high-quality programs. Moreover, the issues that are currently met with reveal the fact that many social workers face challenges for which they are not prepared. Social workers face large caseloads, insufficient time, budget cuts, the demand to perform multiple roles (Lietz and Zayas, 2010), need to develop new strategies and solutions that reflect the diversity of client groups and address the complexity of social issues, face challenges related to racism, and structural inequalities in society. Furthermore, social workers need to have knowledge about a client's social background and understand current developments in their social environment (Limon, 2018). Also, addressing COVID-19 in terms of its grievous fallout on social conditions as a whole and in the lives of individuals, families and households, groups, and communities in specific is a professional challenge (Amadasun, 2020). The use of digital technology by social workers implies assume new roles and must develop multiple skills in order to meet the current requirements of the profession (Jacob, Souissi, 2022). This context increases the demands (Simon, Boyd, Subica, 2022) for the education process in higher education institutions that prepare a new generation of professionals in order to meet the European standard for vocational education and training.

As a result, the education and training system of social workers is based on the principles of continuous professional education: humanization, democratization, continuity, integration, individualization, and ensures the professional development of adults, especially of social workers. Despite the numerous scientific works on various aspects of the education of social workers (the future of continuing education (Faherty, 1979), field education (Kimberley, Watt, 1982; Raskin, 1994; Watt, Thomlison, 1981), education for occupational social work (Hoffer, 1989) and the future of social work doctoral studies (Angus, de Jong, 1975; Gipton, 1980). Included the issue of the training of social workers in the continuing education system requires further attention.

As Ogienko (2007) points out, the opportunity to learn throughout life becomes a key value of the knowledge society, creating conditions for the enrichment of an adult's creative potential at three levels that are accessible: personal and cultural; professional; social and civic.

The important role of continuing education for social workers is emphasized by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2020). The members of this organizations state in *Global standards for Social Work Education and Training* (2020) that, in order to carry out social work, every social worker should benefit of continuous training, using research, theories and modern methods. The requirement for continuing education has two advantages – the social worker grows and develops on a personal and professional level, while society is enriched by services offered at a higher level.

Other specialists who have studied this issue, Cournoyer and Stanley (2002), also note that continuing education in the field of social work is a parallel process, along with carrying

out professional activities related to the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and abilities; rethinking values and relationships; acquiring new experiences necessary for effective professional activity. They identified tools for measuring the level of social worker engagement in lifelong learning, including: periodic review of the professional literature; the pleasure of learning; continuous monitoring of training activities and professional development opportunities; understanding the most effective forms of learning for oneself; active interaction with up-to-date information carriers and responsibility for additional training.

### **3. Methodology**

Projected on this background, the *purpose* of this study is to identify the range of issues that qualified social workers face in their field of practice, as well as models and methods of intervention, the knowledge that professionals and students need, and finally, the extension of the set of skills that are necessary for meeting the demands of employers.

Therefore, the research is based on a theoretical framework and the analysis was based on qualitative methodological research using the focus group. This is a fluid interactive research tool that encourages respondents to elaborate on ideas that the researcher may not have had.

The researcher distributed a personalized introductory message and invitation to participate to each public or private protective service agencies from Argeş County. Letters of invitation to participate were distributed to facilitate recruitment. The qualified social workers in this study must have worked for at least 10 years at their social protection agencies to be eligible for participation; moreover, they must be willing to share their thoughts and opinions with us. The second group was formed by academics from the Social Work study program from Piteşti University Centre. The participants know each other because they have collaborated in the past on various projects and extracurricular activities initiated by academia staff.

This method wanted to stimulate discussions and an exchange of ideas necessary to maintain the relevance and integrity of social work in the education system and to extend the curriculum according to the interests of specialists in the social welfare system and to lay the foundations for continuing education. Academic staff perceptions of qualification-level social work education and how it could be further developed were also examined.

During the introduction, and prior to the recording, the researcher informed the focus group participants about the objectives of the study, the person who would conduct the focus group and the time it would start, clarifying that the meeting would be recorded, while, at the same time, their identity would remain anonymous.

The data was recorded digitally, then transcribed into text, and analyzed to identify the main subject categories proposed by researcher (perceptions of qualification-level social work education and development proposals) and to create new themes that resulted from the practice experience of qualified social workers.

### **4. Results**

The following aspects emerged from the discussions held as part of the focus groups:

#### **I. Current requirements of the social worker in practice**

Throughout its history, social work has been concerned with creating a more desirable future by changing the existing and future conditions of individuals, groups and communities through planned interventions in social systems and their environments. Seen in this context, the social work practitioner can be thought of as a designer who is concerned with helping clients make choices that bridge the gap between their present situation and their desired future situation. Design should have a prominent role in defining social work practice.

The professional practice of a social worker is carried out under the influence of the dynamic changes of society, in response to the new problems and needs of the community. As



a result, the content of a social worker's work is constantly changing, because the social worker is an agent of social development. Thus, a social worker should know the changes in the legislation in the field of providing social services; the basics of ethics and professional communication; the content, forms and procedure of providing services to people who find themselves in difficult situations; methods and forms of social assistance with special groups of beneficiaries (emergence of new categories of clients, for example, immigrants, refugees, victims of war, children/young people addicted to drugs) and social phenomena (bullying, human trafficking, drug trafficking, deinstitutionalization); the basics of psychology; basic elements of medical and hygienic knowledge; the basics of economics, law and labour law, and labour protection;

## **II. Proposals regarding the educational curriculum**

The academic curricula as a hierarchical set of orientations towards teaching and learning generate particular types of relationships and expectations that shape the student/social worker learning experience. So the proposals, in this way, could be summarized as follows:

### **1. Courses and seminars**

There is a need for more flexibility in the courses that students take to meet the current demands of society by organizing professional development workshops and providing continuing education opportunities.

*Students could find their own paths within the curriculum according to their interests, their social and professional skills but, above all, the skills they possess (academic).*

The master's program should be exclusively held online, only one year, covering a wide range of social issues

*Programs in diversity, equity and inclusion or "life coaching" should be added to the existing master's programs or trauma-informed care (qualified social worker).*

Expanding the number of seminars where students/practitioners learn how to use technology in social work and also artificial intelligence and informatics.

*Artificial intelligence could help social workers identify which young people may present the greatest risk of substance use disorder and also facilitate interventions for those who want to overcome this crisis situation. Also with the help of technology, NGOs could more easily optimize resources that are often difficult to access and insufficient (qualified social worker).*

*The use of technology in social work is evident in teletherapy and online counselling. Social workers can connect with their clients through online platforms. As a result, people who were previously marginalized on account of disability, economic and financial issues or geography can now access help from anywhere at any time of the day. In addition, there are numerous mobile apps to provide ongoing support, crisis intervention and self-help tools to people in need, making care accessible at any time (qualified social worker).*

Expanding the educational program.

*By being provided with multiple courses in such areas as the criminal justice system and environmental justice, students will be allowed to learn more about substantive areas while developing skills in working with the individual, with the group or with the community (academic).*

The university should offer short-term accredited programs that train social workers in new skills and competencies and give them the qualification they need to make a change/obtain a promotion in their career.

*Developing more continuing education opportunities throughout their careers gives them the chance to develop professionally and personally, and obtain advancement in their careers more easily (qualified social worker).*

## 2. Practice, theory and research

We need to create and deliver innovative forms of social work practice, theory and research.

*The educational theory and practice we offer must ensure a thorough preparation of individuals for life in a complex world, full of challenges, shortages and many unknowns (academic).*

*It is about finding more creative ideas for complex social problems. At its core, this innovation is driven by the realization that the needs of our society are changing, and social work must change with them (qualified social worker).*

Strengths-based approaches and empowerment today, the focus is not only on risk reduction, but also on the strengths and capabilities that individuals or communities have. The goal is to empower these individuals and communities so that they can identify their own needs and actively participate in finding solutions. A good example of a strengths-based approach is represented by the assessment tools and software. A social work professional can use these tools to identify individuals' strengths and capabilities and then use these unique skills to develop more targeted interventions. In addition, empowering online communities and virtual support groups allows affected people to connect with their peers, share their experiences and offer support to one another.

A starting point for developing a curriculum for social work education would be consistent with design-based practice. In this context the major focus would be on how practitioners and clients can design the system that should exist in the future and how to deliver services differently; what it might look like; and how we can change our intervention strategy.... the concept of design is seen as the basis of a new approach to science and the key to developing alternative strategies to respond to the complexity and uncertainty of the client's situation. Clients are seen as purposeful systems that continually define their goals and adapt their responses and behaviours to changing conditions. Carrying out research in urban and rural areas, guided by partners in those communities

*Research is particularly relevant in identifying issues facing vulnerable groups and communities, so we can develop strategic and change plans (qualified social worker).*

Development of a database on social services provided to different vulnerable groups, statistical data, allowing researchers to access them in different studies and research without prejudice to copyright.

*Carrying out studies on various social issues can have a significant impact, especially when we talk about legislative changes, institutional reorganization or the development of strategic projects (academic).*

*From our perspective, as teachers, it is a difficult path to obtain some relevant statistics or data for studies in social work from the institutions, but this is information without which our studies would have no scientific value (academic).*

Some university teacher felt that they should take a more active role in seeking to influence regional partnerships with employing institution.

Among other suggestions for improvement, one university teacher highlighted the need to move beyond the current focus on teaching basic communication skills to the progressive teaching of the social work craft.

Another underlined the need to refocus on relationship as a key component of practice.

*The relationship building and professional knowledge will enables students and social worker to have an impact in vulnerable people's lives (qualified social worker).*

## 5. Limitations

The study was a small-scale research project which facilitated the collection of the opinions of Pitești University Centre - social work academics and qualified social workers from public or private protective service agencies from Argeș County. Therefore, the results are specific to the context and cannot claim to represent the points of view of academics from other regions of Romania or even internationally.

In addition, it should be noted that due to the small sample size and the corresponding non-parametric statistical analysis, the results of the qualitative analysis of this study are provisional and are considered neither representative nor generalizable. However, although the results may not be representative of academics within similar social work educational settings, they can be compared with findings from other related studies drafted nationally and internationally and ultimately increase knowledge and discussion in this domain.

## 6. Conclusions:

The relationship between knowledge and practice in social work continues to spark debate among theorists and practitioners (Gomory, 1997). Therefore, the future of the profession depends on the ability of schools to offer/initiate educational programs that take into account the fact that the world is changing rapidly, bringing new challenges, more complex problems and an increasing demand for social innovation. We have to highlight the challenges experienced by university teachers as they try to balance the demands of higher education academic roles with the additional responsibilities of working in partnership with employing agencies and other stake holder interests. Moreover, the initiators of university programs need to maintain relationships with these agencies, stake holders, qualified social workers, students, experts in this field, as these groups can contribute to the continuous evaluation of the curriculum. Collaborative partnership working between universities and employers institution has been under-researched and it would be timely, given current proposals for improving social work education, to develop projects for identify and learn from best practice in this field and also for continuing education. Continuing education is a tool that allows social workers to constantly update and improve their knowledge, skills and professional abilities in order to provide targeted and effective social services. Social workers must stay abreast of emerging approaches in order to remain helpful now and in the future.

Excellence in social work education involves the ability to impact the community by training high-quality social workers with the skills and competencies to address the diverse and challenging social work issues.

Therefore, social work must be active in the life of the community, contributing to the creation of a more just and carefree society, a society that is more responsible towards vulnerable individuals and groups.

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# REVOLUTION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONDITIONS OF LEGITIMATE PHILOSOPHY ACCORDING TO IMMANUEL KANT: EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH

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**Abstract:** *The study aims to highlight critical philosophy as an epistemological approach, which was founded by the German philosopher Kant and which is considered among the philosophies that contributed significantly to the transfer of philosophical discourse from the stage of modernity to the stage of post-modernism. If the problem of existence was the main problem in philosophy in the past, then modern philosophical thought has been preoccupied with the problem of knowledge, and the philosopher Kant is considered to be the one who preoccupied it when he resorted to criticism, and in this way the great philosophical system that Immanuel Kant left behind was shaped like the Copernican revolution and an epistemological revolution at the level of the human and social sciences. The study used the analytical critical approach in order to reach the first causes of all scientific knowledge, and to dismantle the complex into its parts according to the Greek proposition, all to criticize and analyze critical philosophy, its problems, and its historical importance. The study reached the main results, which are that critical philosophy has great importance and an important place in Modern and contemporary philosophical thought, as it highlights the role of Kant's critical ideas in addressing the issue of the principles of reason and thinking and the nature of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Critical philosophy, the critical problem, Immanuel Kant, criticism of reason, the cognitive revolution.

## 1. Introduction

If we looked closely at many of the revelations that the geniuses of humanity were able to find in the field of science, philosophy, and art, we would be impressed by the simplicity, intuition, or clarity of these revelations. At the same time, we would be amazed that humanity has waited such a long time to be guided by such revelations. Simple facts, clear evidence! Perhaps the criticism of reason is one of these revelations. We wonder how humanity spent centuries before it occurred to one of its philosophers to put the mind to the test, or call for the necessity of testing the mind's ability to know before using it as a tool to reach any truth! This is the work carried out by Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), when he examined the "human mind" before resorting to it in order to prove many theological, metaphysical, and metaphysical truths. "Critical philosophy" (Zidane 1968, 72-73) was, in its origin, nothing but a systematic attempt to Determine the precise limits within which it is appropriate to use the mind as a tool for knowledge. (Ibrahim Misr Printing House, 14)

## 2. Problem of the study

From the above, the problem can be raised in the main question that this research paper comes to answer as follows:

To what extent is it possible to establish critical philosophy as a systematic attempt to determine the precise boundaries within which it is appropriate to use the mind as a tool for knowledge? What is the extent of its impact on the humanities? Is it possible to get out of the problem of the human sciences through critical philosophy as an epistemological study?

### **3. The importance of the study**

The topic derives its importance from knowing the importance of critical philosophy, in light of the most prominent contemporary cultural or philosophical variables, by addressing the various problems facing the scientific researcher, especially the problem of the nature of human knowledge, its value and limits, and transcending it epistemologically.

### **4. Purpose of the study:**

The aim of the research is not merely to present the foundations and conditions of critical philosophy. Rather, we aim to demonstrate the importance and nature of Kantian epistemology and its implications for the sciences and for the advancement of human knowledge, through an epistemological study.

### **5. Method of the study:**

In this study, we have relied on the historical method to clarify the characteristics of critical philosophy since ancient times, in addition to the descriptive analytical and epistemological method, which is based on collecting information, analyzing it, reading it in an epistemological critical manner, and then drawing conclusions..

## **6. Kant's Critical Philosophy: Postmodern Philosophy**

### **6.1. Monetary problem:**

Kant sent his friend Marcus Hertz a copy of his book, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, to review it. Hertz was deeply involved in the study of philosophy, known for his breadth of knowledge and depth of contemplation, but despite that, he had hardly read the book until Half of it until Hertz returned the book to its owner, saying: “He fears that he will go crazy if he continues reading the book... If this is the case with those who take thought and philosophy as their craft, what are we to do?” (Mahmoud 1936: 249-250) We must approach him with vigilance and caution. Let us start walking from different points on its margins than its heart and core.

Philosophy is not proof or denial, but rather questioning and questioning. We can say that “Kantian” criticism is philosophy itself, as long as the task of “criticism” is to explain the inconsistency of both beliefs on the one hand and skepticism on the other hand in order to move towards questioning the mind. About the extent of his abilities. In fact, Kant found himself faced with two conflicting philosophical trends: the trend of doxastic or affirmative philosophy (dogmatism), which was represented by the German philosopher (“Johan Christian Wolf” 1679 - 1724) and the current of skeptical philosophy (skepticism), which was represented by the English philosopher. (“David Hume” D. Hume 1711 – 1776 ).Note that one of them proves and confirms while the other denies and denies, without this or that having any sound critical basis on which to rely in the process of proof or the process of negation. Hence, Kant found that there is no way to settle the violent dispute. Which arose between the supporters of both parties, except by resorting to the court of criticism, in order to carry out a comprehensive examination of pure reason itself. (Ibrahim :14-15)

When Kant talks about criticism, he does not mean, of course, criticism of books and doctrines, but rather criticism of the faculty of reason in general, especially with regard to those knowledge that he tries to reach without resorting to experience (Kant 2008: 26-27) and from here the main topic around which criticism revolves. Kantianism is the final decision on the problem of the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general, with interest in determining the origin, scope, and limits of this science based on clear rational principles. (M. Zidane 2004: 41)

He expresses this in his book “*Critique of Pure Reason*” as follows:

“By this I do not mean criticizing books and philosophical systems, but rather the

faculty of reason in general, in view of the knowledge that it strives for without relying on any experience. Accordingly, criticism will determine the possibility or impossibility of the establishment of metaphysics in general, and determine its sources, scope, and limits, all This is done according to principles.” (Kant: 26-27)

### **6.2. Kant's critical philosophy:**

Kant was like John Locke. Locke (1632-1704) and David H. Hume (1776-1711) investigated the sources of human knowledge and tried to discover the responses and capabilities of the human mind. But it differs from both Locke and Hume in that they turned to a psychological approach, to analyze the processes of sense and thought and to reduce complex ideas to simple ideas, while Kant started with absolute certain knowledge, which is knowledge that cannot be subject to psychological interpretation. (Abdel-Ilah 2022: 801-802) Therefore, Kant wanted to develop a new theory of the human mind that would be sufficient to satisfy its demands and achievements. In order to understand this new theory, we must present in detail the powers of the mind. According to him, the mind includes three main forces whose functions are, in order, (perception, act of will, and feeling). As for the first function of the mind, its subject is the book “Critique of Pure Reason.” As for the will and its action, it is the subject of the book “Critique of Practical Reason.” Feeling continues to be devoted to Kant's book "Critique of the Faculty of Judgment". Thus, each of his three critical books is organized into a function in the mind, and these functions or powers are: mind, will, and feeling (Rayyan 1996, 229).

The historian and scholar in credit score has always gotten synonymous with epistemology, insofar as it is merely the rational faculty of the experience of knowledge. But Kant himself may be broader than the entire circle of thought, so he argued that it explains three questions: What can I know? what can I do ? What can I hope for? According to Kant, they are the problems that the parties complain about. It represents, respectively, the problem of knowledge, moral culture, and religious culture. The first problem concerns the eyes of sight, the second only the practical, and the third concerns both the theoretical and the practical, and Kant had not yet discovered the third faculty of the human self. (That is, the faculty of conscience or aesthetic judgment), which he will discuss in detail in his latest critical book, “Criticism of the Faculty of Judgment.” Whatever it is, critical philosophy wants to comprehend various fields of human knowledge. (Belkacem 2023: 719-720)

### **6.3. The three monetary problems:**

The origin of critical philosophy is Kant's question about the nature of human knowledge, its value and limits, and its relationship to existence. We saw that Kant considered this question necessary for everyone who wants to use the mind to acquire any kind of knowledge, for we must examine it. Our tool of knowledge, before trusting it or relying on it, so we have to ask a necessary question to know the foundations on which Kant's philosophy was built, or what is the origin in setting the critical problem? (Ibrahim: 46)

Two things came to Kant's mind and he considered them to be indisputable truths: ethics and science. As for morality - which he did not separate from religion - it seemed to him to be a reality and he could not shake it with any reasoning. Throughout his life, he loved to repeat these two lines from Juvenal's poetry: “Believe me, the most heinous sin is to prefer living over honor, and to sacrifice the principles of behavior in the pursuit of life.” Kant believes that existence is not the direct subject of philosophy, but rather Its subject is science and ethics, as their actual existence is the starting point for the philosopher. He does not ask whether science and ethics are possible, but rather asks: How did science and ethics exist, what are their origins, and how do we explain their existence? There are two things that philosophy can study and analyze, and there is no doubt about their existence;



But the problem is how do we reconcile science and ethics? Science and ethics are two things that do not harmonize each other, so that we find that science is based on mathematics and necessary experience, while ethics is based on a world that transcends the tangibles and freedom. Therefore, we find science and ethics contradictory. (Boutroux 1972, 14-15)

Hume ended up doubting when he saw one of these contradictions, that is, the contradiction between the law of thought and the law of causality: Hume saw that causality is not homogeneous with thought, but is included in the knowledge of all things, and therefore it is impossible for the mind to know things with certainty. This conclusion to skepticism is not accepted by Kant, because the issue for him is not to consider whether it is necessary to maintain the certainty of science and morals. Rather, in his view, what is necessary is to reconcile them, because they are two existing matters (données) and reconciling them is a reality. And Kant says:

“We know from the beginning that Hume's skepticism cannot be accepted because it destroys science and morality” (Boutroux:1 6-17)

As such, the image is well placed

How was science possible? What were literary publications like? How was the connection between science and ethics possible? “How” means on what foundations are science and ethics based, such that they are composed of seemingly contradictory elements? (Boutroux: 17)

Kant criticized reason, and thus he proposed a new approach that had crystallized in his mind clearly. In order to understand his proposed approach, we have to refer to his cognitive theory, and this is what I will address in the second point of this part, as if we are facing a revolution like the one brought about by Copernicus. Nicolas Copernicus (1473 - 1543) in astronomy, whereby he made thought possess the conditions of knowledge in itself, and that things revolve around him in order to become the subject of perception and knowledge, and he does not revolve around them as was previously believed, and in order to bring this doctrine closer to the mind and correct what happened from Errors in his understanding, he wrote a treatise called “An Introduction to Every Future Metaphysics that Wants to Be a Science” (1783).(Karam 1982: 213)

#### **6.4. The monetary problem has historical importance in several ways:**

The monetary problem has historical importance in several ways:

First: Kant's critical philosophy is the result of the conflict between the rationalists and the empiricists. Kant's thought represented the effort of the human mind to reconcile these two conflicting currents in philosophy, and this is what we will discuss in the second section of this chapter. (Moati 2001: 222)

These two schools of thought ran into serious difficulties, and the two schools were unable to overcome them. Kant wondered whether the issue was incorrectly placed, and whether it was not an illusion to imagine a connection of knowledge between the mind and things outside of it or things as they are. His doctrine appears to us as a result of this great philosophical drama that existed between rationalists and empiricists during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (Boutroux: 18)

Second: Kant's philosophy is a starting point for the theories of German philosophy, and the problem that occupies the first place in German philosophy is explaining the possibility of a “primary” science of nature. Although Kant had previously protested against the categorical idealism by which we deduce from the laws of thought the laws of existence, this Idealism stems from him, and the historical importance of Kant's philosophy cannot be ignored in this regard.

Third: Finally, Kant's philosophy in general has historical value in that it is a starting point for all critical philosophies that have performed a great mission in the history of modern thought, and which continue in various eras, remaining to our days.

(Boutroux:18)

## **7. Kantian epistemology**

Each of the major philosophical schools of thought contains a general conception of knowledge. The problem of knowledge was one of the major problems that was constantly raised throughout the long history of philosophical thought, and the position on this problem was one of the features thanks to which we can distinguish different philosophical schools of thought. Epistemology is that part of every philosophical doctrine that investigates the issue of knowledge in order to propose a specific solution to this issue. For this reason, we resorted to one of the pillars of philosophical thought, because Kant seems to us from the beginning to be heading towards solving the issue of knowledge in a way that is contrary to that which we find among philosophers who preceded him, such as Descartes (1595-1650), René Descartes and others. (Waqidi 1983: 83-143)

Kant said about himself: "I am, by nature, a researcher, and I feel an all-consuming thirst for knowledge and an anxious anxiety to obtain more of it, or satisfaction with every progress I make." He had a rational tendency, and that is why I love the exact sciences, I mean mathematics and the natural sciences based on experiment and observation. Such as physics, astronomy, and the origins of the universe. (Badawi 1977: 115)

But he took it as a starting point for a comprehensive view of the universe, that is, for a philosophical view that organizes human knowledge in general. For this purpose, he had to investigate the truth of human knowledge, and from here he was very interested in the theory of knowledge, that is: to what extent can our mind reach the realization of the truth of the universe, nature, and man? What are the correct knowledge tools? What is the value of these tools and their roles in obtaining correct knowledge? (Badawi :115)

### **7.1. Kantian epistemology: where does knowledge come from? From reason or from experimentation?**

Kant's theory of knowledge exists in a relationship with the rational and experimental philosophies, taking from them both the basic matters related to knowledge (Ziat 2024, 22-23), but Kant rejects from the rational and experimental philosophies the problem of each of them regarding knowledge, and Kant's philosophy lies on the borders of these two projects together, but without being identical. Either of them, she aims in her project to overcome their problems. (Durant 1988: 316)

### **7.2. What are the sources of knowledge for humans?**

Kant says that there are two sources of knowledge: sensitivity and understanding, without giving one of them absolute priority over the other. There are, therefore, two sources of knowledge according to Kant, the first of which is "experience" and the second of which is "our ability to think about the raw material" that is given to us through experience. In Kant's view, knowledge in humans cannot do without any of these two elements necessary for knowledge, for knowledge is matter and form. As for matter, it comes to us through our sensory impression of external objects, thanks to the ability that we have to receive these impressions, which Kant calls "sensitivity." As for image, its source is our ability to think about the sensory impressions it receives, and Kant calls this ability "entendement." (khodoss 1990: 43-46) According to Kant, knowledge is therefore matter and form, and matter in his view is an a posteriori given because it requires the presence of the subject. As for the form, it is an a priori given because the ability of understanding to compare, connect, and separate is not dependent on experience. Knowledge, then, occurs when the two elements are integrated. (Waqidi, 152) Kant says:

"But if our entire knowledge begins from experience, this does not mean that it comes entirely from experience, because our knowledge through experience can be a synthesis of what we receive through sensory impressions and of what is produced by

itself by our ability to know (which is stimulated by sensory impressions): this is an addition that does not We distinguish it from primary matter only when our attention becomes accustomed to it, thanks to long training that teaches us how to separate it from that matter.” (Waqidi: 153)

### **7.3. Knowledge levels:**

The first level: It includes the external world, the existence of which there is no need to prove, and it consists of two forms:

- The world of phenomena: In Kant’s words, it is the world that the ordinary man is familiar with, and it consists of partial material things and natural events that last at a certain time and exist in some place or the world of possible experience.

- The world of the thing in itself: which cannot be perceived, but was assumed by Kant to establish metaphysics.

The second level: which includes the cognitive process in its physiological form, which consists of three levels:

The first level and its elements: something, sense, perception.

The second level and its elements: perception and experimental perceptions as two basic sources of human knowledge.

The third level: It consists of the effective mind and a priori perceptions, frameworks of knowledge, or rational synthetic judgments. (Baghoura 2008: 14)

### **7.4. Nature of knowledge (primary knowledge and later knowledge):**

Kant agrees with the empiricists that all our knowledge begins with experience, but he differs with them in an important matter, which is that this position does not mean that all knowledge is derived from experience. There is knowledge that is completely independent of every sensory experience, and this knowledge is what Kant calls “Primary” or “a priori”, knowledge. in contrast to experimental knowledge, which is “a posteriori”. In this, Kant says, “The thing that is beyond doubt is that all of our knowledge begins with experience..., but even though all of our knowledge begins... With experience, this does not mean that it all stems from experience or experience..., and there is knowledge that is completely independent of experience and all sensory impressions, and such knowledge is called “a priori knowledge” and is distinguished from “a posteriori knowledge” that stems from experience.” (Zidane: 51)

The question that arises in this regard is: Where do we find this initial knowledge?

Kant believes that this knowledge is not far from us, as science provides us with many examples, such knowledge, especially in mathematics, which is considered one of the “glories of the human mind.” It gives us the wonderful example of elementary knowledge that is related to necessity and comprehensiveness without relying on experience, so the sum of two and two Always four, and that issue is absolutely certain, no matter what we see or hear to the contrary. Necessity and strict universality are therefore two documented features of a priori knowledge, one of which is inseparably linked to the other. (Kant :32-46)

### **7.5. Limits of knowledge:**

Knowledge, as we have seen, can only be achieved by uniting the work of two sources: “sensitivity,” which is our ability to receive the influence of external sensory objects, and “understanding,” which is our ability to produce a priori perceptions in which we think about the sensory impressions we receive about the objects, and combine them with one object of knowledge. (Waqidi: 187)

The union of sensitivity and understanding that constitutes all our knowledge relates only to sensible things, and it does not therefore relate to topics that we can think about in general. There are therefore limits to our knowledge that stop at knowing the

topics about which we receive impressions thanks to our impressionability, that is, sensitivity. Neither pure sensory intuitions, nor pure perceptions, nor the collection of designs through which the contribution of intuitions is united with the work of perceptions are capable of making them transcend knowledge of these tangible objects. (Waqidi: 190)

Kant calls us to distinguish between objects as they are given to us through sensitivity and those objects in themselves. The phenomenon is what our knowledge can reach, and the thing in itself is what represents the limit at which that knowledge stops. Kant meant by phenomenon the thing that is given to us through Sensitivity, which we know as it appears to us. (Waqidi: 106)

The thing in itself, i.e. “noun”, is defined in its first stage as a subject that cannot be the subject of sensory intuition, and that it is a subject that can only be given to the understanding. We know through the “Kantian” theory of knowledge that what we can know is not a subject that is given to the understanding alone. Rather, it is a subject that must be given temporally before that of the senses. The categories of understanding have no objective function other than the application to the subjects of experience. Therefore, this subject, which is only given to the understanding, is a subject whose knowledge cannot lie. However, it remains possible as long as it is given to understanding. (Waqidi: 192-191)

Kant gives another concept of the thing in itself. It is the most important concept that brings us to the criticism that we practice in order to know our knowing ability and test the limits to which we can rely on this ability. This meaning determines the negative function of the noun in relation to our knowledge. Kant says:

“The concept of nominee is therefore merely a concept that sets a limit whose goal is to restrict claims of sensitivity, and it has only a negative use. It is not an arbitral illusion, but it is related to that to determine sensitivity without being able to establish any positive outside the field of sensitivity.” (Waqidi: 195)

This, then, is the function of the concept of the thing in itself according to Kant. It is a negative concept considering that what it defines is what we cannot know. However, achieving the negative concept is considered a positive result that the criticism that Kant calls us to practice on our knowing ability brings us. In order to distinguish between what it can and what it cannot. Our arrival at the meaning of the thing itself represents a limit to our knowledge, which would make us fully aware of the limits at which must use our knowing ability. One of the positives of this definition is that it is certain that understanding can be used in an ideal way. Understanding cannot think in a way that leads to knowledge except when it relies on the data provided by sensitivity, and the a priori perceptions of understanding and the pure intuitions of sensitivity can only work to think about the data of sensitivity in framing it. Giving it the quality of reasonableness. However, the understanding can think without relying on sensitive data, and in this case it thinks without its thinking leading it to attain objective knowledge. (Waqidi: 196-195)

## **8. Reason and experience: a project of reconciliation and transcendent knowledge.**

The double critical stance towards Kant's previous philosophical currents appeared due to his careful observation regarding the efforts of both rationalism and empiricism to develop their own theory of knowledge, the results of which lead to the refutation of the other. The matter did not stop at this profound insight, but rather the assumptions on which it was based were revealed to him. Each of these trends has a depth of arbitrariness and exaggeration in relying on assumptions and adhering to them as an argument for the correctness of the premises, and he recorded his critical observation regarding each trend. Rational philosophy exceeded the limits of the mind and its energies and claimed the possibility of arriving at proof of entities that cannot by nature be the

subject of experience, such as: God, human freedom, the immortality of the soul, and so on. While experimental philosophy linked everything to the data of sensory experience and did not realize the existence of transcendent principles, which are the frameworks into which the data of sense must enter in order to become perceptions. In the face of this existing contradiction in the structure of hypotheses and results, Kant discovered the existence of judgments that are neither experimental nor analytical, and he called them “synthetic a priori judgments.” (Waqidi: 195-196) They are synthetic because their predicates are not included in their subjects, and they are a priori because they are not derived from experience. Here, Kant solved a problem. A new thing appeared to him: How are a priori synthetic judgments possible? (Kant: 48-49)

The solution is that it would be possible if it were possible to show that human knowledge depends on perceptions that are not empirical in origin, but rather have their origin in the human mind. It is true that all knowledge begins with experience, but this does not necessarily mean that it arises from experience. This is because the experiment presents single, mixed data such as colors, lights, softness, hardness, etc. But the mind, with the frames it has installed embedded in its nature, is what composes them, arranges them, and transforms them into perceptions of subjects. The mind receives sensory impressions separately, with no connection or arrangement between them, but it soon does its work on them, arranging them, unifying them, and linking them together, otherwise they would remain a vague and indistinguishable mixture. (Badawi, *Encyclopedia of Philosophers* 1984: 169-170)

Since Kant's philosophy is based on images, structures, and entities, it is useful to examine the procedural, systematic function exercised by transcendent knowledge because it relates to the topic that we touched upon a moment ago, which is the a priori judgments that Kant discovered. Accordingly, Kant says: “I call transcendental all knowledge that is not concerned with objects as much as it is concerned with the way we know objects, in the sense that this way of knowing must be possible a priori.” (Badawi, *Encyclopedia of Philosophers*: 170)

Badawi (1917-2002) comments on this by: “The transcendent is the one that precedes experience, but has entered the realm of reason. Transcendent knowledge is devoid of every element of sensation, and the transcendent principle is the principle by which all the general conditions by which it alone can be represented a priori.” Things can become objects. Transcendental philosophy is the science of the possibility of a priori synthetic knowledge. It does not investigate objects, but rather the principles from which knowledge and its limits arise a priori. It is a system of knowledge that presents in an a priori manner the objects of pure reason in a system that is necessarily linked. It is part of theoretical metaphysics. Its main topic is: How can a priori synthetic judgments exist? (Ibrahim:79)

“Concepts” or “perceptions” - as one of the basic “categories” in Kant's philosophy, being the necessary links between the subject and its predicate, that is, between the existence of things and their mental representations - occupy an important place, as they are for him the means by which a person can perceive things. The concept strategy in his philosophy results from its practice of linking what is in the minds and what is in the objects. He transcended the duality of the rational given and the sensory given, and sought to find a middle term between the two given things and make “understanding” a tool for linking sensory intuition and rational perception, then he made “sensitivity” and “understanding.” » They perform functions that complement each other. Sensitivity prepares the material of knowledge, and understanding prepares its form. Without sensitivity, knowledge would have no subject matter, and without understanding, knowledge would have become incomprehensible, and on this Kant decides: “Concepts without sensory intuitions are empty, and sensory intuitions without concepts are blind.” It is not possible for “understanding” to involve sensory intuitions, just as it is not possible

for “sensitivity” to involve mental perceptions. Rather, “knowledge” is generated from their union together, such that it will transform “sensory perception” into “experience.” Human knowledge has two essential elements: The element of intuition or direct observation, and the element of mental perception or “concept.” “Concepts” or “perceptions” are not able to provide us with any knowledge in complete independence from direct sight or the corresponding sensory intuition, just as sensory intuition is also not able to provide us with any knowledge in complete independence from concepts and perceptions. But what is important is that the sensory is included under a rational conception that defines the image of judgment in general, and thus deprives empirical judgments of total truth or general legitimacy. (A. Ibrahim 1997: 93-94)

Kant believes in the objectivity of the external world, but he believes that the laws of the mind only lead us to knowledge of “phenomena” in a way that is “conditioned” by our subjective categories, and this means that “the unity of the self” is the only pillar of all knowledge. Accordingly, the legitimate use of the categories of the mind is inherent in experience and is not transcendent of it. For this reason, it is not permissible to apply primary meanings except to the objects of experience produced by sensory perceptions, and their use is considered unlawful if the categories are applied to transcendent objects, because they will lose all their meaning and value. Saying, for example, that God is an “essence” or not an essence is a kind of meaningless judgment as long as the saying “essence” does not mean anything reasonable outside the scope of sensory perception that has no way to reach the absolute. Everything related to the process of formal deduction of categories aims at proving the laws of nature - which is the basic issue in Newtonian physics - he wants to prove the necessary relationships that exist between phenomena one after the other, or just a conditional relative hypothesis based on a specific accidental experience, but rather It is a primary meaning through which the mind links these successive phenomena in nature with necessary and inevitable links. Were it not for the faculty of the mind, which includes categories, it would not be possible to comprehend the meaning of “nature.” Since the mind is the one that primarily dictates its general laws to nature. It is not surprising that the basis for all knowledge is a set of absolute primary propositions that all other knowledge opposes, and these primary propositions are what Kant called “principles of pure understanding.” (Boutroux: 41-42)

Here is Kant's philosophical conclusion: subjecting the empirical world to specific mental laws while at the same time rejecting the claim of knowledge and the ability to perceive a world beyond tangible phenomena. The transcendent self, as the pillar of knowledge, is the one that gives everything that concerns us and can be perceived mentally, as it may be able to reduce the content for the rational to mere pure mental relations. (Buchinsky 2015: 32-51)

## **9. Conclusion**

Every statement whose subject is science can be considered the epistemological aspect of every philosophical theory. In this sense, contemporary epistemology can find in Kant an epistemological statement that it can benefit from in analyzing scientific knowledge. However, epistemology in its contemporary sense does not match that with what it contained. Major philosophical theories include a theory about science, because this theory, as is the case with Kant, has always sought to be a general theory about knowledge as a decisive and final answer to the question of knowledge.

The Kantian theory of knowledge is a huge effort made by the philosopher in order to find a solution to the issue of knowledge and resolve the dispute therein. He wanted to go beyond the ideal theory of knowledge, which was based on the statement that human thought alone is capable of knowledge without relying on data from the senses. Kant asserts that no... We can know any subject without this subject having been presented to us by the senses.

Knowledge begins temporally, as Kant said, with experience, and he wants to overcome this negative result reached by Hume's empiricism. It is doubting the objectivity of scientific laws. One of the goals of Kant's theory of knowledge was to restore legitimacy to the ability of the human mind to derive general laws for observed phenomena. It also remained an attempt to provide a decisive answer to the issue of knowledge, and these are the two things that make this theory different in terms of its goals. What contemporary epistemology seeks is that the theory of knowledge appeared at a certain time in the history of science. It benefited from the data of this stage, the "Newtonian physical system." However, it went beyond its historical relativity, and raised its basic concepts to the level of the absolute, "the concept of the mind."

The history of scientific knowledge can, at the same time, be the history of the changes that have befallen human thought since this thought began to produce scientific knowledge. To say that a human mind is fixed in its structure means understanding the history of science and the history of human thought, as if they were separate realities. The human mind In Bachelard's view, it is a structure that has a history, and its history is in the development of its knowledge. Our rational structure produces knowledge, but it is subject to its influence, so it itself knows development. The mind does not only produce knowledge, but in addition to that, it learns from science: "Science in general teaches The mind, and the mind must submit to science, to the most advanced science, to the science that is developing.

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# THE TENDENCY TO POSTPONE THE COMPLETION OF TASKS IN THE CASE OF INITIATING STUDENTS INTO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

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**Abstract:** *The initiation of students in the pedagogical scientific research is possible and very necessary in their academic education, especially at the level of the training basic skills, such as: identifying the topics of interest, theoretical documentation, issuing hypotheses, proposing ways of practical investigation, anticipating ameliorative solutions. By applying a questionnaire about the phenomenon of postponement in the academic education of students and by quantitative-qualitative analysis of the products of their activity, we were able to find that, during the design of the psycho-pedagogical micro-researches, students develop some of these skills, which are facilitated by the development of the information technology, but also that they have difficulties in adequately managing their investigative approaches or meeting deadlines limit. We consider that, an awareness of the situation in which students find themselves is useful for them and for the teachers who guide them, by applying the planning, organization and verification strategies.*

**Keywords:** *pedagogical scientific research; Students; postponement/procrastination; negative effects; self-regulation.*

## 1. The initiation of students in the field of pedagogical scientific research

Even during the familiarization with the problems of scientific research in the educational field, it is likely that students will face a series of fears and will be able to anticipate the practical difficulties of research: the fact that the phenomena are irreversible and can no longer be verified exactly, the fact that the recording is not exhaustive, the impossibility of clearly delimiting or controlling the variables, the difficulty of building research tools and applying the methods, the limits of competence, the time they have, the probability/inaccuracy of the results, the organizational limits.

Arslan (2023) conducted a research in Turkey, which showed that, for the health field, specifically, for nursing, the students' anxiety is low, which makes their participation in research consistent. They accept experiences, participate in symposia, read various periodicals and are open to collaborating and consulting with specialists. It is therefore useful for young people to be actively involved in research and other types of scientific activities.

Among the essential requirements are: mentioning the sources of documentation; respecting the truth in communicating the results obtained; assuming responsibility for the content of the research. The fact that, students can benefit from the use of digital information technologies by consulting the internet is advantageous in many aspects, however, it becomes favourable to their tendency to copy other people's ideas or products, without recognizing the sources, which is considered plagiarism.

Ipanaqué-Zapata, Figueroa-Quinones, Bazalar-Palacios, Arhuis-Inca, Quinones-Negrete and Villarreal-Zegarra (2023), showed that, in the initiation of scientific research of Peruvian students, the following skills are needed: the use of catalogues, bibliographic information sources; the formulation of a scientific problem, research objectives and hypotheses; selection of the population, sample and type of sample to be used; selection, development and application of methods, techniques and tools; analysis and processing of information through various statistical techniques; interpreting and discussing the results presented in tables and graphs; drafting conclusions and recommendations; writing the final research reports.

In our opinion, the objectives of initiation in the field of scientific research are: a) to identify general and field-specific research methods and tools ; b) to acquire concrete ways of designing research approaches; c) the correct use of the specific terms in the research; d)

practicing the skills to formulate hypotheses, ameliorative solutions for identified practical situations; e) the formation and development of a positive attitude towards the activity of knowledge through scientific research, through a responsible, assumed approach.

## **2. From procrastination to plagiarism**

We understand the procrastination in academic learning as an unreasonable postponement of solving tasks, which negatively affects the results that will be achieved. Schouwenburg and Groenewoud (2001) characterized this behaviour as a choice in which, the benefits of the deferral are visible in the present, while the costs will be borne in the future. The aforementioned authors bring into question the need for the intervention of self-regulation or self-control at students, which would mean "choosing a more valuable but delayed reinforcer (e.g., passing a future exam) to the detriment of a less valuable but less delayed reinforcer (e.g., the joy of social contacts)" (2001: 238).

The same idea about procrastination behaviour was also supported in the study published in 2006, by Howell, Watson, Powell and Buro, who found that only few of the tasks solved by students are submitted before the deadline and their submission skyrockets when this deadline approaches, but, a temporal update is possible, especially among those who have identified this wrong tendency by recognizing it.

Regardless of the voluntary or involuntary motivation, copying the work of others, without the correct specification of the sources, in order to obtain the advantage of presenting an intellectual work, benefiting from rewards, promoting in evaluations, is plagiarism.

In terms of the different cultural dimensions from one country to another, Mahmud, Bretag and Foltýnek (2019) found significant differences between the UK and the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, for all measures, except for students' awareness of the sanctions applied for plagiarism. Low "power distance" and high "individualism" have been linked to the positive perceptions of politics and the plagiarism process. The results suggest that the institutional plagiarism policy and the procedures need to better respond to the unique characteristics of the national cultural context, and we agree that such awareness would contribute to reducing it among students.

After Kokkinos, Antoniadou and Voulgaridou (2023), the analysis of the latent profile of students, in terms of the link between academic dishonesty and the tendency to postpone assignments, highlighted four groups of students: overcontrolled, resilient, ordinary/medium and undercontrolled. The studies have shown that, in terms of general academic dishonesty and cheating, average students scored lower than over-controlled and under-controlled students. As for plagiarism, it is interesting that those who tend to over-control obtained higher scores than the others. Finally, those who have an average level of procrastination scored lower than all profiles in terms of plagiarism. Classifying students based on the personality profiles facilitates the planning of interventions, as well as, the implementation of the measures for individual or group interventions with university students who are more prone to both, cheating and procrastination.

Other research has also indicated that the students who procrastinate tasks too much, often resort to the fraudulent activities, due to time constraints (Herdiana and Zamal, 2021). Also, the concern to identify the link between the tendency towards plagiarism and the use of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), belonging to Šprajc, Urh, Jerebic, Trivan and Jereb (2017), confirmed that the access to the information and communication technology is largely responsible for plagiarism, through: the ease of copying and easy use of the new materials and technologies. After a SWOT analysis of ChatGPT's role in the current research, Giray, Jacob and Gumalin (2024) concluded that the ChatGPT's potential to reshape scientific research can only be realized if its use is done ethically and in combination with a continuous surveillance.

We can add that the negative effects caused by the failure to carry out the tasks/steps involved in the activities of choosing topics, the rigorous documentation or anticipating resolution solutions refer to behaviours such as:

- making results by creating fictitious data;
- plagiarism of the results or ideas of some authors;
- distortion of the results obtained by other people;
- failure to correctly attribute the authorship of the works;
- entering incorrect, unverified, irrelevant information;
- lack of assumption of work obligations, deadlines, responsibilities; failure to assume interaction with the coordinating teacher.

In this regard, in Romania, the introduction of ethics and academic integrity courses, through the Order of the Ministry of National Education no. 3131/2018, was a welcome measure.

### **3. The self-regulation of learning – as a useful strategy**

In the academic learning intervenes the self-regulated learning, studied, among the first, by Zimmerman and Schunk (1989). It occurs at those students who are active participants from a behavioral, motivational and metacognitive point of view in the learning process. The self-regulation includes: the autonomous formulation of goals, self-evaluation of performance and self-reinforcement of responses. In the same sense, the self-regulation is given by the ability to set realistic goals, to select, modify, implement strategies and tactics of action that optimize the relationship among the existing potential, the unknown resources and the results obtained.

In their paper on the contribution of the self-regulation in improving the procrastination, Yamada, Goda, Matsuda, Saito, Kato, and Miyagawa (2016) drew attention to the extreme procrastination, because sometimes the planned procrastination can be a favourable learning behaviour for the high learning performance. We can conclude, therefore, that the time management and self-regulation, applied through the prediction of results, volitional control and self-reflection are beneficial and desirable actions.

Through practice and self-regulation in order to improve skills, a possible competence profile of the young researcher in the pedagogical field, relevant to any scientific or research field, includes (adapted from Joița, 2007):

- the general personality attributes/traits (openness, courage, objectivity, respect for the ideas and solutions of others, discerning adoption of novelties; spirit of observation, epistemic curiosity, enthusiasm, which is combined with lucidity; spirit of initiative, realism, pragmatism, team spirit, balance and probity, honesty, etc.)
- the intellectual capacities (solid general and specialized culture, rigor, but also mental flexibility, nonconformism, creativity, critical and self-critical spirit, perseverance, thoroughness, elevated, clear language, etc.).
- the specific skills, necessary at the level of each stage of the research (design, development, capitalization).

Thus, in the design phase, the most accessible to those who are initiated in this field, the specific skills are: to notice the deficient problems and to identify their causes; elaboration of an improvement project; to capitalize on the theories and experiences of the field; of formulating objectives and hypotheses that will advance solutions that need to be verified; of building methods, research tools; of anticipation of the organization; useful proposals or original contributions.

### **4. The Applied Research Methodology**

The application through Google Forms of the questionnaire on postponement in the academic education and the quantitative-qualitative analysis of the products of the students' activity (Research Projects) were used for a sample of 114 students from a university in the

Southwestern Romania. The subjects were students at the level of deepening the psychopedagogical studies for the teaching profession, during the master's degree at the faculty, in the form of full-time education.

In our empirical research, we have considered the hypothesis that, in the initiation of the students in the scientific research, it is possible to frequently encounters behaviours and attitudes of postponement of the completion of tasks, accompanied by the unethical takeover of other people's work.

In the case of the questionnaire-based micro-survey, the questions referred to the following negative aspects: the procrastination in solving academic tasks and awareness/regret of the procrastination behaviour, the onset of the stress or emotional discomfort, the unfavourable post-tasks self-assessments, non-compliance with the activity planning, the plagiarism or taking over tasks from the internet, under time pressure. As positive, correlative aspects, the following were analysed: performing the tasks at the optimal time, obtaining performances in advance of the deadline or the self-proposed one; efficient time management.

The responses scaling used the following measures: Not at all; Rarely; Medium; Very often; Always, as a sincere and confidential self-reference from each student.

Considering that this self-referential way can be subjective, we also used a test to evaluate the products of their learning activity, during the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. In the analysis of the products of the students' activity, we applied an Assessment Grid of an Improvement Research Project, carried out individually, a grid designed by us for the beginner learners (Table 1). The criteria were communicated to the students in advance (from the beginning of the semester), so that they have clear benchmarks for building the resolution and self-verification.

**Table 1: The evaluation grid of a Research Project**

No. crt.	Criteria Tracked	Details of the criteria	Score granted
1.	Title wording	It is formulated in an operational and comprehensive manner. The title prefigures the type of the approach assumed (conclusive, experimental, ameliorative, predictive, comparative, etc.).	0.5
2.	Motivation for choosing the theme	Knowledge interests are invoked. The topicality and importance of the research topic is reflected.	0.5
3.	Theoretical foundation of the theme	A summary/synthesis of relevant and current sources in the field is made, in accordance with the epistemological structure of the chosen issue. Documentation resources are clearly mentioned. Own points of view are presented.	1.5
4.	Proposing the purpose and objectives of the research	The results are correctly captured.	1
5.	Building research hypotheses	They are logically and in a new way, as relationships among the research variables, at least one general hypothesis and two specific ones.	1.5
6.	Elaboration of the working methodology	A sample, a duration are selected and methods, instruments are proposed in accordance with the objectives and hypotheses developed. There is a logical sequence and merge in the option for multiple collection methods, then between the collection and data processing methods.	2
7.	Anticipating results	Plausible results, implications, openings in a realistic, critical manner are anticipated.	0.5

8.	Reference to the bibliography used	At least 5 sources of documentation are correctly and completely specified. The bibliographic sources at the end are consistent with the bibliographic sources mentioned in the text.	0.5
9.	Responsible and ethical involvement in carrying out the task	The application work is the student's own.	1
10.	Ex officio		1

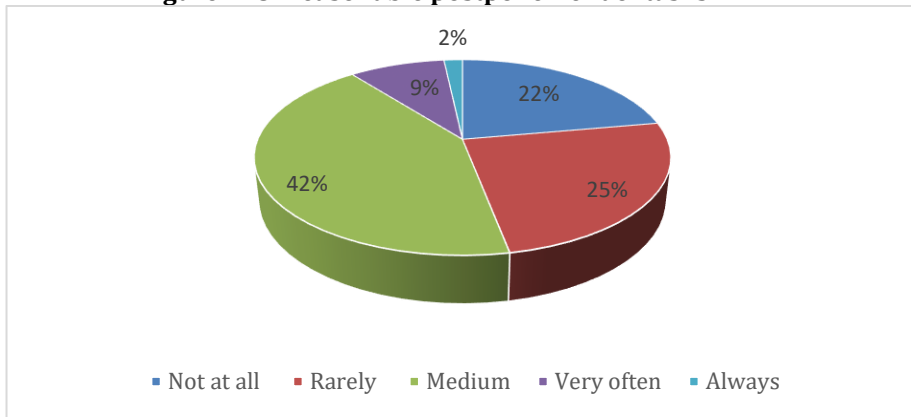
**5. Results obtained and discussions**

**5.1. Results of the opinion questionnaire**

The analysis of the response percentages formulated by the students to each item of the questionnaire indicated that:

1) Unreasonable postponement of the academic assignments is an aspect confirmed by students. 2% of students always put them off, and 42% of students explained that they put off tasks beyond what is reasonable, to an average extent. Another 25% rarely postpone them, and 9% resort to postponement very rarely.

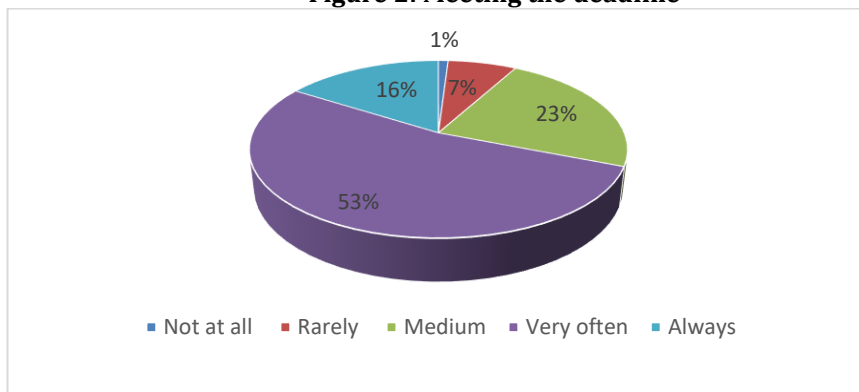
**Figure 1: Unreasonable postponement of tasks**



Cumulatively, as can be seen in Figure 1, the postponement occurs to a large extent, in 78% of respondents, compared to 22% of subjects, who answered that they do not postpone tasks.

2) The deadline is, however, achieved. The respondents showed that they are on time, as follows: Not at all: 1%; Rarely 7%; Medium 23%; Very often 53%; Always 16% (Figure 2).

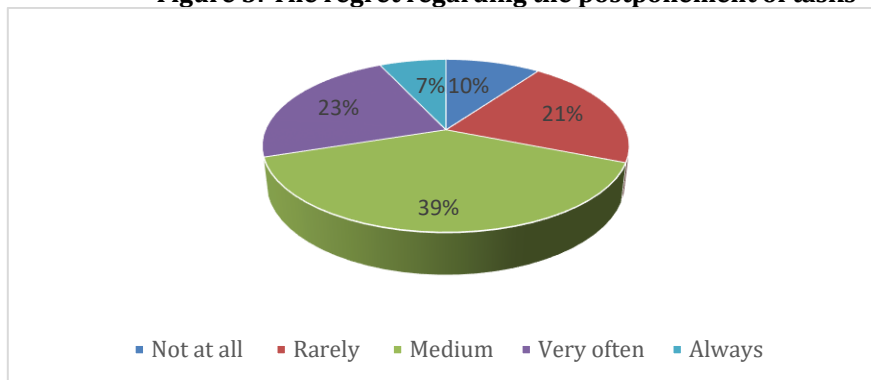
**Figure 2: Meeting the deadline**



Although the deadlines are proposed and require a teacher-student agreement, in general, being the same for all, they are external. 92% of our respondents showed that they meet the assigned deadlines.

3) The state of regret about the fact that, they did not act earlier in the academic tasks is present. The ratings were: Not at all: 10%; Rarely 21%; Medium 39%; Very often 23%; Always 7%.

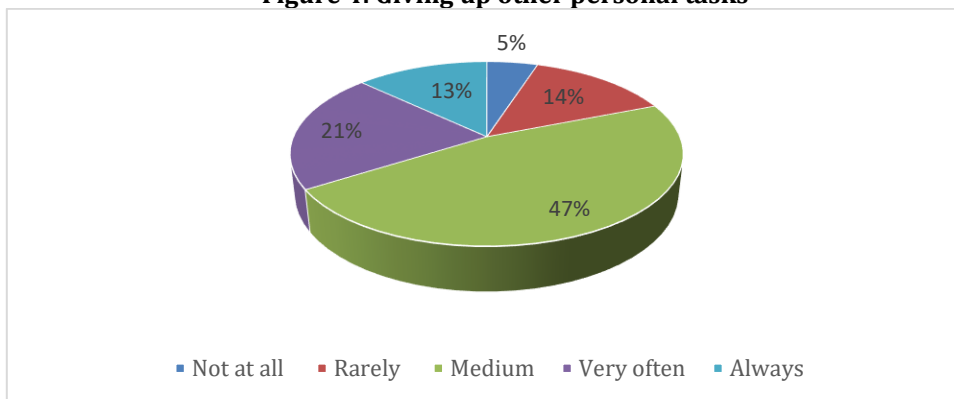
**Figure 3: The regret regarding the postponement of tasks**



If the postponement of the various tasks is usually explained as an aspect subsumed to the time management, from a psychological point of view, this repeated behaviour is currently placed in the area of forming healthy skills of conscious control of emotions, by accepting external requests, which take the students out of their comfort zone and make them get involved in tasks at the right time. Thus, although in any learning activity there is a state of initial frustration, it can be successfully overcome.

4) Giving up other tasks in the personal program, in favour of the academic ones, recorded the percentages: Not at all: 5%; Rarely 14%; Medium 47%; Very often 21%; Always 13%.

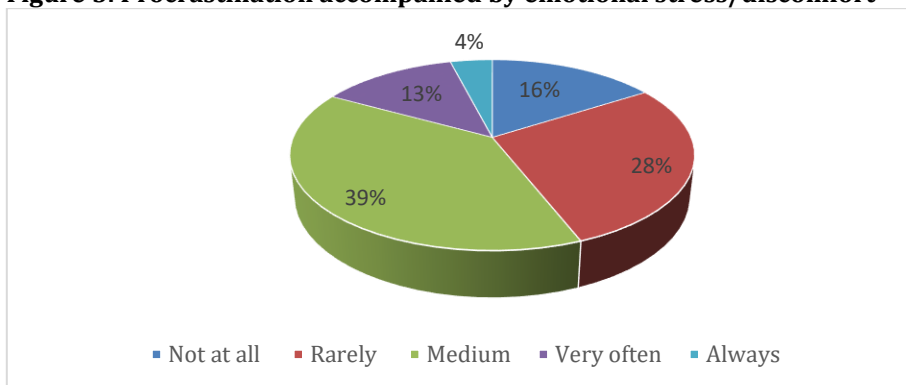
**Figure 4: Giving up other personal tasks**



Most of the students put the academic tasks first, which is explainable by the motivation and relevance of the studies for them.

5) Postponing some learning tasks has been associated with stress or emotional discomfort. The answers had the following distribution: Not at all: 16%; Rarely 28%; Medium 39%; Very often 13%; Always 4%.

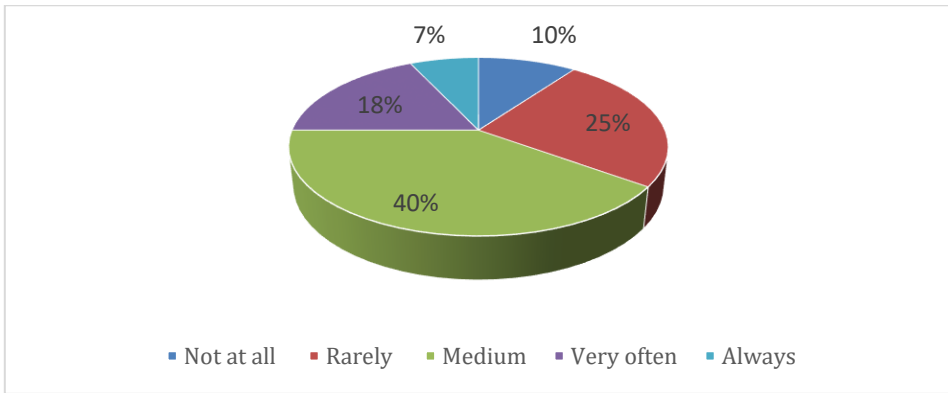
**Figure 5: Procrastination accompanied by emotional stress/discomfort**



Although the students invoke the association between postponing tasks and stress, in-depth analysis is needed to know how strongly this stress is felt, so as not to end up with chronic stress and health problems, as Jochmann, Gusy, Lesener and Wolter (2024) showed.

6) For the component of the negative self-evaluations at the end of the day, in terms of efficiency, the following values were recorded: Not at all: 10%; Rarely 25%; Medium 40%; Very often 18%; Always 7%.

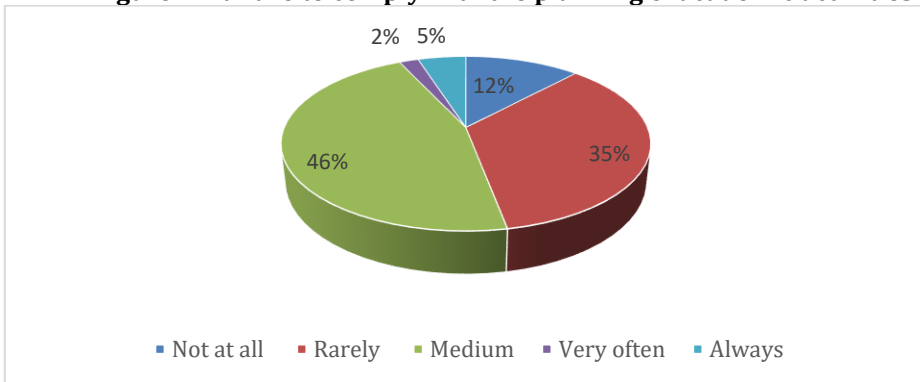
**Figure 6: Negative end-of-day evaluations of efficiency**



Cumulatively, 65% of students are not satisfied at the end of the day with the efficiency of their own actions, beyond the effort invested, the efficiency being a product of several factors.

7) The failure to comply with the planning of academic activities, in an uncontrollable context, obtained the following values: Not at all: 12%; Rarely 35%; Medium 46%; Very often 2%; Always 5%.

**Figure 7: Failure to comply with the planning of academic activities**

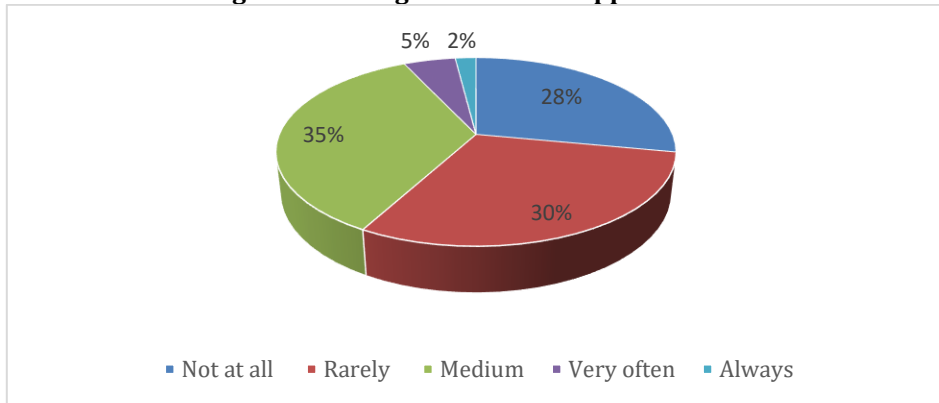


It is gratifying that 47% of students manage to stick to the planning of their activities. We believe that, by making the decisions at the right time and making choices related to the importance/urgency of other requests, in relation to the academic ones, the distractions that often arise in independent study can be eliminated.

8) Taking over tasks or application works from the internet or from colleagues had the following answers: Not at all: 28%; Rarely 30%; Medium 35%; Very often 5%; Always 2%.



**Figure 8: Taking over tasks or application works**



As a summary, 42% of students resort to plagiarism. But, for this item, the students' statements can be interpreted with caution, because, even under the protection of anonymity, they refer to the recognition of an unethical behaviour, copying or appropriating the work of other people.

In the complementarity and to verify the answers of the previous items, the students were questioned in terms of obtaining an advance performance and efficient time management.

9) Achieving performance ahead of the deadline or the self-proposed deadline recorded the percentages: Not at all: 5%; Rarely 14%; Medium 48%; Very often 21%; Always 12%. Thus, we find that 81% of the respondents achieve performance in advance.

10) Efficient time management was assessed with the percentages: Not at all: 7%; Rarely 19%; Medium 37%; Very often 19%; Always 18%.

The levels of responses to items 9 and 10, which are very similar, confirm the trends observed in item 2, which referred to the compliance with the deadlines. The students' self-perception (cumulatively for the middle level, very often, always) is that 82% of them meet deadlines, that they complete tasks in advance – 81% and that they manage their time efficiently – 71%.

### 5.2. Results of the analysis of the products of the activity

In the Table 2, we summarize the distribution of the results obtained by the students, as grades in the realization of their research project.

**Table 2: Quantitative Results of Solving the Task**

Grades obtained	Grades 10, 9	Grades 8, 7, 6	Grades 5, 4 or lower
Number of students	54	52	8
Percentage	48%	45%	7%

Qualitatively, in relation to the Assessment Grid used, we found that, the most difficult component in the solution was the Formulation of the research hypotheses, followed by the Choice of methodology and the correct theoretical foundation. In all the situations assessed with grades in the range 1-5, the use of the internet was very useful for solving the task correctly, but the students did not delimit their own contribution from that of other authors.

Quantitatively, the results of the assessment confirmed that initiation into the scientific research results in good and very good results, even if the university students face new

challenges, which are related to supporting the learning, its in-depth realization, assuming autonomy and developing transversal skills, very evident in the contexts of education that aims to support the innovative and creative approach. Although the size of our sample was small, knowing the students' perception of their own research design activity is important for teachers, and a clear communication of expectations and difficulties encountered makes students to relate themselves much more motivated and efficient to this process.

## 6. Conclusions

Our micro-survey showed that a large part of students tends to postpone solving the academic learning tasks, and, consequently, meeting them in the time/deadlines is more difficult to achieve. The lack of time and the difficulty of mobilizing intellectual effort lead some of them to carry out superficially articulated or plagiarized research projects.

As proposals, for students who become familiar with the scientific research, the encouraging of reflection, systematic documentation, periodic counselling/feedback from teachers, actual exercises, explicit, reflective appreciation are measures that can prevent the postponement of solving tasks, as well as the recourse to plagiarism on their part.

Apart from the individual or group projects, for the initiation into the scientific research, there are several types of training activities suitable for the master's studies: the participation in conferences, debates, writing reports, exchanges of experience, meetings with specialists, analysis of relevant products or research.

In relation to the essential scientific research skills, our study highlighted that there is a greater need for rhythmicity in learning and an efficient organization in carrying out the scientific documentation, responsible access to the online databases, effort in supporting one's own contribution, at the level of students. Thus, in the future, the proactive skills and behaviours associated with the research ethics will be transferable to different contexts outside the university space, when graduates will integrate on the Labor market.

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## STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REGARDING CARE AND PARENTAL ATTITUDE

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**Abstract:** *The perception of high school adolescents towards parental assistance and conduct is manifested through a remarkable variety, contingent on multiple dimensions, including the particular parent-child bond, the domestic context, cultural and social principles, along with the individual characteristics of the adolescent. However, certain patterns and influential factors can be distinguished that shape how adolescents perceive parental assistance and behavior. These students particularly value parents who actively listen, are open to dialogue about their dilemmas, and offer advice or support. Parental involvement in the adolescent's educational development and in the wider school context is also valued. Participation in school activities, interest in academic results and progress, as well as assistance in choosing a professional path are significant elements. Emotional support proves to be fundamental, with adolescents needing trust and encouragement from parents to cultivate self-efficacy and navigate age-specific challenges. Also, teenagers value parents who approach them with respect and give them a considerable degree of autonomy. Allocating trust in adolescents' ability to make decisions and manage responsibilities favors the strengthening of a balanced parental relationship. Parents who promote perseverance and support learning from negative experiences are perceived in a favorable light.*

**Keywords.** *pupils, interest, perceptions, emotional support, behavior, parents*

### 1. Concepts and definitions

In analyzing the psychosocial dynamics of early development, it is essential to pay particular attention to the influence that minors' beliefs and perceptions exert on their receptivity to family education and how these are reflected in their interactions with their age cohorts. According to studies conducted by Dunn (1993), it is imperative to contemplate how minors' perceptual constructions of parental behavior shape their reactions and relationships with other children. A significant mechanism by which minors' perceptions of parental behavior influence interpersonal relationships with their peers is the modeling process, whereby minors adopt the behaviors observed in parent-child interactions, as documented by Putallaz (1987). These perceptions may also modulate peer relationships by setting general expectations about social dynamics, which subsequently affect juveniles' behavior in the context of interactions with their peers.

Contemporary scientific investigations have illustrated the existence of substantial correlations between the conceptualizations that minors have vis-à-vis the parental methods adopted and their level of psychosocial adjustment, observing variations in these correlations depending on the specific aspects of parental behavior evaluated. Analytically, minors' favorable perceptions of parental support are frequently linked to developmental progress, while negative interpretations, particularly associated with feelings of rejection, often correlate with negative repercussions on minors' development. Additionally, research by Mboya (1996) and Rigby (1993) demonstrated that minors' constructions of parenting practices are shaped by variables such as the dynamics of social interactions between peers, while studies by Anan & Barnett (1999) and Fincham et al. (1998) highlighted the connections between these perceptions and behavioral expressions, either internal or external, manifested in the educational environment. Thus, it is inferred that the exploration of how minors'

conceptualizations of parental behavior influence the structure of interpersonal relationships and social adaptability represents an area of primary interest in the study of psychosocial development.

Parental behavior is constituted by the totality of actions, attitudes and interactions manifested by parents in the relationship with their offspring, covering a wide range of components, including, but not limited to, physical care, emotional support, moral guidance, the implementation of discipline, facilitating effective communication and behavioral modeling. This comprehensive definition emphasizes the complexity and diversity of the parenting role in the context of child development.

Parental behaviors are defined as the set of intentional and goal-oriented actions through which parents interact with their offspring, representing fundamental elements of the family context that can influence the commitment of adolescents in the educational process (Prevatt, 2003). In light of the family systems theory, advanced by Bornstein and Sawyer (2005), which posits that both parents, mothers and fathers, are essential contributors to children's educational development, preliminary studies have examined the dynamics between parenting practices and developmental evolution, highlighting the possibility that the impact of a such dynamics to be modulated by the partner behaviors of the other parent (McKee et al., 2007; Lowe & Dotterer, 2013; Foster et al., 2016). Although this research has predominantly focused on socio-emotional aspects and on children's academic performance, there remains a lack of clarity regarding how maternal and paternal parenting practices simultaneously contribute to adolescent engagement in the school context.

Parental support for autonomy is a mechanism by which parents can facilitate and stimulate the development of autonomy and independence of offspring. This strategy involves generating an enabling context in which minors are able to make choices, express opinions and emotions, develop problem-solving skills, and assume responsibilities in an evolving and adaptive manner. Autonomous parenting acknowledges the importance of developing children's independent skills, giving them the space and support they need to explore and cultivate their own identity and decision-making skills. By providing this type of support, parents encourage children to take control of their own decisions and actions, thereby promoting the development of healthy self-esteem and autonomy.

Recent research has addressed the mediating role played by basic needs in the interaction between parents' psychological control and poor health. The study carried out by Ahmad and his collaborators (2013) demonstrated that a reduced satisfaction of basic needs mediates the relationship between parental psychological control and teachers' assessments of adolescents' academic adjustment. Costa and his team (2015) identified parental psychological control as a more effective and singular predictor of internalizing stress compared to autonomy support. It was found that basic psychological needs fully mediate the relationship between psychological control and the process of internalizing stress. A limitation noted in these studies was the inability of the measurement tools used for basic psychological needs to differentiate between need satisfaction and need frustration. Furthermore, the research did not simultaneously consider both well-being and poor health as possible outcomes.

The concept of perception of parental autonomy from the children's perspective refers to how minors interpret the degree of freedom and independence granted by their parents in their daily lives. This perception is built on how parents encourage and enable children to make choices, express their views, take responsibilities and form their own identities. When parents provide adequate support for independence, minors can gain confidence in their own abilities and learn to manage various situations. Thus, children's perceptions of parental support for independence can have a significant impact on the control they exercise over their own lives and their level of independence.

The perception of parental affection, as felt by children, reflects how minors interpret and experience the love expressed by parents. This constitutes a subjective and deeply personal

experience, shaped by day-to-day interactions, parenting behaviors, and communication within family dynamics, as Vasquez et al. (2016) pointed out. Thus, minors' perceptions of parental love are shaped by a variety of factors, including behavior, communication, and interactions specific to the family environment. Children thus form their understanding of love based on how they are treated, the affection they receive and the way their parents express their love towards them.

Children can interpret the sanctions imposed by their parents, according to the study carried out by Grolnick and Deci (1991), through the prism of three main perceptual frames:

1. States of fear or anxiety: Harsh or unpredictable sanctions can induce states of fear and anxiety among minors. In situations where the reasons for punishments are not clarified or when they are perceived as disproportionate, there is a risk of negatively affecting both the dynamics of the parent-child relationship and the emotional health of minors.
2. Learning opportunities: Juveniles can consider sanctions as educational moments, recognizing that certain actions attract specific consequences and that these punishments can foster the development of personal responsibility and appropriate behavior.
3. Feelings of resentment and the perception of rejection: Severe or consistently applied punishments can cultivate feelings of resentment and a perception of rejection among minors. They may interpret the sanctions as an indication of a lack of affection or acceptance from the parents.

The concept of perception of parental control from the perspective of minors refers to how they identify the degree of guidance, supervision and influence exerted by their parents on their lives and the decisions they make. This perception is a subjective experience and is influenced by variables such as the parenting style adopted, the child's age, his personality traits and the family context in which he develops.

## **2. Research objectives and hypotheses**

The present study adopted an exploratory and descriptive methodology, with the main objective of exploring the psychological relationships inherent in parental behavior during the high school years, relevant aspects in the context of diagnosing potential personality disorders or deviant behaviors manifested later in life.

Within this framework, the specific objectives pursued were:

Elaboration of a comprehensive profile regarding high school students' perceptions of parental support and behavior.

Exploring potential correlations between these perceptions and various psychological factors likely to emerge among adolescents.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the following hypotheses, which derive from the stated objectives:

It is assumed that there is a correlation between adolescents' perception of autonomous parental support and manifestations of affection (positive evaluations, expression of affection, emotional support).

A connection is hypothesized between adolescent observations of parental behavior and the recurrence of threats and sanctions. A relationship is hypothesized between adolescent observations of parental behavior and guilt-inducing criticism.

## **3. Study participants**

The present study is based on a sample made up of high school students, specifically from the 9th to the 12th grades, coming from an educational institute located in Tulcea. The sample includes a total of 60 students, distributed as follows: 24 male participants (representing 40% of the sample) and 36 female participants (60%), with an equal division between the lower (IX-X) and upper cycles respectively (XI-XII) of high school, each category numbering 30 students (50%).

During the research, each of the 60 subjects benefited from the necessary training to become familiar with the procedure for completing the questionnaire. To ensure data confidentiality, participants were asked to use an identification code, intended to preserve the anonymity of the collected information.

#### **4. Research tools**

##### *Autonomous Parental Support Perception Scale*

The scale of perception of autonomous parental support, translated into Romanian by Raluca Livinți, is used to evaluate how teenagers perceive the level of support and autonomy granted by their parents in various aspects of their lives.

The statistical analysis of this test revealed the existence of 6 factors: freedom within certain limits, reasoning of requests and limits, recognition of feelings, threats and punishments, performance under pressure, criticism that induces guilt.

##### *Inventory of Children's Findings Regarding Parental Behavior*

"The Inventory of Children's Findings Regarding Parental Behavior" translated into Romanian by Brebenel Diana-Mihaela, Constantinescu Oana Maria and Ioniță Alia-Maria is used to collect information from children regarding how they perceive their parents' behavior. This questionnaire explores various aspects of the parent-child relationship, such as the level of support, communication, discipline and more.

Statistical analyzes of the inventory reveal the existence of seven factors: Autonomy - extreme autonomy, careless discipline; Autonomy and love - moderate autonomy, encouraging sociability, encouraging independent thinking, equal treatment; Love - positive evaluation, expression of affection, shared emotional support; Love and control - intellectual stimulation, child-centeredness, possessiveness, protectiveness; Control - intrusion, suppression of aggression, control over blame, parental guidance; Control and hostility - strictness, punishment, nagging; Hostility - irritability, negative evaluation, rejection; Hostility and autonomy - neglect, ignorance.

#### **5. Research design**

The administration of the evaluation tools took place in two ways: in printed format (pencil-paper) and through an online questionnaire, the participants not being imposed a limited time frame for their completion. However, most respondents completed the questionnaires within 10-15 minutes. The objective of the study was explained to the subjects and the voluntary and anonymous nature of their participation was emphasized, and informed consent was requested in this context.

The questionnaire completion procedure was carried out collectively in the management class for each participating class, after which the questionnaire sets, together with the associated demographic information - age, gender, year of study and educational institution - were collected for analysis. . The accumulated data were later analyzed using the statistical software SPSS version 26.

#### **6. Ethical demands**

The ethical principles governing this research were followed by ensuring the informed consent of the participants for their involvement in the study. The confidentiality of the subjects' personal data was guaranteed by anonymizing their identity. In addition, the respondents gave permission for the use of the aggregated data for the purpose of disseminating the results of the investigation through a scientific publication.

**7. Presentation, analysis and interpretation of hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1. It is assumed that there is a correlation between adolescents' perception of autonomous parental support and manifestations of affection (positive evaluations, expression of affection, emotional support).**

In the assessment of the normality of the data distribution by applying the specific test, a significance value (Sig.) below the 0.05 threshold was obtained, thus indicating the need to adopt a non-parametric approach, since the assumption of normality of the distribution was not confirmed. Consequently, it was chosen to use the Spearman test for correlation analysis, this choice being justified by the violation of the assumption of normality.

Examining the correlation table, it was observed that the significance threshold value (Sig. 2 tailed) was 0.023, lower than the standard value of 0.05, indicating that the identified relationship is statistically significant. Referring to the correlation coefficient, a value of 0.292 was found, suggesting that approximately 29.2% of the variability of the "love" variable can be explained by the perception of autonomous parental support.

**Table 1. Corelation Spearman**

		Perception of parental support	of Love
Spearman rho	Perception of parental support	Correlation coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.292*
	Love	N	60
		Correlation coefficient	.292*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023
		N	60

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

Studies in the field indicate the existence of a positive correlation between the perception of autonomy-oriented parental support and the manifestation of love, positive appreciation, as well as the provision of emotional support by parents. It is highlighted that, under the conditions in which parents grant an adequate degree of autonomy to their children and support them in making independent decisions, minors are prone to evaluate their parents in favorable terms. The feeling of having space and freedom to express one's own ideas and make personal choices translates into an improved perception of the parent-child relationship. Also, parents who demonstrate affection and who explicitly communicate love towards their children generate a favorable framework for providing emotional support, an aspect that can prove to be essential in the development process of minors and adolescents. Supporting autonomy can play a significant role in cultivating robust self-esteem. According to research conducted by Grolnick and Ryan (1989), when children perceive that their parents validate their competence and encourage them to explore their interests and passions, they are more inclined to develop a positive self-perception. In this context, the love expressed by parents can complement and reinforce autonomy-oriented support. Children who feel loved and accepted for who they are often show greater confidence in their ability to explore their environment and take on increased responsibilities.

**Hypothesis 2. A connection is assumed between adolescent observations of parental behavior and the recurrence of threats and sanctions.**

From a psychological perspective, a moderate positive correlation (.462) between children's perceptions of parenting behavior and parents' use of threats and punishments may suggest that parenting styles perceived as more authoritarian or punitive are associated with



a higher frequency of use of threats and punishments . This finding emphasizes the importance of how children interpret parental actions and their impact on parental disciplinary practices.

In the context of very high statistical significance (.000), the results suggest that the relationship is not coincidental and underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics between perceptions of parental behavior and disciplinary approaches in shaping children's behavior. This understanding can contribute to the development of parenting strategies that promote positive communication and non-punitive discipline methods with the aim of improving parental relationships and reducing child problem behaviors.

**Table 2. Corelation Spearman**

		Findings regarding parental behavior	Findings regarding Threats and punishments
Spearman rho	Findings regarding parental behavior	1.000	.462**
	Correlation coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	60
	Threats and punishments	.462**	1.000
	Correlation coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	60	60

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

Research has suggested that a threatening and punitive parenting style may be associated with negative outcomes for children, both in terms of their behavior and their perception of their relationship with their parents. The association between threat/punishment and child outcomes may vary depending on several factors, such as severity of punishment, family context, and children's individualities (Won & Yu, 2018).

**Impact on behavior:**

Children exposed to constant threats and harsh punishments may develop reactive behaviors or become anxious and withdrawn. Discipline styles based on threats and punishments can contribute to a strained relationship between parents and children, and this stress can affect children's behavior.

**Perception of the relationship with parents:**

The family environment where threats and punishments predominate can be perceived as unsafe and hostile, affecting the trust and emotional bond between parents and children.

**Hypothesis 3. A relationship is hypothesized between adolescent observations of parental behavior and guilt-inducing criticism.**

From a psychological point of view, the existence of a moderate positive correlation (.432) between children's perceptions of parental behavior and the application of guilt-inducing criticism may reflect the impact that parenting styles, perceived as critical or punitive, have on children's emotional dynamics. This underlines the significant impact of parental communication on children's emotional state, especially regarding the development of feelings of guilt and self-evaluation.

In the context of a statistical significance of .000, the findings indicate a significant association between the two variables, emphasizing the need for a conscious parenting approach that minimizes negative criticism and promotes a positive family climate. The

results suggest that parenting strategies that focus on constructive communication and emotional support can have a positive impact on children's psychological development.

Therefore, it is essential for parents to consider the potentially negative effects of guilt-inducing criticism and look for ways to communicate expectations and feedback in a way that supports children's development of autonomy and self-esteem. Promoting an understanding and accepting parenting style can help strengthen the parent-child relationship and promote healthy emotional development.

**Table 3. Corelation Spearman**

		Findings regarding parental behavior	Findings regarding guilty critics
Spearman rho	Findings regarding parental behavior	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.000 . 60
	guilty critics	Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.432** .000 60

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

Persistent criticism, especially those that generate feelings of guilt, can adversely affect the mental health of minors in the long term, facilitating the manifestation of disorders such as depression or anxiety in adulthood. Minors may experience stress and a derogatory perception of themselves as a result of continuous exposure to a judgmental or critical family context.

In the light of the findings of Zou (2022), it is argued that a balanced and constructive critical approach can exert a beneficial influence on the development process of children, stimulating their capacity for learning and personal growth. However, the prevalence of guilt-inducing criticism can have dire repercussions. Creating a family environment characterized by transparent communication, emotional support and mutual acceptance can facilitate the building of a positive parental relationship, with favorable effects on the emotional and behavioral evolution of minors.

**Conclusions**

The interaction between parents and offspring constitutes a fundamental pillar in the process of human development, exerting a considerable influence on the configuration of character traits, the sense of self-efficacy and individual achievements. Therefore, the optimization of parental support and parents' behavior is emerging as a critical stage in building a family framework conducive to health and harmony. This trajectory requires not only firm commitment and responsibility, but also a predisposition to perpetual learning and adaptation.

Initiating the improvement of parent-child relational dynamics is based on establishing transparent and empathetic communication. The practice of actively listening to children's concerns and experiences generates a space of emotional safety, where minors feel understood and valued. Thus, parents have the opportunity to clearly articulate expectations and share the fundamental principles of the family nucleus, cultivating a common basis of mutual understanding.

Strengthening parental support and behavior is a continuous approach, anchored in awareness, flexibility and unconditional affectivity. A parent-child relationship built on solid principles favors the emergence of autonomous, empathic and responsive adults, equipped to navigate existential complexities (Diaconu-Gherasim, & Măirean, 2016). By investing in the

quality of the connections established with the current generation of minors, it is essential to shape a more cohesive and balanced future for society.

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# THE ROLES OF THE SOCIAL WORKER FROM TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT GRĂDINARI IN THE FIELD OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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**Abstract:** *Social workers are tirelessly fighters for the cause of people with disabilities. They advocate for the latter's rights, promote their inclusion in society and work to improve their general well-being. This paper analyses this social work "segment", the work with people with disabilities, by outlining the legal framework and social services in relation to these beneficiaries. The aim of the qualitative research is to identify the beneficiaries' perception, people with disabilities from the Territorial Administrative Unit Grădinari, on the social services they benefit from and in relation to the relationship with the social worker. It also aims to identify the social worker's perception on one's activity in the interaction with people with disabilities. Most people with disabilities are satisfied with the benefits and services they receive. Some interviewees feel that there is room for improvement, but still appreciate the support provided. All participants have a good opinion of their social worker, who is praised for one's kindness, patience, involvement and calmness. The conclusions underline the variety of services offered, the variety of impairments the social worker works with, but also the social worker's involvement and the beneficiaries' satisfaction with the social services received and with the case manager.*

**Keywords:** people with disabilities; social services; impairment; social protection; social worker.

## 1. Introduction

One person in twenty received a disability certificate in Romania in June 2023, amounting to almost 900,000 people, of which about 77,000 are children. People with disabilities in Romania are more likely to be women and to have a lower level of education. While a little over 16,000 adults with disabilities still live in residential social care centres in the social welfare system, there are a number of people hospitalized in other facilities such as psychiatric wards and hospitals for long periods of time according to The World Bank.

The fundamental right to social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities has not yet been fully realized in Romania. Romanians with disabilities are often socially ostracized and materially less well-off, encounter barriers in accessing their physical environment and face exclusion from employment opportunities and the health care system. In rural areas, people with disabilities tend to face more challenges than their counterparts in urban areas. They are less likely to have attended school, less likely to be employed, less likely to be seen by a qualified social worker and less likely to own a cell phone. Similarly, they are often left behind in rural development interventions. People with disabilities are often seen as objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection, not as people who are capable of exercising their rights, making decisions on the basis of their free and informed consent and being active members of society and the economy.

## 2. Social protection and disability in Romania

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined the concept of disability, taking into account the state of human health: "Impairment is any loss of ability or irregularity in the structure or functioning of the organism from a psychological, psychophysical or anatomical point of view" and as "disability or any limitation or inability (resulting from disability) to

perform a life activity in a way or to an extent considered atypical for humans, limitations in the fulfilment of social roles, results from or prevents the full performance of a social role appropriate to age, sex and in accordance with social and cultural conditions” (Rebernik, et al., 2020).

Social protection includes policies to care for and protect disadvantaged people, by taking appropriate measures and legislating social instruments aimed at helping disadvantaged groups to adapt to decent living conditions ([www.mmuncii.ro](http://www.mmuncii.ro)).

The 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasizes that “Disability is an evolving concept and results from the interaction between persons with impairments and barriers resulting from human attitudes and the environment which hinder their full and effective participation in social life on an equal basis with others” (Masala and Petretto, 2008).

Following the same concepts, the 2006 Convention No. 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, in Art. 1, includes the following definition of a person with disabilities: “A person with a disability is a person whose opportunities for obtaining and maintaining suitable employment and for advancement in employment are significantly limited as a result of a duly diagnosed loss of physical or mental abilities” (Woods, 2017).

According to the 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the term disabled person is defined as “any person who, by reason of any physical or mental impairment, whether innate or acquired, is unable, totally or partially, to provide for himself or herself independently with the conditions required for individual or social life” (Huges and Paterson, 2010).

The problem is quite significant, especially in EU countries, as so far no uniform definition of a person with disability has been formulated to be applied in all member states. However, both globally in EU countries, including Romania, efforts are being made to pinpoint the aspects of disability (Wolniak and Skotnicka-Zasadzień, 2021). The national social work system, according to Law 292/2011, consists of the social work benefits system, to which the social services system is added (Neamțu, 2016).

But the responsibility for financing social services lies with the local community. This creates huge differences between different regions of the country, between rural and urban areas. Cities and municipalities do not have enough money to support the development of social services for people with disabilities in the community (Arpinte, 2019).

Social services for adults with disabilities play a crucial role in ensuring their dignity, inclusion and well-being. Funding these services is essential to ensure their effective functioning and equitable access for all beneficiaries. In Romania, funding comes mainly from the public budget. Law 448/2006 provides important financial support to people with disabilities through specific social benefits. Adults with disabilities receive: a fixed monthly benefit, regardless of their income from other sources, to help cover basic expenses such as food, housing and clothing; and a monthly benefit for people with severe or accentuated disabilities. This benefit is intended to compensate for additional expenses specific to severe disability, such as personal assistance or medical therapies.

### **3. Social work at the level of local public authorities and the role of the social worker in supporting people with disabilities**

Before presenting the roles and the tasks of the social worker within the local public administration, it should be emphasized that local public administration authorities have the obligation to establish specialized structures of public social work services, organized at different levels of the administration, as follows (Lazăr, et al., 2020):

- social work general directorates, established under the county councils or local councils;
- social welfare directorates under the local councils of municipalities and towns;

- social work departments subordinated to the specialized department of the mayor, at commune level.

Within the public administration, these bodies are responsible for (Pătrașcu, 2014): the administration and provision of social work benefits as well as the organization, management and provision of social services.

The roles performed by social workers are complex. Social workers are the staff responsible for the smooth delivery of social services and support individuals, families and communities to develop skills, build relationships and find resources that will help them live more fulfilling lives (Lazarus, 2015).

In the case of disabilities, the right to social work, as social benefits, is provided ex officio or on request, based on supporting documents, according to the legislative norms. The beneficiary's application is registered with the competent local public administration authority within the territorial radius of the domicile or residence of the disabled person (Buzducea, 2009).

Protecting and promoting the rights of people with disabilities is a fundamental obligation of public authorities. This responsibility means taking concrete measures to facilitate the social inclusion of this disadvantaged group and their full participation in society. An essential role in this process is played by specialized staff within public authorities, who have the duty to integrate the specific needs of people with disabilities in all areas of activity (Moarcăș Costea, 2013).

Comprehensive assessment of people with disabilities aims to identify in detail their needs and to develop a support program, containing all the necessary social, educational, medical, rehabilitation and adaptation measures and services to be provided to the person in order to facilitate his/her social integration/reintegration. The complex assessment process, carried out by the social worker, mainly follows the following aspects (Țiclea and Georgescu, 2016):

- assessment of physical, mental and sensory abilities for disability, handicap or dependant;
- determining the level of functional autonomy impairment;
- assessment of the environment in which the person lives with the family;
- assessing the person's perception one's needs, etc.

The social worker, after a careful assessment of the specific needs, has the essential role of elaborating an Individualized Care and Assistance Plan (I.C.A.P.). This personalized document serves as a detailed roadmap guiding the interventions and support offered to each vulnerable person.

Based on the results, the social worker communicates existing social services that can cover all or part of the identified needs. The provision of social services is based on the I.C.A.P. developed by the social service provider with the agreement and participation of the beneficiary. In order to monitor the effectiveness of the social services provided, as well as to determine the continuation of the intervention or the elimination of the case, the beneficiary's situation is periodically reassessed (Munteanu and Sagebiel, 2007).

#### **4. Qualitative research**

The investigative approach consisted in the realization of a sociological survey based on an interview guide applied to people with disabilities from the TAU Grădinari and to the social worker. The inhabitants of this village can consider themselves lucky because they have a social worker with a higher education in social work, who possesses knowledge, skills and competences, being able to help the vulnerable population.

The qualitative research aims to identify the beneficiaries' perception, people with disabilities from the TAU Grădinari, on the social services they benefit from and in terms of their relationship with the social worker. It also aims to identify the social worker's perception of one's activity in the interaction with people with disabilities.

The questions included in the interview with the social worker from UAT Grădinari were: *"What is the role of the social worker from UAT Grădinari in one's work with beneficiaries with disabilities?"; "What are the biggest challenges in carrying out one's tasks?"; "What are the support methods offered to people with disabilities?"; "Are there stressful situations at work? How are they managed?"*.

The proposed objectives are:

- identifying experience in working with people with disabilities;
- identifying challenges faced by the social worker in working with people with disabilities;
- describing the forms of social support offered to these categories of people;
- identifying the strategies used by the social worker with these categories of people.

To conduct the interview, the social worker E.G. from UAT Grădinari agreed to answer the questions proposed in the interview guide. The structure of the interview guide used to interview social worker E.G. was based on three thematic units and 14 supporting questions. Analysis and interpretation of the results obtained after applying the interview guide to the social worker.

#### *Thematic unit 1. Experience in working with people with disabilities*

Life for people with disabilities can be challenging, from accessing basic necessities to overcoming social barriers. In this critical landscape, social workers emerge as champions, dedicating their expertise and compassion to empower and support this population. Their role extends far beyond simply providing services; they are advocates, connectors and architects of a more inclusive society (Nicoară, 2012).

In terms of the social worker's involvement, experience as a social worker in working with people with disabilities, from the responses provided by the social worker with 2 years of experience in working with people with disabilities, in a wide range of disabilities including physical, mental, intellectual and sensory emphasizes case management roles such as: Monitoring the situation of adults with disabilities in the administrative territory, ensuring the well-being of people with disabilities through access to services and support, identifying and assessing the specific needs of people with disabilities, initiating and supporting services in collaboration with various entities, etc.

Support Q: What is your role in disability case management?

*"Social workers play a vital role in supporting people with disabilities, ensuring their well-being and integration into society. My responsibilities cover a wide range of tasks, from providing direct services to supporting systemic change: I monitor the situation of adults with disabilities in the administrative territory, closely monitor the well-being of people with disabilities, ensuring that they have access to needed services and support, gather and synthesize relevant data and information related to the needs and experiences of people with disabilities, identify and assess the specific needs of people with disabilities, collaborate with various entities, including public and private organizations, to initiate and advocate for services, prepare necessary documentation to facilitate service delivery, etc."*

Supporting question: Do you collaborate with other professionals in disability case management?

*"Sure, we collaborate with representatives from the medical field, the legal field, the territorial administrative representatives, the ministry, etc."*

The social worker has experience and expertise in working with people with disabilities. They are dedicated to helping these people to reach their full potential and live independent and dignified lives. Collaboration with other professionals from different fields is essential to provide a holistic approach to the needs of people with disabilities.

#### *Thematic unit 2. Challenges in working with people with disabilities*

Social workers play an essential role in promoting and supporting people with disabilities. However, their dedication is often tested by a complex set of challenges. One

significant challenge is the limited resources available to social workers. Budget constraints often translate into (Lazarus, et al., 2020): caseload overload or financial constraints that can restrict access to essential services such as therapy, transportation, and assistive technology. This creates a gap between identified needs and available resources.

Social workers often find themselves navigating to solve communication gaps frequently occur between different agencies and service providers. This can lead to delays in accessing services and a lack of coordinated care (Zamfir, et al., 2015).

Support Q: What are the biggest challenges you might face?

*“The biggest challenges are when you want to help more and you fail.”*

Support Q: Describe a major challenge you faced in your previous role and how you overcame it.

*“The biggest challenge was a beneficiary who had amputated legs and was a Guaranteed Minimum Income beneficiary living in the Marila C-S Sanatorium, he had no family. This sanatorium collapsed and I couldn't find him a place to live although at the same time he needed a caregiver. Finally, I managed to hospitalize him at Oravița Town Hospital and in the meantime to prepare all the documentation for the Territorial Social Work Directorate, to receive a certificate proving a degree of disability according to medical records, after issuing the certificate and obtaining the help of a personal assistant, I found him a nursing home in Caraș-Severin county, Belobreșca where he benefited from a normal and decent living, he was very satisfied with the services and the staff of this asylum. My greatest satisfaction was when he told me that God works through good people like me.*

Support Q: What are the most difficult cases? What types of disabilities are involved in such cases?

*“The most difficult cases are those in which there are no caregivers to get involved in the process of analysis, assessment, and drawing up the necessary documentation needed to obtain benefits for people with disabilities. The most difficult cases are those who are severely disabled, perhaps even mentally ill”.*

Support question: Has there ever been a time when you felt you did not provide an adequate level of support to a client?

*“In the two years that I have been working I have not felt this, all social workers need to ensure that people receiving social services receive support as a result of the entitlements they have and not as a result of pity or benevolence.”*

Support Q: How did you learn from this experience?

*“Difficult cases remind me of the motivation that led me to choose this job. I wanted to be able to help, so I do my best to accomplish my tasks. So, every case teaches us to be motivated, to strive to be better and helpful.”*

According to the responses given by the social worker, the major challenges as a social worker include: limited ability to offer help; frustration arises when the desire to help is greater than the resources available. Finding solutions for complex cases: the case of a beneficiary with multiple disabilities, homeless and homeless, required a multi-pronged approach, including temporary admission, obtaining disability documentation and finding a suitable nursing home. Low family involvement: Lack of family involvement can complicate the process of assessing, documenting and obtaining disability benefits. Cases with multiple disabilities and mental illness: Social workers may find it difficult to manage complex cases involving severe disabilities and mental health problems.

Overcoming the challenges requires perseverance and creativity, finding alternative solutions and working with various institutions to obtain the necessary assistance for the beneficiaries. The desire to help and the satisfaction of improving the lives of beneficiaries serve as motivation to overcome obstacles. Each difficult case provides an opportunity to learn, refine skills and become a more effective social worker.

*Thematic unit 3. Forms of social support and strategies used in helping people with disabilities*



Social workers serve as “advocates” for people with disabilities, using a multi-faceted approach to empower and enhance their well-being. The foundation for effective support lies in building trust and relationships. Social workers achieve this through (Lazarus, 2010): active listening, empowerment and culturally competent care.

Support question: What forms of support are currently available for people with disabilities?

*“Depending on the degree of classification, people with disabilities benefit from different forms of support, such as: personal assistants, monthly allowance, health insurance, transportation facilities, medical devices for rehabilitation, etc.”*

Support question: Do you think it needs improvement?

*“Maybe in some neighbouring communes or villages, yes requires such as a day centre. There is also no possibility of providing home care or institutionalization if needed.”*

Supporting question: What strategies do you use to manage stressful situations at work?

*“I focus on what is urgent and important. Also, I try to ignore and not react to hurtful questions, the desire to help is greater than wasting time with passing remarks.”*

Supporting question: How do you stay motivated, engaged and effective at work?

*“We all work for financial security, but our motivation to help people is also important, that’s why I chose to be a social worker. I want to help as much as I can, every case solved brings me joy and strength to go on, to help people in the community”.*

According to the answers provided by the social worker, the support available for people with disabilities includes forms of support such as: personal assistants, monthly allowance, health insurance, transport facilities, medical devices for recovery, etc. However, there is a need for improvement: lack of day care centres in some areas, non-existence of home help services or institutionalization when needed.

The responses highlight the wide range of support available for people with disabilities, but also highlight the need for improvements in certain areas, such as access to day care centres and home care services.

It also focuses on strategies for managing stress in the workplace and factors that keep social workers motivated and engaged. The responses provide valuable insight into the realities faced by social workers and the disabled people they support. The aim of the interview with people with disabilities is to correlate the answers of the social worker with the perception of the beneficiaries regarding the role and skills of the social worker in working with people with disabilities, as well as their satisfaction with the social services received.

The starting questions for the qualitative research are: *what are the social benefits received by the respondents; what is the level of satisfaction with the type of benefits accessed; what is the level of satisfaction with the social worker?*

The objectives of the beneficiary interview are:

- identifying types of impairment;
- identifying the types of social benefits received;
- highlighting the perception of the benefits received;
- emphasizing satisfaction with the social worker case manager.

As regards the interview with the beneficiaries, the 19 persons with disabilities agreed to answer the proposed questions, four of them were aged between 20 and 29, eight were aged between 30 and 39 and the remaining 7 persons were over 40. Their educational background is limited: 4 interviewees have no education, 6 persons have completed primary education, 5 persons have completed eight grades and 3 interviewees have completed ten grades.

Analysing and interpreting the results of the interview guide for people with disabilities.

For Thematic Unit 1: *Disability history*, the answers given by the beneficiaries show that only two of the answers refer to acquired disabilities (HIV and sclerosis). The majority of the answers refer to congenital disabilities (visual impairment, deafness, physical disability, mental disability, rare diseases). There is no indication of specific causes of congenital disabilities.

The responses provide a general picture of the types of disabilities faced by participants. It is important to keep in mind that each person has a unique experience with their disability, and the causes and severity can vary significantly.

Thematic Unit 2: *Types of social benefits*, is framed by two supporting questions and the answers given by the 19 beneficiaries show that all participants receive at least one type of support for their disability. The type of support varies according to the nature of the disability and individual needs, and family support plays an important role for many participants. Some answers received: *“I receive monthly allowance. I get a lot of help from my family because I am disabled”*; *“for my impairment I get a personal assistant”*; *“I get support for treatment and rehabilitation”*.

Social services provide a wide range of assistance, from personal assistance to home care. Health services, including treatment and recovery, are essential for many interviewees, namely: *‘social services, home care’*; *‘recovery services, free treatment’*; *‘social, medical and food services’*.

From the responses received the diversity of types of support available to people with disabilities can be underlined. It is important for individuals to be aware of the options available and to access resources that can improve their quality of life. Support from family, state institutions and other organizations can make a significant difference for people with disabilities.

For the thematic unit 3: *Satisfaction with the services provided*, through the three supporting questions, the beneficiaries' answers support that the majority of the participants are satisfied with the benefits and services received. Some participants feel that it could be better but still appreciate the support provided. For example: *‘very good, I like the social welfare girl, she helped me all the time, with paperwork, doctors. Now I get an allowance. I'm good’*; *„I'm good, I benefit from everything the lady from social work told me, she didn't leave me until I had solved everything. Maybe there should be more money, but it's good that there is money”*; *„very satisfied, it was hard with the files, the paperwork, the visits to the doctors, but now everything is going well”*.

In terms of perception of the social worker, all participants have a good opinion of their social worker. The social worker is appreciated for her kindness, patience, involvement and calmness. From the answers received we selected the following: *“I have a very good opinion about our social worker, she is very soulful, she gets involved and explains if we don't understand”*; *“I have a good opinion, she is very helpful, she always answers our requests and guides us how to solve problems”*; *“she is a special person, she puts her heart, as if she was one of us. She always helps out with what she can, with referrals, transportation, documents”*.

All participants are satisfied with the way they are treated by the social staff. Social workers are praised for their care, attention and respect, e.g. *“very satisfied because she is very patient, we only talk to her”*; *“I am treated with attention”*; *“she takes care of us, speaks nicely”*.

The responses highlight a generally positive picture of participants' experiences of benefits, services and social work. There is a general appreciation for the support provided, although some participants feel there is potential for improvement. Social workers and social workers play an important role in ensuring good treatment and appropriate support for people with disabilities.

## 5. General conclusions of the paper

Social benefits are an essential safety net for people with disabilities, providing them with a decent minimum standard of living and facilitating their social integration. While they do not eliminate all the challenges faced by this group of people, they provide important financial support that contributes to improving their quality of life.

Disability can be a defining feature of a person's life, exposing people to a range of interconnected vulnerabilities. It can increase the risk of marginalization and multiple forms of injustice, including poverty, discrimination, abuse and even torture. Beyond the specific limitations imposed by disability, there is often an inability to defend against these wrongs. This increased vulnerability can lead to social isolation, mental deterioration and violation of fundamental rights.

The practical part of the work revealed a diversity of disabilities among social service recipients: chronic illnesses, mental health problems and paralysis/ limb paralysis/loss of limbs being the most common. It is confirmed that all participants receive at least one type of support for their disability and that the type of support varies according to the nature of the disability and individual needs.

The role of the social worker in the TAU Grădinari is very important. The contact of people with disabilities with the social worker is frequent, with most of the interviewees having a monthly interaction. Information, counselling and dealing with referrals are the most requested services.

The overall satisfaction level is high, with a significant appreciation for the provision of information and resolution of referrals. Beneficiaries are informed about their rights and duties; the social worker is committed to supporting people with disabilities to reach their full potential and lead as independent and dignified a life as possible. We note that collaboration with other professionals from different fields is essential to providing a holistic approach to the needs of people with disabilities.

The obtained results emphasize the satisfaction of the beneficiaries with the social services obtained and with the involvement of the social worker in fulfilling his role of "support" for people in need. It is essential to promote an inclusive society that respects and values diversity. Fighting discrimination and providing adequate support are crucial to ensure the independence and autonomy of people with disabilities. Only through concerted efforts and a change of mindset can we create a fairer and more equitable world for all.

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# THE THEORY OF SOCIOLOGICAL INTERVENTION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ITS APPLICATION IN STUDYING THE EDUCATIONAL SITUATION IN ALGERIA

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**Abstract:** *This research paper addresses an extremely important issue, which is the production and application of sociological knowledge in the interest of society. The researcher can use it in a variety of research fields, the most important of which is sociology of education. The researcher looked forward to an intervention based on a change of reality by exploring the sociological intervention that seeks to understand the sociological dimensions of situations of tensions and inconsistencies in conflicting attitudes and situations in an attempt to bring about change in the logic of the act of social actors.*

**Keywords:** sociological intervention, sociological education.

## 1. Introduction

The development of the sociology of education, the development of its theoretical and applied research topics and methods, can only be understood in relation to the transformations affecting the education system and the changes that necessitate the need to understand the implications and dimensions of this change.

Since sociology of education is one of the branches of sociology that is concerned with society in general, it is self-evident that it is concerned with pedagogical patterns and micro-phenomena in their historical evolution and in conditions that shape their experiences. Therefore, it has become necessary, especially in cases of tensions and contradictions, for science, scientists and applied researchers from sociologists and social psychologists to intervene to bring about change in the behavior and culture of individuals by adopting approaches that undertake to understand the socio-educational dimension within the dynamics of the subjective experience of educational actors to manage those crises.

In this context, Sentaul approaches sociological intervention as one of the concepts invested in the field of education and determining its contributions to change. What is meant by sociological intervention? What are the initial milestones for his appearance? What are its applications in the field of education and what are the conditions for its implementation? What are the difficulties of applying it in the study of educational conditions in Algeria? The answer to these questions encompasses the focus of our study of this subject.

## 2. Preliminary features of the emergence of the concept of sociological intervention

Intervention in sociology is merely a "sociologist's step in a particular social organization, often as a customer of sociologists in order to facilitate some of the changes required by such organization" (Lapassade, 1976: 51).

It is "an agreed service, a sold service, where the sociologist is requested by a client who provides the parameters of the system: group, sets or institution, and through a commercial relationship completes their work" (Herrerros, 2002:75).

The concept of intervention in the first order has been raised by communal psychologists within the research framework of the verb identified by Curate KurtLewin as a structural research framework or by an orderly order Analytical research uses a collection of techniques such as investigative research, unguided interviews, and group discussions.

But the grounds for intervention lie in the reporting of the group in every phase of the research, An analytical picture of the situation will be illustrated in an upward way This interventionist method is defined by the technique of retrogression, Since its inception, sociology has been determined by an "interventionist project", which Auguste Comte aspired to establish a science of healing for the sick community he called " Pal Sociatriel But this project has long remained inky on paper social misery in order to improve the situation resulting from that situation, Sociologists also offered their services to governors and officials, but their work did not constitute fundamental issues in the field of sociology, so sociologists remained mere theorists or researchers seeking to advance knowledge "(Herreros, 2002: 192).

Many sociologists and other specialists in other sciences agree that "the history of intervention in regulations was initially associated with technical work resulting from the Taylorien model, where the concept of intervention was raised by technical engineers or so-called regulators who applied the Tellurien principles and foundations in industrial enterprises" (Galiene, 1996: 26).

The emergence of the Telori model dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, where it was widely echoed by many institutions and organizations, especially economic ones. which applied the curricula and foundations of this model for the purpose of raising productivity at work, But Tellurism, as is known, cannot be regarded as a form of interference with organizations as much as a rational act of organizing work within the organization and improving workers' working conditions. So the next stages had to be awaited for the need to intervene in the areas of governance, administration and management.

In the 1950s, the first step was recorded in industrial and economic demand, which was aimed in particular at raising productivity for this purpose. "Mentors or officials of economic and industrial institutions have sought intervention from graduates of trade and economic schools and engineering schools with the skills or classical techniques in management in order to organize the plant for better production. All these interventions have generally been based on all aspects of time and movement." (Morin, 1996: 27-28) Although these interventions have been able to achieve some of their objectives, the workers have found themselves faced with the need to invest and employ the humanities, given the nature of the problems they have encountered, especially with regard to the reactions and attitudes and representations of the employees or staff, This led workers to hire technical psychologists who controlled well in human engineering 'ergonomie in order to solve problems that had an impact on work and productivity.

It can be said that the first sociological intervention in sociology is the one addressed by Alan Touraine in the study of social movements in that it brings the acting self to the surface of consciousness, because the self, according to Alan Touraine, is not fully present in consciousness, but rather covered and concealed behind other demands, which requires delving deeply into what lies behind these demands, in order to find the real struggle behind them, which is the struggle to produce the self. Although this latter exists in the actor's consciousness, it needs to be extracted and freed from various forms of demands and struggles" (Touraine, 2011 : 210).

In other words, the mechanisms of sociological intervention focus on "pushing actors to discover this meaning in their own actions" (Touraine, 2000: 905), since the basic measure of the validity of the researcher's hypothesis, according to Alan Touraine, is its ability to increase the capacity for action among the individuals under study" (Touraine, 2000: 913). Building on the foregoing, the method of sociological intervention is the method that has been adapted to fit and coincide with the sociology of action initiated by Alan Touraine (Alain Touraine) in (La Voie et le Regard, 1978), and then developed within the Center for Social Analysis and Intervention "CADIS" in France. Indeed, the sociology of action began in the 1960s in the field of working conditions, then crystallized in the late 1970 in the sociology of social movements, before expanding later with the beginning of the 1980s into new fields and

at the hands of new scholars, most notably the professor of sociology at the French University of Bordeaux (Dubet, 1946), who is one of the prominent members of the Center for Social Analysis and Intervention CADIS, the center founded by "Alain Touraine".

While the idea of the sociology of action established by "Alain Touraine" is based on "society's production of itself", through an approach to the general historical frameworks of social action from an evolutionary perspective similar to that created by "Karl Marx", as this approach is based on an attempt to decode social events carrying the future and is therefore essentially considered a predictive approach.

However, researchers at the Center for Social Analysis and Intervention, such as "**François Dubet**", tried to get rid of this predictive feature towards a deeper analysis of society, as mourning was declared with the idea of "**the social individual**" and the historical reading of . ) 102: Zaina Folco, 2014(society as a succession of defined types of societies"

### **3. Concept of sociological intervention:**

A relatively modern methodological innovation requires the formation of several groups of social actors involved in the phenomenon. Intervention adopts a special type of interviews in the form of interventionist sessions in terms of performance, design and procedures. Three types of sessions can be distinguished:

- Sessions in which group members are discussed among themselves within the logic of **self-analysis**.
- Sessions during which groups meet "**interlocutors**" "**adversaries**" or "**allies**".
- Sessions during which sociologists propose hypotheses derived from the analysis of previously collected substances.

Thus, it can be said that the approach of sociological intervention is based on the interplay between the subjective analysis of the groups of actors and the intervention of researchers with theoretical hypotheses " (Becho,2019 : 97).

In essence, this approach is the most recent gap between scientific knowledge and ordinary knowledge in order to make a break between the two "François Dubet" in 1994, saying "Instead of considering mutual advocacy games between actors and researchers as obstacles to knowledge, we suggest addressing them as a potential material for sociology. This does not mean, however, that the investigator's powers in the analysis process are abandoned. The sociological intervention is interspersed with a tension between the overall understanding situation and the detection situation, as this latter position is characterized by the will to "demonstrate hidden social relations". (AlainTouraine) and then bypassed the resistance of the actors and their ideologies " (Becho, 2019: 98).

### **4. Sociological intervention and its educational applications**

In addition, interventionist work can be introduced into school life, where the social act is understood and interpreted in order to track its causes and investigate its effects, including the aim of generating the hidden meaning of the act in accordance with the practice of intervention and accompanying mechanisms that stand on a human view of social relations.

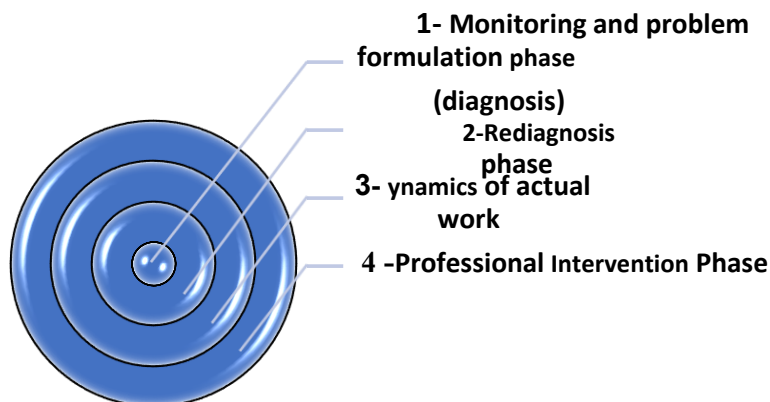
The work of the sociologist is based on his need to understand social events relying on a special kind of observation that allows analyzing the behavior of individuals based on cultural references and on a narrative style of autobiography. The social actor acts from acquired predetermined constraints that may not be consistent with the reality of social life at a specific point in time that makes it mediate the individual's relationship with his surroundings, which may lead to conflict, contradiction or disagreement that necessitates sociological intervention. That is because every human self grows on two levels: the individual's exploitation of himself, which forms the cognitive level, and the other's exploitation of the individual, which reflects the relational aspect at the social level.

Accordingly, it can be said that sociological intervention is considered "an attempt to facilitate the transition to a new and better situation for a social system like the situation it was in before" (Galienne, 1991: 61).

But whatever the type of intervention work, it requires thinking, guessing, arrangements and preparations specific to the intervention process, which differ according to the fields, parties and groups that make up the organization or what is known as the social context. And intervention in the educational field by the sociologist is to work to achieve a set of goals that fall under the framework of guidance and direction to overcome difficult situations.

### 5. Stages of sociological intervention:

The method of sociological intervention, like other methods, is built on a set of stages and steps that make it easier for the researcher to move forward in studying phenomena, diagnosing them, encompassing their dimensions to bring about change, and this will only happen effectively if these stages, some of which are connected to each other in a way that enables the researcher to comprehend and well understand the problem and transform it from its social reality to its sociological reality. The stages that may constitute the most important elements of the intervention process at the level of the educational context can be limited according to the following illustrative diagram:



### 6. The stage of observing and formulating the problem (diagnosis):

This stage starts from sensing the problem, aiming to understand and analyze the social situations that are being intervened in, which solving them would change the situation to a better one. This stage can be divided into several steps:

#### 6.1. Collecting information:

Relevant information is collected about the social situation that we want to intervene in. This information can include statistics, reports, interviews, field observations, previous research, etc.

#### 6.2. Analyzing and interpreting the data:

The collected information is analyzed to understand the social structure of the targeted society. This includes analyzing the economic, political, cultural and social factors that influence this community.

#### 6.3. Identifying the problem:

After understanding the social structure, the problem that should be intervened in is identified. This problem should not just be symptoms, but rather the roots of the issue that is to be intervened in.



#### **6.4. Assessing needs and resources:**

The needs and available resources for sociological intervention are assessed, including determining the financial, human, and external resources that can be relied upon to achieve the required change.

#### **6.5. Developing an action plan:**

An action plan is developed that defines the objectives, strategies, and specific steps that must be taken to implement the social intervention. This plan must be based on the previous analysis and assessment of the situation. In summary, the diagnosis stage in sociological intervention aims to understand the problem and target community and assess available resources before developing the action plan necessary to implement the desired change.

#### **7. The stage of returning the diagnosis:**

This stage is not just seen as a process to present study results, but rather as a crucial moment between the situation of collective representation or the stage of discussing results, and the final exchange stage which consists of translating the results of the diagnosis. Since the diagnosis process reveals what the actors already know, intending to enlighten a group of individuals at a specific moment or stage in time. This stage takes place between the consultant and the organization, then the presence of consultants (intervention staff) who can intervene in the final exchange stage on translating diagnosis results, determining the intended course of action, and models related to the questions raised during the diagnosis results discussion stage. Discussing them with participants away from the organizing body is a first stage where the most important points taken from the diagnosis results are presented and appropriate deadlines are proposed to the organizing body. Here, the intervener tries to recruit all actors to solve the problems raised and bring about change.

#### **8. Dynamics of actual work engagement:**

This is the stage of total entry into the field of intervention work, and it is a crucial stage as the stage of presenting the arrangement (*Invention du dispositif*) in the sense of proposing the methods or mechanisms capable of solving the problems raised, since the intervention practice at this stage “goes beyond personal work to predictive work and speculative vision to propose or present the arrangement” (Galiene, 1991: 72).

In other words, proposing the mechanisms capable of introducing change, “and the researcher is the only one who can make the transition, and therefore it is his duty to present to the group an image of the social movement that gives the act its supreme meaning” (Touraine Alain, 1984: 206), and this transition to analyzing the act is called a transformation.

And due to the sensitive nature of the work, the researcher must not become obsessed with the act but rather reveal its supreme meanings, such that “He oversees the gathering of groups consisting of ten to fifteen people, around a specific issue which is formally proposed by sociologists. These groups are not real groups, they gather individuals who share the same commitment or experience but do not know each other” (Cousin, 2011: 4). And a group of actors is supervised by three researchers, the first (the translator) carries out the self-analysis and stays close to the group playing the role of the initiator, while the second (the analyst) starts from hypotheses that have been formulated, trying to attract the group to that, while the third performs the secretarial tasks of recording the content of the acts. Defining roles helps overcome the difficulties and problems facing the social system. So the intervener moves from “the sociology of the system to the micro-sociology of groups in order to confront the unconscious group” (Galiene, 1991: 62).

And the nature of the researcher's role increases when he proposes hypotheses to the group after formulating them, so their actions are analyzed by looking at their content as

social attitudes. He is the only one who has the ability to define the act and generate the hidden meaning of the act and social attitudes. Thus, the sociological intervention emerges strongly as it connects theory and methodology. It is "the practice of movement theory which affirms the existence of actors and the logic of action and seeks to establish a link between the two, actors are seen as having the capacity to act, but also as being capable of interpreting the actions and situations in which they participate. This is why sociological intervention relies on the reflexive capacity of representatives; through this method, actors are invited to engage in introspective reflection which places at its center an analysis of how they read and interpret" and which questions their ability to act and intervene in this world. The goal of this method is to reveal and analyze social relationships in order to disentangle the different dimensions that organize the actors' action " (Cousin,2011: 1).

We also note that the researchers practice of intervention sessions pushes them as analyzing sociologists to provoke and observe psychological catharsis, as they give meaning to lived conflicts and propose solutions through which actors in their shared relationships can reach a higher level of balance , thus sociological intervention remains undisputedly a means to gather a large amount of information through the confrontations imposed by its temporal extension. It is -the only one that ensures carrying out the upward movement of the answer to the hidden place of the conflictual production of society-.

### **9.The professional intervention stage:**

The intervention aims at this stage to place the researchers in a situation that allows them to recruit the various methods that match the research topic. Through their positions in front of the group, "they reveal themselves, speak, raise objections, and point out contradictions in the observations made. In short, they intervene. Thus they break the traditional and academic position of value-neutrality that is expected from the sociologist, who should simply step back and record opinions and testimonies. For sociologists, it is a question of developing a general social logic for interpreting an act or situation; this is why they put forward hypotheses as the sessions progress, and put them into discussion with the group in order to clarify the meaning of the act. At the end of the process, the transformation session is an opportunity for them to present general hypotheses to the actors that reflect their condition and situation. So the method is a comprehensive and cognitive approach" (Cousin, 2011: 4).

It starts by producing information and ends by producing knowledge, and hence achieving balance and settlement between the actors. Here, the intervention is no longer limited to "revealing the system only but also producing knowledge and terminology that may help describe the paths in which everyone is engaged" (HATCHVTEL, 1992 : 82).

The process of sociological intervention depends on **two important factors:**

#### **A- The appropriate period for research:**

Since participant observation is the cornerstone of direct and indirect operations, it is the first obstacle facing the researcher in terms of the time taken up by the observation, especially since the subject of the study usually deals with tensions, contradictions, clashes, which requires a longer period of time in order for the researcher to be able to grasp the aspects of the topic. Therefore, it requires that he involves with him a team of collaborators.

#### **B- The appropriate method for research:**

which is the Weberian method and which is considered one of the easiest methods to understand opinions.

And they express themselves, speak, express objections, point to contradictions in the words spoken, in short they intervene, in this they break the traditional and academic position of intuitive neutrality that is expected from the sociologist who should simply step back and record opinions and testimonies, For sociologists it is a question of developing a general social logic to account for an act or situation, For this they put forward hypotheses as the sessions

progress, and put them into discussion with the group in order to clarify the meaning of the act, And at the end of the process, the transformation session is an opportunity for them to present to the actors general hypotheses that reflect their condition. Therefore, the method is a comprehensive and cognitive approach.

### **10- Conditions for implementing the sociological intervention method:**

The intervention sessions require in terms of performance, design and procedures a set of principles:

#### **10.1. Requirements for forming groups:**

- Each group consists of 10-15 individuals with common interests around a specific issue or experience without knowing each other.
- The composition of the group members is heterogeneous.
- The possibility of holding intervention sessions in an open manner (three researchers) or in a closed manner (two researchers).
  - Relying on provoking interaction and discussion between the interveners to carry out thinking operations (knowledge production) and hence deducing where situations and positions are read and interpreted.
  - Generating new ideas and crystallizing common concepts that go beyond initial assumptions and concepts and pushing for collective construction and the ability to express their experience and expertise within their social world to reveal what is invisible or hidden.
  - Sociological intervention relies on the social actor's ability to think.
  - Showing the nature of intervention relationships during the intervention and analyzing them in order to identify the different aspects of the complex and shared issues between the participants in the same social experience.
  - Shaking up and provoking the discussants in the discussion, especially by focusing on contradictory situations by highlighting the contradictions between what the interveners say and what is an internal conflict or tension.

#### **10.2. Composition of researchers:**

The implementation of the sociological intervention technique within the framework of the sessions is supervised by three researchers:

**a- The first researcher - the translator:** Carries out the self-analysis and stays close to the group playing the role of the initiator (initiateur) and among his tasks:

- Revealing himself to the members of the group.
- Programming and designing the interaction of the interveners and determining how to direct them to achieve the transformation and self-analysis process.
- Identifying and establishing the composition of the groups.
- Training researchers to exchange roles among themselves.
- Coordinating between researchers on how to organize intervention sessions.
- During the intervention process, he creates unusual situations for negotiation and discussion through confrontation.
  - Ensuring that the intervention is under supervision and organization.
  - Consolidating the relationship between researchers and representatives.
  - Involving the group's representatives in self-analysis by focusing on contradictions and confrontation among them regarding common positions.

**b- The second researcher - the analyst :** Starts from hypotheses that have been formulated, trying to attract the group to that. His most important tasks are:

- Directing group members towards a comprehensive reading of his function and experience in working while presenting research steps.
- Welcoming the discussants.
- Showing respect for all participants in the discussion regardless of their positions and

opinions.

- Creating a safe atmosphere that makes participants feel ready to reveal their suppressed feelings.
- Encouraging interaction by asking open questions in order to provoke debate among them.
- Drawing the research path according to the design of hypotheses through opening up to social problems and subjecting actors.
- Facilitating the interactive process and encouraging dialogue and exchange between them.
- Modifying the research path based on the participants' answers.

**c - The third researcher performs the tasks of the rapporteur to record the content**

**of the actions, add:**

- Recording and taking notes that serve the research.
- Obtaining the group's consent for recording and filming.
- Focusing on verbal exchanges, gestures and signals.
- Organizing answers periodically and in an orderly manner, not randomly.

### **10.3. Session process:**

The session time usually takes from one to two hours, and includes the following three stages:

**- The first stage:**

Welcoming and introducing participants, giving background on research while clarifying the purpose of the intervention process and basic session rules, as well as shedding light on the common ground between group members, and emphasizing respect for confidentiality and ensuring that everyone agrees to the use of video/audio recording to help participants feel safe to express their opinions, positions, situations and social experience.

**- The second stage:**

Asking questions starting with introductory questions to break barriers and start the discussion, inviting participants to share their general thoughts, which gives participants a glimpse of others' views on the subject and makes them think about the topic raised.

**- The third stage:**

Moving on to ask the main questions about the initial assumptions. These questions are fundamental to obtaining the information that the sociological intervention aims to reach and are consistent with the purpose and objectives of the method. They must be characterized by reflexive and transformative capabilities of meanings in order to bring about change based on how the conversation flows.

**- The fourth stage:**

Ending the session, expressing thanks and appreciation for the good course of the session and respecting the communication language between all participants.

### **10.4 - Objectives of sociological intervention:**

- Studying collective contradictions to identify causes and consequences, then focusing on the scope of historical identity and the social transformation of the participants.
- Understanding the ability of participants that the movement within the intervention session is capable of deviation or change.
- Engaging participants more in analytical discussion (feedback).
- Helping group representatives face problems by enhancing their understanding of the social reality they live based on positions, situations, and hence rehabilitating it in social relationships.
- Disentangling the intertwined dimensions that organize the actors' action.

- The ability for self-analysis and achieving transformation in providing actors with opportunities to bring about change (cognitive correction), or rather accompanying individuals in solving problems.

### **11. The sociological value of sociological intervention:**

The field of research in the sociology of education has witnessed several sociological approaches that were characterized by the accumulation of studies and the growth of educational research, and the increasing preoccupation with studying the social phenomenon as an independent science with its own laws and characteristics. What the reality of practice with a sociological dimension showed us, whether in terms of theoretical rooting or at the field level, is that there is a discrepancy in the adoption of sociological approaches and their applications in covering the study of the educational phenomenon to understand and dismantle the problems of behavioral deviations by analyzing the patterns of interaction of educational and instructional elements within their social system and proposing alternatives to confront them.

This clarifies the educational field's need for approaches capable of in-depth analysis of the social and cultural context and its implicit variables, especially since the basic pillar for studying the educational phenomenon is the social actor who requires a kind of analysis, processing and change for the various conflicting situations and positions that the individual or group actor faces. This imposes the participation of researchers to discover the dimensions related to the phenomenon under research processing.

Accordingly, sociological approaches can be classified between what is related to interpretive precepts and concepts, and what seeks to understand the social phenomenon at the micro-sociological level and at the level of vocabulary and facts of the context to which the actor belongs as an individual or group.

The sociological study rejects going down to the field with preconceived ideas and concepts, but rather deduces its concepts from its realistic context, as it also relies on the researcher's experiencing the situations or positions under study in order to change reality.

In light of these goals and objectives, the sociological intervention approach falls under unique characteristics and features that take into account the characteristics of the human phenomenon characterized by individuality and continuous change to give the researcher new horizons that enable him to immerse himself and delve into the patterns of the phenomenon and interact with it to understand the experiences, actions, intentions and interpret the meanings of the self, as the subjective experience of the act is clearly realized as long as this social act takes on a subjective meaning related to the self and hidden behind demands that require sailing into the entity of the self in search of the meanings behind these demands to liberate them on the surface of consciousness.

The epistemological study of this social act is determined according to several references that adopt methodological and hypothetical premises, which imply that external factors beyond the two actors determine their behavior, meaning that the actors exist under the inevitability of forces external to their entities and will, and all the researcher has to do in these situations is search for the causal relationship between these external forces and the actions and behaviors emanating from those actors. This conception is confirmed by Durkheim, who presents the study of phenomena as objective things, while we find that Max Weber emphasizes the causal relationship between culture and rational behavior, as he studies the act.

Thus, sociological intervention assumes an effective role in rebuilding the subjectivity of the actor and achieving his social recognition and humanization within the transformations experienced by contemporary societies resulting from the transition to the era of modernity, which coincides with problems and obstacles related to social and psychological situations that struggle for survival to prove the self and realize its perceptions and elucidate the features of its existence within its social system.

Hence, sociological intervention has taken the approach of searching for the self as an active subject (economic, psychological, social) with certain intentions, and having the freedom to choose and make decisions in different social situations and positions.

### **12. Difficulties in Applying Sociological Intervention in Algeria:**

Promoting the application of educational research to study school problems and address them requires a deeper and better understanding of the nature of these problems in all their latent dimensions in their circumstances and natural context, which allows the sociological researcher to formulate effective solutions to reduce their impact on the course of the educational actor and in a way that allows for the development and quality of learning outcomes.

Despite the achievement of this educational research, which emphasizes the diversity of using methods in studying these problems, the procedural implementation of the approach of deliberating and dealing with sociological intervention is still limited in the studies and practices of researchers, especially in investigating the educational issue.

Employing intervention in educational research is important in elucidating the orientations of actors, as enhancing these orientations serves the construction of the educational actor's future project by giving him great freedom to academically search for himself and achieve his personality without unconditionally submitting to everything that is determined in the educational system. Hence the essence of sociological intervention emerges as a result of simulating the reality of the educational actor in his conflicting situations and positions that require intervention to closely and comprehensively monitor the personal experience of the participants with what it carries of meanings and assumptions that lead to proposing alternatives and solutions accompanying the subjectivity of the actor.

In addition to the distinction of the intervention, which is part of qualitative research, "in providing better outputs in terms of interpreting human activity, as the researcher is the main tool in this type of research and therefore qualitative educational research reflects the researcher's orientations clearly, and through the results of this research we can identify the researcher's orientations through the general principles and theories employed by the researcher in collecting specific information and linking it together, especially since the information and outputs provided are almost free of distortions."Cognitive distortions that may affect traditional quantitative research" (Johnson et al , 2007: 112-133).

In light of the technological acceleration witnessed by societies, which recognizes the mechanisms and techniques of scientific research methods in the field of education, the use of the sociological intervention approach in understanding and developing educational practice is a missing link due to a number of problems and obstacles that prevent its activation. And if these obstacles face researchers in all countries, they are particularly acute in Arab countries, especially Algeria, with an almost complete absence, which can be justified according to the following difficulties:

#### **A- Difficulties related to the researcher:**

- Weak academic training of Algerian researchers, which causes imbalances in their theoretical and scientific qualifications.
- The low research skills of some researchers, as the sociological intervention approach requires high abilities and capabilities that may not be available to many of them, especially with regard to data collection, analysis and interpretation, such as the weak skill of direct communication while managing intervention sessions with respondents.
- The ignorance of many researchers of the mechanisms and procedures of the sociological intervention approach in social research in general and educational research in particular in terms of mastering the standards that adopt methodological precision and discipline, and not on the criterion of objectivity as is the case in the natural sciences and classical research.

- Researchers' weak management of the discussion process, leading to conflicts between intervening members and changing the direction of the research objective.
- Failure of sample members (interveners) to adhere to the specified appointment to hold intervention sessions, despite prior coordination and apologies for social considerations.
- The researcher's weak scientific rigor and falling into the error of selective observations or selective recording of data.
- The predominance of statistical program culture in social research, which has framed research quality in the quantitative approach, has become a major obstacle factor to the use of the sociological intervention approach and expulsion of it, which requires the researcher, whether a student or supervisor, to avoid this approach not only because of disbelief in it but also out of fear of delving into the unknown and violating the predominant quantitative culture of the field.

#### **B - Difficulties related to the graduate studies system:**

- Most courses that serve scientific research are designed according to the quantitative trend, ignoring the qualitative trend, especially to solve current problems, but rather being limited only to interviews and observation to collect data.
- The scarcity of references and specialized books dealing with the sociological intervention approach and translated into Arabic in particular to help researchers refer to them.

#### **C - Difficulties related to the mechanisms, implementation and analysis of sociological intervention data:**

- Implementing the approach takes a long time and great effort on the part of the researcher and experiencing the phenomenon under study, which may prevent lingering in following its application and transforming the quest to study it quantitatively.
- Unavailability of programs for analyzing qualitative data.

From the above, it can be said that the sociological intervention approach is an effective mechanism for understanding the educational phenomenon in Algerian society because of the complexities of this reality that requires the researcher to master its objectives. and its philosophy, tools, data collection, analysis, presentation, interpretation and discussion methods on the one hand, and on the other hand, understanding the subjectivity and identity of respondents and reaching objective interpretations of their actions, interactions and creating change in reality.

### **13. Conclusion**

The sociological intervention approach seeks to study the practices of actors in rational social situations, focusing on understanding the participatory and interactive dimensions that aim behind them to improve and make changes to these situations. The researcher within the sociological intervention plays two roles at the same time, on the one hand a producer of knowledge and an educational actor in the light of the knowledge he produces, creating change for the better for a reality that touches the individual and society on the other hand. The sociological intervention approach is suitable for getting to know the self and how the subjectivity of the actor is formed, what "Alan Touran" calls "the actor's return capable of managing the tensions generated by the diversity in patterns of social educational behavior in the school environment" (Tawil, 2018: 1046).

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# SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE AS SOFT POWER AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION FROM LINGUISTIC DISCOURSE TO THE HABITUS

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**Abstract:** *The study discusses the issue of symbolic violence as soft power, considering it an important topic in social sciences and political philosophy. It contributes to understand sociocultural transformations in modern societies, and its impact on identity and social behavior. The topic of domestic violence varies according to its contexts and applications. It is a field of research and analysis that focuses on the use of the language of symbols to achieve certain goals. The study deals with symbolic violence as soft power and social reproduction, and how symbols are used to convey messages of different topics, using language and culture to achieve this power and domination through it. In the philosophical context, symbolic violence is considered a manifestation of power of the habitus. The study aims at how soft power, or symbolic violence can be a powerful tool for changing social behavior and reproducing identities and values in contemporary societies. The study used descriptive approach to analyze the phenomenon and the social practice that is still practiced today in light of cultural models and sociopolitical discourses. study concluded that soft power has become a powerful social practice to change social behavior and reproduce individual and social identities. The phenomenon can be understood and analyzed by understanding the cultural and social contexts of society that practice these types of violence.*

**Keywords:** Symbolic violence, soft power, social reproduction, linguistic discourse, habitus.

## 1. Introduction

Symbolic violence refers to strengthening power or imposing control over society using cultural signs and symbols. It is considered a manifestation of social and cultural power, to justify power and establish a certain hegemony over a special category of individuals or society in general.

From the perspective of the philosophy of power, symbolic violence is considered a means to enhance control and establish dominance over weak or non-dominant groups. Symbolic violence may be linked to philosophical concepts of power, where symbols are used as tools to pass on power and establish social superiority. Through this perspective, symbolic violence can be seen and exposed as a tool to achieve goals of power and domination by creating and reinforcing symbols that justify superiority and control. This includes the use of language, cultural symbols, traditions, and even religious and political sanctities as means to consolidate power and establish hegemony.

It is important to understand that symbolic violence is not always clearly visible as a social production, but rather may be hidden in the language and cultural symbols that we use daily. Hence, working to understand this type of violence requires analyzing it within the cultural and social context in which symbolic violence arises and how it is used to establish power and enhance hegemony.

The study can provide a deep understanding of symbolic violence as a social and cultural phenomenon, contributing to the development of philosophical discussions about power and domination in contemporary societies.

The problem of the research is represented in the following question:

-How symbolic violence can be understand as soft power and social reproduction from linguistic discourse to the habitus?

## **2. The aims of the study**

- Understand culture and social transformations: This aspect aims to understand the cultural and social factors that affect the dissemination, support and reproduction of symbolic violence. In shaping culture and determining social practices.
- Understand how language and linguistic discourses are used to establish and strengthen habitus power and achieve social dominance. The use of language as a means and symbol to enhance power and superiority.

## **3. Method of the study**

The research paper uses the analytical descriptive approach to analyze and describe the phenomena of symbolic violence, soft power and social reproduction from the philosophy of linguistic discourse to the power of habitus. Also, it works to understand the social and cultural effects of symbolic violence through existing models in social reality, and its role to building and shape societies, individual and collective identities. Through descriptive analysis, it is possible to identify the contents and symbols used in symbolic violence and understand what these contents represent for the individual and society, and factors that influence the spread and support of symbolic violence, including economic, political and cultural factors. Also do not forget to mention that it can be used to understand the linguistic and social phenomena and interactions that affect the formation of discourse and identify it as a hegemonic authority, and to understand the precise relationships between language and power and how they are formed and their impact on society and the individual.

## **4. Procedural concepts**

### **4.1 Violence**

Violence is considered irrational aggressive behavior, whether physical or moral, causing physical or psychological harm. We find that the meaning of violence varies according to “any aggressive act aimed at causing serious physical harm, such as injury or death.” (Hamby, 2017: 168). The problem of violence exists in human society, and it is a problem like other social problems. Violence is considered a pathological phenomenon. It has social and psychological dimensions over time, as a result of several social, cultural, economic and psychological factors that contributed to its strengthening.

### **4.2. Symbolic violence:**

Symbolic violence is a type of violence relies on the use of cultural signals or symbols instead of direct physical violence to achieve goals such as control. The type of violence consists of the use of language, images, cultural symbols, and religious symbols to promote discrimination and domination over different groups of society, or to justify social practices. Pierre Bourdieu says in his book *Masculine Hegemony* that this type of violence may be “soft, intangible violence, as long as it is invisible and not even noticed by its victims, but in all cases, it exists and is a reality, established by culture by transforming it into subconscious demarcations, in which one finds... This violence has all the necessary and sufficient conditions for its sustainability” (Bourdieu, 1994: 5).

Symbolic violence can have many uses, such as racist rhetoric to justify discrimination against a particular group of society without resorting to other forms of violence. It can also appear in the use of stereotypes or cultural symbols to enhance dominance or to demonstrate cultural, social, or political superiority, etc., due to its profound impact. On social and political understanding and behavior. Symbolic violence includes many forms, such as verbal symbols threatening violence, symbolic symbols such as cultural symbols or slogans, or visual symbols such as cartoons.

Symbolic violence is considered part of studies that focus on social interactions and the role of symbols in shaping the behavior of the individual and society, and as a means of

control, control and influence in society, including influencing relationships and shaping practices, as it is an important field in the study of social dynamics, power and influence in human societies. Both Bourdieu and Jean Passeron see symbolic violence in their book *Reproduction*: “All power is symbolic violence, that is, every power that seeks to impose meanings, and presumes that it is legitimate and capable of concealing the power relations from which it is based, as the basis for its power” (Passeron, 2007: 102).

#### **4.3. Habitus**

The term habitus takes several different philosophical and sociological connotations. “The term habitus was used in ancient Greek philosophy with the concept of (hexis), especially by Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle; and after them Hegel, Husserl, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. However, the term (hexis) was replaced, during the Middle Ages, by the term habitus.” To indicate a condition, situation, or way of living” (Hamdawi, 2015: 7)

The meanings of the term habitus differ from its traditional meanings, as it is related to the individual’s urgent need to confirm his social or cultural identity. French sociology Bourdieu sees habitus as a social mechanism that drives individuals to maintain their social, economic or cultural position in society, and it forms part of the social structure, as it is a type of social power that affects the behavior of individuals and their interactions in society.

In this context, we see that habitus is a set of dispositions that the individual has acquired or been imprinted with through socialization. Therefore, predispositions are a set of inclinations, trends, and attitudes related to thinking, perception, and feeling, and these predispositions are employed in an unconscious manner.

#### **4.4. Soft power**

The term soft power is among the terms that have recently appeared in the writings of Joseph Nye. It is a term that can be said to refer to the ability to achieve goals and influence through appeal and persuasion rather than military or economic force. Soft power depends on culture, values, and ideology and represents a positive image in building any decision and a positive image in the minds of others to persuade them to cooperate and influence in ways that go beyond the direct use of force. Soft power depends on cultural, social and educational influence, which makes it an effective means of achieving goals, we can say here that soft power is equivalent to symbolic violence in meaning, according to what Pierre Bourdieu says about symbolic violence, “that it is soft, hidden, quiet violence, and it is hidden and unknown to both its practitioners and its victims at the same time.” He says about it in another context: “It is “Quiet violence, invisible and imperceptible even to its victims.” This violence is manifested in values, emotional, moral, and cultural practices that rely on symbols as tools of control and domination, such as: language, images, signs, connotations, and meanings.” (Wafsa, 2013: 6).

Soft power is “the ability to get what you want through attraction and influence instead of coercion, or paying money through cultural and ideological means. Soft power also exercises a type of symbolic violence within the exercise of its influence on others within cultural and social contexts. It and symbolic violence are two different concepts.” In the methods and reasons for using them, but sometimes they are two sides of the same coin. Symbolic violence is a soft power that the victim shares with her executioner, especially if it is within cultural contexts.

#### **4.5. Linguistic discourse**

linguistic discourse includes symbolic violence as the use of language in a way that carries meanings or symbols that include indirect threat or violence. This is done through the use of words or phrases that arouse fear or anxiety, or through the use of symbolic images that express a threat or Aggression This type of exercise of power is considered verbal

violence. Gender may appear in public speeches, debates, the media, and even in everyday interactions between individuals, forming an everyday habit rooted in everyday discourse.

The power of linguistic discourse in symbolic violence lies in its ability to shape the views and influence the behaviors of individuals and societies without the need to use direct violence. Through the subtle and poignant use of language, symbolic speech can arouse feelings, impressions, and meanings in the minds of individuals.

### **5. Symbolic violence, soft power and social production**

Symbolic violence represents a type of violence that is not carried out directly on individuals, but rather is expressed through cultural symbols or authoritarian symbols that exercise some kind of domination over individuals' decisions and self-determination. This type of violence can also be embodied in language as it constitutes speeches that carry implicit and other meanings.

Symbolic violence often reflects authoritarian relations. It can have profound negative effects on the individual and society, as symbolic violence is embodied and produced socially as soft power and through societal practices, whether intentionally or unintentionally, starting with the family and its role in the process of socialization and reproducing the individual culturally and socially. And the practice of symbolic cultural violence according to criteria that include the name of customs, traditions, prevailing custom, and other laws and cultural backgrounds, which, as Pierre Bourdieu calls, cultural capital, which constitute the rules of society.

Symbolic violence is a social production, as it arises and develops in the context of social relationships and interactions, through the history, culture, and social context of societies, and is affected by values, beliefs, and social practices, as we see that cultural capital, in the view of Pierre Bourdieu, "works to justify the values and culture of the dominant class as the objective culture and values of society." "It is a kind of symbolic violence" (Badawi, 2009: 10). These sociocultural patterns contribute to consolidating this soft power, starting from relationships within the family and outside society. It is used as a mechanism to control collective thought and human behavior. Because it is subconscious violence and silent persuasion that does not find any resistance on the part of individuals, it is therefore considered an agreed-upon social production

symbolic violence is considered a soft power due to achieving goals and objectives through its mechanisms that express less aggression. Therefore, Pierre Bourdieu sees it as "soft violence, hidden, invisible and unknown, as this violence is reflected in feelings, values, moral and cultural practices. This violence included symbolic tools." Like language, it is often revealed in light of the practice of moral symbolism against its victims (Mohammedal-Asbahy, 2020: 4), as society can produce this violence through its practices through relationships and considering it a form of collective expression. Those who practice this type of symbolic violence are through their understanding of the various cultural and social contexts surrounding them.

### **6. The power of linguistic discourse to shape symbolic violence:**

Linguistic discourse is one of the most important tools used by individuals and institutions to spread ideas and shape views and behaviors in society. Among the forms of this discourse, symbolic violence stands out as one of the mechanisms used to achieve certain goals, whether political, social, or other. The study addresses part of the role of the philosophy of the authority of linguistic discourse in shaping and promoting symbolic violence through how linguistic discourse is used to justify and promote symbolic violence in various fields.

The role of linguistic discourse philosophy comes in explaining this phenomenon. Rhetorical philosophy highlights how meanings and identities are constructed through the language and pronunciation used, and focuses on how symbols and values are used to achieve dominance and reproduce social reality. Our understanding of symbolic violence bears greater

responsibility for using language and symbols in ways that promote justice and tolerance and enhance social understanding. Real change comes through changing prevailing discourses and challenging linguistic and cultural hegemony that contribute to reproducing injustice and discrimination in society.

Linguistic discourse is considered a symbol of violence to the authority of the word and the field in which it is used, as “the symbol being removed takes on its major role as a class weapon used by the religious and secular classes to intensify power, dominance, and differentiation in human societies” (Lévi-Strauss, 1961: 32). Even the subtlety of speech it carries a symbolic verbal meaning based on the field of delicacy and fluidity. This linguistic discourse may carry the meaning of social and cultural symbols, due to their circulation and social reproduction through the rules of socialization to which there is no longer any opposition as a process that reproduces the individual culturally and socially..... , Society's valorization of this linguistic discourse, which usually carries symbolic violence in its content, is considered an application of a kind of power and control over certain individuals within society, such as, for example, the use of language in political systems that affect social conditions. This means that the practice of symbolic violence “is conditional on the presence of symbolic capital, which culminates in symbolic authority (religious, cultural, financial, social, psychological) that expresses its legitimacy, in the sense that what comes from this authority is accepted as legitimate and real by those over whom symbolic authority is exercised” (Pierre, 1992: 134).

We can only understand whether linguistic discourse has authority through our understanding of the social and cultural context. Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes “the importance of symbolic power to take an active character in people’s lives. What gives passwords their power and makes them capable of preserving or breaking the system is belief in the legitimacy of the words and those who utter them” (Bourdieu, 2007: 60). The way to establish the authority of linguistic discourse must be mechanisms of strong persuasion and a clear vision in terms of using words that have an impact on social decision-making.

## **7. Symbols of habitus power**

The concept refers to the comprehensive system of values, beliefs, and practices held by members of a particular society. Habitus is shaped by the constant interaction between external social structures and individuals' internal personal experiences. Through this interaction, a specific pattern of behavior, thinking, doctrines and perceptions is formed among individuals. “The concept of habitus is perhaps one of Bourdieu’s most frequently cited concepts based on his broad points” (Maton, 2008: 49)

The formation of the authority of social reality is closely linked to the concept of habitus. Whereas Bourdieu points out that it plays an important role in shaping social reality, affecting how individuals perceive the world around them and how they interpret social events and phenomena, habitus affects the actual power that individuals and groups exercise in shaping social reality. For example, habitus can influence how individuals interpret violence and conflicts in society. It also causes the formation of beliefs and values that justify the use of violence in some social situations, which strengthens the authority to shape and reproduce the social reality of these values and beliefs, and enhances their role according to specific interests and values.

The various factors that constitute the habitus of each individual interact, and differ from one person to another and from one society to another based on those individual and social experiences and factors, which are formed starting with the family, where individuals learn their primary values and beliefs and acquire their social and cultural skills through interaction with their family members. Culture and Society, with its teaching and learning systems, these factors affect the formation of habitus, as individuals are exposed to certain values and social concepts during the learning process and interaction during social relationships. The system of shared cultural values and models enhances the authority to

construct social reality in order to adapt, as the individual is born with inclinations and predispositions from his social reality that impose themselves automatically on him, and accepting them does not find any opposition on his part, as we can say here that habitus is a process of social normalization that is produced in a social environment. It carries the power of symbolic violence in reproducing the individual according to the system of values practiced and agreed upon socially.

Habitus symbols constitute a basis for the practice of socially recreating reality and forming social identities for individuals according to existing socio-cultural models, starting from the language, used words, customs and traditions to religious symbols and rituals and other political and economic systems, as these symbols constitute the authority for social reproduction of the individual. Important for understanding the distribution of power and dominance in society

In the field of social, political and cultural conflicts, we should look at violence in a broader way than just concrete physical processes. We must understand violence as a concept that goes beyond physical force to the areas of language, symbols, and values, and this is what is referred to as symbolic violence. This concept is based on the philosophy of linguistic discourse and habitus, showing how language and symbols are used as tools to achieve domination and reproduce social reality.

## 8. Conclusion

Symbolic violence represents soft power and social reproduction, as we realize that understanding this phenomenon requires thinking about the complex relationship between language and power, and how it is used to shape reality, direct thought, thinking, and practice behavior in society. Through the philosophy of linguistic discourse, we learn about how meanings are constructed and identities are formed through language and symbols, while the authority of habitus highlights how language is used as symbols and tools to dominate and reproduce the individual on the same models and intellectual currents. Considering symbolic violence as a means of discrimination and domination, it becomes necessary to change the prevailing discourses and challenge the linguistic and cultural hegemony that contribute to strengthening this soft power. Therefore, the call to be linguistic and cultural aware and to strive to use language and symbols in ways that promote justice, tolerance and promote social understanding remains essential for building societies. Where language and symbols are tools for positive change and not discrimination and domination.

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# THE RESILIENCE MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL ECONOMY STRUCTURES IN THE STATE OF BAVARIA IN THE GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC. CASE STUDY: BISS MUNICH

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**Abstract:** *This paper explores the resilience mechanisms of social economy structures in the state of Bavaria in the German Federal Republic. The main objective of this paper is to investigate the level of resilience of the employee of this region. Specifically, it investigates the integration of vulnerable individuals, including former prisoners, into the labor market. The focal point of analysis is Biss Munich, a notable model of social economy structure known for its innovative approach to inclusion. A qualitative method was used during this study. Specifically, an interview with the employees of the organization was conducted in order to analyze the initial experience, the main challenges during the pandemic, and the financial measures used during Covid-19 and their usefulness. The results of the study show that despite negative impact of the pandemic, the resilience measures managed to ensure a positive work environment that helped the employees to continue their activities in optimal conditions during the pandemic.*

**Keywords:** social economy, resilience, integration through work, occupational therapy, disadvantaged people

## 1. Introduction

The resilience of socio-economic structures in times of crisis, particularly in the context of the unprecedented challenges posed by the recent global pandemic, is a critical topic for investigation (Hamsal, et al., 2022; Novianti et al., 2024). As societies face disruptions to traditional economic patterns, understanding the mechanisms that enable some organizations to be resilient in these situations becomes critically important (Mokline et al, 2021; Gečienė, 2021). This paper delves into the resilience mechanisms observed within social economy structures, with a particular focus on the exemplary practices of the Biss Munich organisation. Through a nuanced exploration, we aim to shed light on the strategies and approaches adopted by Biss Munich that have fortified its ability to navigate through tumultuous times. By situating this analysis within a broader theoretical context, we seek to articulate the significance of studying such resilience mechanisms and offer insight into their practical implications.

The choice of Biss München as a model of good practice is deliberate and worth elucidating. The resilience of this organization during the pandemic period shows a convergence between theoretical soundness and pragmatic efficiency. While many socio-economic structures faced unprecedented strains during the pandemic (Savic & Dobrijević, 2022; Habánik et al., 2021, Fedyk et al., 2022), Biss Munich emerged as a beacon of resilience, demonstrating adaptability, innovation and an unwavering commitment to its mission. In defending the choice of Biss Munich as a focal point, we aim to highlight the inherent theoretical and practical advantages.

## 2. Historical Context and Evolution of Social Economy Structures: A Comparison between Western Romania and Bavaria

The social economy, encompassing cooperatives, mutuals, associations, and social enterprises, plays a crucial role in fostering economic resilience and social cohesion.

Bavaria's social economy boasts a long-standing tradition rooted in the principles of the social market economy. The origins of Bavaria's social economy can be traced back to the

mid-19th century with the establishment of the first cooperatives by pioneers like Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen and Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch. These early cooperatives were founded on principles of self-help, self-governance, and solidarity, aimed at addressing the economic and social needs of their members.

The post-World War II period was a time of reconstruction and economic revival, during which the social economy in Bavaria expanded significantly. The social market economy model, which combines free-market capitalism with social policies that promote fairness and prevent social exclusion, provided a fertile ground for the growth of social economy structures. Cooperatives, in particular, flourished, spanning various sectors such as agriculture, banking, housing, and retail.

The legal framework in Bavaria and Germany at large, such as the Cooperative Societies Act (*Genossenschaftsgesetz*), has long supported the development and operation of cooperatives. Additionally, the state's strong economic base and low unemployment rates have facilitated the integration of social enterprises into the mainstream economy, contributing to social cohesion and economic stability.

Bavaria benefits from a deeply ingrained tradition of social economy practices, supported by a stable economic and political environment. The long-standing legal and institutional frameworks have enabled the social economy to integrate seamlessly into the broader economic system, highlighting the importance of historical continuity and institutional support.

### *2.1 Historical Context and Evolution of BISS Munich*

BISS (*Bürger in sozialen Schwierigkeiten*), founded in Munich in 1993, operates as a social enterprise dedicated to assisting individuals facing social and economic hardships, particularly the homeless. The organization publishes a monthly street newspaper sold by individuals who are homeless or in vulnerable situations, providing them with a source of income and a pathway towards social reintegration. From its inception, BISS Munich has been rooted in the principles of social solidarity and economic empowerment. The organization was established during a period of significant social challenges in Germany, including rising homelessness and unemployment, necessitating innovative approaches to social welfare.

## **3. Body of Manuscript**

### *Resilience mechanisms of social economy structures*

In examining the resilience mechanisms of social economy structures during a pandemic, it is imperative to dissect the strategies used by organizations such as BISS München. This section delves into the specific mechanisms underlying BISS Munich's resilience, presenting a comprehensive analysis of its operational strategies and their effectiveness in navigating through turbulent times.

BISS is a newspaper project that helps citizens in social difficulties to help themselves. BISS magazine is the oldest and, with a paid monthly circulation of 38,000 copies, one of the most successful street newspapers in Germany. The seller keeps 1.40 euros of the sales price, currently 2.80 euros. The magazine also sees itself as a lobby for socially disadvantaged groups. It aims to raise awareness for the concerns of homeless and poor people. A lean, professional editorial team produces the magazine, which is sold on the street by poor, homeless and formerly homeless people. The magazine is a means to an end. This means that its budget is kept small, as money should mainly benefit the sellers.

Over 100 sellers bring the BISS to readers. Only those who are in need within the meaning of the German Social Code (SGB) can become BISS sellers. The neediness is checked by BISS. Selling opens several opportunities for the seller. They can earn an additional income on top of their social welfare or basic income support (in this case, their sales quota is limited). He can also live solely from his work at BISS. If they can regularly sell at least 400 copies of the magazine, they can be employed on a permanent basis (also part-time).



In addition to the job offer, BISS also takes care of the seller's debt relief and health rehabilitation. When moving into an apartment for the first time, BISS provides him with money to finance the initial furnishings.

Sellers who would also like to get involved in the magazine could attend the BISS writing workshop. Once a week, they put their thoughts and opinions on paper with the help of two journalists. The texts are then published in the section of the same name. These texts make BISS unique in the Munich media landscape, as relatively unfiltered contributions from people in need or in poverty can only be found in BISS.

The non-profit organization of the same name, which publishes the magazine, has defined goals that concern the sellers: The sale of the magazine should help people to help themselves. The seller not only earns money. The regular activity structures his day and he has the opportunity to make contacts with his customers. The continuous personal support that results from this strengthens the sellers' self-esteem and enables them to gradually escape their isolation, poverty and exclusion. Through public relations work such as discussion rounds and talks in schools, the association aims to educate society and raise awareness of people in social need.

The BISS project also makes use of the City of Munich's professional and still close-knit support system for its sellers. BISS has employed a social worker on a part-time basis for the necessary preliminary work and clarifications, as well as for particularly complicated cases. When a magazine is purchased, there is an opportunity to make contact without obligation. If a buyer is interested, they can find out more about the life of a BISS seller and discover how they can help. BISS works because it is able to bring together the most diverse social forces. Munich residents, companies, advertising agencies, church people and foundations all contribute to the success of the project.

BISS does not receive any public funding but is financed by the sale of the magazine and advertisements. This pays for the production costs of the magazine, including the fees, the salaries of the specialist staff and the operating costs. Fines that are sporadically awarded to BISS - like other social institutions in Bavaria - by judges and public prosecutors are also used to finance the business area where necessary. All donations are only used for citizens in social difficulties.

The idea of a street newspaper originally came from America. BISS was launched on October 17, 1993, as the first street magazine in Germany. There are now over thirty more or less similar projects in this country. Since these street magazines were launched, their creators have been debating which concept is the right one: should salespeople be involved in all stages of the magazine's production, or is it enough for them to sell a magazine produced by professionals and thus open up new prospects (not only) on the job market? BISS has opted for a middle way and involves the sellers as much as possible through the writing workshop and the city tours. The success shows that this was the right decision.

The most important thing is not to lose people, even though sales have of course fallen significantly. Of our 100 sales staff, 57 are permanent employees. They have been paid a short-time working salary plus a top-up, and we have not dismissed any sales staff because of coronavirus. We provide advice with masks and social distancing and have appointments in the office. It's good for the sales staff's overall health to be in contact with people. Many regular BISS customers have also called us and asked about "their" salespeople.

#### *Innovation and diversification*

Innovation emerges as another key resilience mechanism presented by Biss Munich. Recognizing the need to diversify revenue streams and mitigate dependence on traditional sources of funding, the organization embarked on a journey of innovation. By developing new service offerings tailored to the evolving needs of the community, Biss Munich has not only expanded its impact but also strengthened its financial sustainability. Initiatives such as virtual fundraising events, online service delivery platforms and partnerships with local

businesses have underlined Biss Munich's proactive approach to innovation as a means of resilience

### *Strong Community Engagement*

Central to Biss Munich's resilience is its unwavering commitment to community engagement and partnership-building. The organization leveraged existing networks and forged new alliances with community stakeholders to mobilize resources and support in times of crisis. By fostering a sense of belonging and collective responsibility within the community, Biss Munich not only garnered essential support but also cultivated resilience at the grassroots level. This strong community engagement served as a buffer against the adverse impacts of the pandemic, enabling Biss Munich to weather the storm with resilience and resolve.

Overall, this section provides a comprehensive exploration of the resilience mechanisms observed within social economy structures, with a specific focus on exemplary practices in Biss Munich. By dissecting organizational strategies and approaches, this manuscript aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of resilience in times of crisis, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on socio-economic resilience.

"The newspaper only plays second place for us. Biss is all about the sellers," says Managing Director Karin Lohr, referring to the founding idea of helping people in social difficulties to help themselves.

In 2019, BISS experienced an exceptional year. Out of 11 issues published, 9 sold out completely, resulting in a record average circulation of 41,000 copies per month. This remarkable achievement delighted everyone involved, particularly the BISS sales representatives.

The success of our sales largely depends on the number and well-being of our vendors. When our vendors are healthy and stable, they can consistently sell the newspaper in various locations, including streets, weekly markets, and metro stations. Throughout 2019, BISS maintained a steady workforce of at least 45 permanent vendors. These vendors receive a fixed monthly salary, from which they pay their taxes and social security contributions. Having a regular income and access to healthcare through their insurance significantly enhances their quality of life.

### *Evolution of BISS and challenges met during pandemic*

BISS has become an essential resource for many vendors, some of whom have been with the organization for over 15 years. It is always heartening to observe long-standing, older vendors at their city posts, often engaging in familiar conversations with their long-time regular customers. New individuals also join BISS almost daily, seeking an escape from challenging life situations. These newcomers often start working as vendors, bringing new experiences and skills. They all share the hope for a better future for themselves and their loved ones, including elderly parents and sometimes children left behind in their home countries. The disparity in living conditions continues to drive people to seek places where they can live in peace and modest comfort.

The housing crisis affects everyone equally. Those who earn low incomes and face exorbitant rents often struggle to improve their situation, leading them to live in extremely small, expensive apartments. To address this, BISS collaborates closely with the BISS Foundation, which is dedicated to helping socially disadvantaged individuals secure affordable housing. People looking to rent or sell an apartment at a reasonable price find the right support here.

BISS remains committed to ensuring that disadvantaged individuals receive direct assistance, whether through individual support (clothing, medicine), access to dental care, low-barrier employment, fair wages, or decent housing. The organization extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported its work. It is through an incredible network of

supporters—readers, friends, patrons, sponsors, donors, St. Boniface with Abbot Johannes, Brother Emmanuel, and the entire team—that BISS can continue to benefit the poor and disadvantaged.

The year 2019 presented both challenges and successes for BISS. Out of 11 published issues, 9 were completely sold out, resulting in a record average of 41,000 copies sold per month. This remarkable accomplishment brought immense joy to all involved, especially the BISS sales team.

The success of our sales heavily relies on the number and well-being of our vendors. When our vendors are healthy and stable, they can consistently sell the newspaper in various locations, including streets, weekly markets, and metro stations. In 2019, BISS maintained a steady workforce of at least 45 permanent vendors. These vendors receive a fixed monthly salary, from which they pay their taxes and social security contributions. Regular income and access to healthcare, including dental care, significantly improve their quality of life.

For individuals at risk of poverty and homelessness, a stable job is a significant opportunity. This stability provides them not only with financial security but also with a sense of dignity and respect from their peers and customers, often helping them secure affordable housing and avoid further hardships.

BISS remains dedicated to social inclusion for disadvantaged individuals. Various internal community events support this mission, including monthly sales meetings, communal breakfasts, the annual company outing, and the Christmas party. A particularly memorable event in 2019 was a trip to Wieskirche in Pfaffenwinkel, followed by lunch at a farm restaurant in Hobenpeißenberg with stunning Alpine views.

Poverty and homelessness are global issues. At the end of July, some vendors joined the World Cup social workers in Cardiff, Wales. The year concluded with a highlight: an exhibition titled "BISS Einbli-" at Kunstverein Gräfelfing, featuring photographs by Ellen Raicke that showcased the living conditions of BISS vendors.

The year 2020 posed numerous challenges for BISS, including implementing hand sanitizer in the consultation room at the House in Hohenschäftlarn (reported in BISS 12/2020). The Corona pandemic significantly impacted BISS. Although street sales resumed after a brief hiatus in the spring of 2020, sales figures by year-end were significantly lower than the previous year. The relationship between a street newspaper and public life was evident, as more people stayed home and reduced their travel within the city. This situation was especially difficult for vendors who typically worked in restaurants and bars in the evenings and at night, as these venues were not operational.

Notably, BISS is the only street newspaper globally that applied for and received short-time work benefits for over 50 vendors during April and partially in May. These jobs were secured due to the permanent positions. In the same month, two vendors were finally able to leave their inadequate and overpriced accommodations and move into a house owned by the Munich Wogeno housing cooperative. This move required extensive preparatory work: apartments had to be renovated and furnished, future tenants needed assistance with contract signing, cooperative shares and deposits were pre-financed, and bank accounts were established. This preparatory work paid off, as alternatives were explored behind the scenes. The so-called mobilization work in apartments was intensified on the handover day, allowing social workers to intervene on-site if needed. For example, one vendor had been living without electricity for months, and this issue had to be resolved.

Throughout the year, the internal service and social assistance teams at BISS were extremely busy. The office on Metzstrasse and the social workers were frequently out in the city and surrounding areas, speaking with vendors at various locations.

The year was marked not only by the pandemic but also by housing issues. In August, a family was moved from their accommodation into a new home. Unfortunately, the year ended on a sorrowful note with the unexpected passing of long-time vendor Ercan Uzun on November 20 at the age of 53. Just days before his passing, two of his four children visited

BISS and proudly shared their successful professional qualifications as an architect and an IT systems specialist. He would have been so proud to see their achievements.

#### **4. Research method**

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the level of resilience of the employee of BISS Munich during the pandemic. The research questions referred to topics such as: what is the background of the employees? What were the hardest challenges during the pandemic? What measures were taken to assure the working resilience? In order to achieve this goal and answer the research questions, a qualitative method was used.

In pursuing a comprehensive understanding of resilience mechanisms within social economy structures, qualitative research methods provide invaluable insights. Conducting interviews with employees of organizations like BISS offers a deep, nuanced perspective on the operational, emotional, and strategic facets that quantitative data alone cannot reveal. This section introduces the interview research method, highlighting its advantages, key characteristics, and a hypothetical approach to data collection over time. This approach not only captures rich, qualitative data but also allows for an ongoing assessment of organizational dynamics, providing critical insights that can inform future practices and policies.

The interview method offers several advantages. Firstly, it allows for a detailed exploration of the subject matter, enabling researchers to uncover complex layers of information often missed in surveys or quantitative methods. Secondly, this method provides the flexibility to probe deeper into interesting areas that emerge during the conversation, facilitating a more dynamic and responsive data collection process. Additionally, interviews establish a personal connection between the interviewer and the interviewee, fostering an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their true thoughts and experiences. Finally, the qualitative data gathered from interviews is rich and descriptive, offering valuable context and subtleties that enhance the overall analysis.

Moreover, information regarding the economical aspects of the organization where gathered from annual reports received from the organization.

#### **5. Research results**

BISS hired its first three vendors in 1998, and sponsors cover the portion of the salary that a BISS sales agent cannot earn on their own. On average, this amounts to €7,000 per vendor per year, with partial sponsorships also available for periods of three months (€1,750), six months (€3,500), or nine months (€5,250). In addition to personal sponsorships, general sponsorships directly benefit the vendors' salaries as well.

The operating revenue for BISS includes income from various activities such as street sales, advertisements, subscriptions, revenue from employed vendors, city tours, and interest income. During the reported period, the total operating revenue was EUR 1,042,625.75. Other revenue sources, including donations, sponsorships, support from membership fees, fines, and legacies, totaled EUR 1,841,114.56. Additionally, BISS received an integration subsidy from the employment agency, amounting to EUR 22,983.71, and a continued payment of salaries by health insurance companies, which was EUR 1. On the expense side, manufacturing costs and materials, which include producing 11 issues and an anniversary catalog along with associated taxes, amounted to EUR 223,393.81. Other operating expenses, encompassing rent, office supplies, IT, and depreciation, totaled EUR 175,807.75. Expenses for those affected, covering housing equipment, various types of individual assistance, and support for social projects, were EUR 482,078.05. Personnel expenses, which include salaries for 73 employees (including 57 BISS sales agents) and temporary workers, amounted to EUR 2,835,652.04. Finally, the construction costs in Hohenschäftlarn were reported at EUR 71,071.98.

**Table 1: Summary of the profit and loss statement biss e.v. 2019 (BISS Annual report 2019)**

No	Revenue / Expense Category	Euro (EUR)
1	Operating Revenue (street sales, advertisements, subscriptions, revenue from employed vendors, city tours, interest income...)	1,042,625.75
	Other Revenue (donations, sponsorships, support of membership fees, fines, legacies...)	
3	Integration subsidy from the employment agency/ Continued payment of salaries by health insurance companies	22,983.71
	EXPENSES	
4	1. Manufacturing costs and materials for 11 issues and anniversary catalog including taxes	223393.81
	2. Other operating expenses (rent, office supplies, IT, depreciation...)	175807.75
	3. Expenses for those affected (housing - equipment, all types of individual assistance, support for social projects...)	482078.05
	4. Personnel expenses for 73 employees (including 57 BISS sales agents) and temporary workers	2835652.04
	5. Hohenschäftlarn construction costs	71071.98
	Total	2,906,724.02
	Subtotal Effort	-----
	Annual result / reserve addition	-----
	Total	2,906,724.02

Comparing 2019 to 2020 in terms of revenue generation, while specific figures for sales, subscriptions, and advertising are not provided, there was a significant difference in total revenue between the two years. Although the revenue for 2020 is not explicitly stated, the increase in expenses suggests a parallel increase in revenue to support these expenditures, indicating financial growth or stability despite economic challenges.

In examining expenses, the most notable difference lies in production and material costs, which amounted to 225,628.06 euros in 2020. Although the corresponding figure for 2019 is not specified, this substantial amount suggests increased production activities or higher material costs. Additionally, other operating expenses saw a significant rise in 2020, totaling 163,256.42 euros. This increase points to potential expansions, investments, or heightened operational demands during that year, reflecting the organization's adaptability and growth.

For other income sources, such as donations, sponsorships, and support from various agencies, no explicit year-over-year comparison is provided. However, the consistent mention of these sources across the years underscores their importance in bolstering the organization's financial health. The implication is that these sources either remained stable or grew, contributing significantly to the financial resilience of the organization.

Expenses for those affected, including expenditures for furniture, individual assistance, and support for social projects, remained consistent between 2019 and 2020, totaling 1,701,449.17 euros in both years. This consistency highlights BISS e.V.'s unwavering commitment to supporting vulnerable populations, ensuring that essential services and support continued despite financial fluctuations. The steady expenditure in this area reflects the organization's prioritization of its mission and beneficiaries.

Personnel expenses, including salaries for employees and temporary staff, also remained stable over the two years. This stability indicates that the organization maintained a

consistent workforce, which is crucial for operational continuity and effective service delivery. The steady personnel expenses suggest that BISS e.V. managed to retain its employees and maintain their livelihoods, further emphasizing its role as a reliable employer.

Overall, while specific revenue figures for 2020 are not provided, the increase in expenses suggests a corresponding rise in revenue to support the organization's operations and initiatives. Despite potential challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, BISS e.V. appears to have successfully navigated the economic landscape, maintaining its commitment to supporting vulnerable populations and fulfilling its mission throughout both years. The organization's financial strategies, evidenced by stable income sources and controlled expenses, demonstrate its resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity.

**Table 2: Summary of the profit and loss statement biss e.v. 2020 (BISS Annual report 2019)**

CATEGORY	SUMMARY OF PROFIT AND LOSS FINDINGS BISS E.V. 2020
REVENUE	EURO
Sales (street Sales, subscriptions, vendor revenues, city tours, advertising)	828,541.00
Other income(donations, contributions, support, charity)	2,337,818.00
Subsidies for inheritances/integration of the employment agency	92,229.00
Total	3,258,588.00
EXPENSES	EURO
1. Production and material costs for 11 issues, including taxes	225,628.06
2. Other operating expenses (rent, office supplies, IT, depreciation)	163,256.42
3. Expenses for those affected (furniture - for the living room, individual assistance of all kinds, support for social projects)	763,094.00
4. Personnel expenses for 73 employees (including 63 employed BISS vendors) and temporary staff	1,701,449.55
Subtotal Efforts	2,853,428.03
Total	3,258,589.26

Moreover, comparing 2019 to 2020, we can see an increase of 34% of people living through employment of BISS, 5% increase income from small pension and BISS sale and the number of unemployment people decreased to 40%.

After the interview, I managed to collect data that suggested that the majority of the interviewees had a background in social management and gained experience working for various companies while engaging in significant volunteer work in the social field. Wanting to turn their passion for social work into a career, they pursued a master's degree in social work. This shift led them to apply for a job at BISS, where proficiency in Romanian, German, and English was required. They worked at BISS for around four years.

The initial experience at BISS was somewhat shocking for the interviewees as it involved close interaction with highly disadvantaged groups such as homeless people, very poor individuals, those without education, members of Roma communities, and adults who grew up in orphanages. At the beginning, the interviewee felt a strong personal responsibility to help and "save" everyone in these disadvantaged categories.

The interviewee began working at BISS during the pandemic, which presented unique challenges. Operations at BISS were shut down for only one month before resuming, as the

services provided were crucial for the disadvantaged people they support. Despite the pandemic, BISS continued its operations because social interactions were vital for their clients. The work at BISS provided not only financial stability but also essential social contact and validation for clients.

Selling newspapers through BISS gave clients the financial means to secure basic needs such as housing, effectively preventing homelessness. To ensure safety, the team initially worked with masks and later installed Plexiglas panels, continuing daily work despite the risks. Remarkably, none of the colleagues contracted COVID-19 until much later, after vaccinations began, and even then, no severe cases occurred among the team. The interviewee's experience highlights the importance of continuous support and social interaction for disadvantaged individuals, as well as the resilience and adaptability of the BISS team during the pandemic.

The interview with BISS employee revealed a nuanced picture of the main challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. BISS played a crucial role in providing essential support to vulnerable individuals throughout this period. Despite the widespread disruptions caused by the pandemic, BISS ensured continuous service and social contact, which were vital for the well-being of their clients. The organization's steadfast commitment helped mitigate some of the adverse effects of the pandemic on their vulnerable clientele.

As a media organization, BISS staff enjoyed special permissions to travel during lockdowns. This operational privilege allowed them to remain active and maintain a sense of normalcy. The ability to continue their work was not only crucial for their clients but also for the mental health of the employees. Seeing that the situation was manageable and being able to contribute positively helped the staff cope with the stresses of the pandemic.

BISS implemented comprehensive protective measures to safeguard their employees and clients. These measures included providing masks and tests and allowing employees to make individual choices about working during the pandemic. However, the situation was not without its difficulties. One of the more contentious issues was the pressure from management regarding vaccination. The interviewee expressed discomfort with the responsibility of pushing vaccination on colleagues and clients. They felt a significant ethical burden, given their influential position within the organization.

The interviewees' discomfort was exacerbated by ethical dilemmas and disagreements with management about enforcing vaccination. They believed strongly in individual choice and were wary of misusing their influence over clients, many of whom were in vulnerable positions. A specific incident where a client experienced adverse effects after vaccination reinforced the interviewee's cautious stance on advocating for vaccination without absolute guarantees of safety.

Despite these internal conflicts, BISS demonstrated a high level of organizational support and flexibility. The management respected the fears and concerns of employees who were uncomfortable working during the pandemic. They allowed these employees to opt-out if they felt unsafe, highlighting a compassionate approach to managing staff during a crisis. This support underscored BISS's commitment to the well-being and autonomy of its employees, ensuring that the workforce felt valued and understood during an exceptionally challenging time.

The interview painted a comprehensive picture of the operational and ethical challenges BISS faced during the pandemic. While the organization successfully maintained its services and provided crucial support to its clients, it also navigated complex internal dynamics and ethical considerations. The commitment to safety, flexibility, and respect for individual choices helped BISS manage these challenges effectively, ultimately reinforcing its mission to support vulnerable populations even in the face of unprecedented adversity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, BISS implemented a range of financial measures designed to support its employees and sustain its operations amidst the unprecedented challenges. One key measure was the financial assistance provided by the German

government, which covered approximately 50% of the net monthly salaries for employees. This support was instrumental in alleviating financial strain on both the organization and its staff, ensuring that employees could continue to receive income despite the economic downturn.

BISS employs a mix of fixed employees, who are on salaried contracts, and commission-based workers, who earn based on sales. Over 50% of BISS employees are on employment contracts, which provided them with a higher degree of financial stability during the pandemic. For those with employment contracts, BISS ensured that their full or nearly full salaries were maintained, typically around 90% of their pre-pandemic income. This level of support was critical for these employees, as it helped them to maintain financial security during a period of widespread economic uncertainty.

In contrast, commission-based workers, whose earnings are largely dependent on sales, were given a fixed monthly amount of approximately 400 euros from BISS. This measure was designed to provide a baseline level of financial support despite fluctuations in their sales performance. By offering this fixed amount, BISS aimed to ensure that these employees had some degree of financial stability even when their earnings from sales were reduced due to the pandemic's impact.

BISS encouraged its employees to sell at least 400 newspapers per month as a means of qualifying for employment contracts. Meeting this sales target was essential for gaining access to the benefits associated with these contracts, such as regular income and comprehensive social benefits. Employees with contracts received several advantages, including social insurance, health insurance, and contributions to pensions and unemployment funds. These benefits were particularly valuable during the pandemic, as they provided crucial support in the event of unemployment or other financial difficulties, such as difficulty paying rent.

For employees who chose to sell fewer newspapers and thus earned minimal amounts, BISS offered less responsibility and fewer benefits. This approach highlighted the importance of striving for a contractual employment arrangement, which provides more substantial financial security and social protections. By linking employment contracts to a specific sales threshold, BISS not only incentivized higher performance but also ensured that those who achieved this target received the necessary support and benefits.

Overall, BISS's financial measures during the pandemic demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting its workforce and maintaining operational stability. The combination of government assistance and internal policies aimed at ensuring financial stability and access to benefits reflects BISS's proactive approach in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic while safeguarding the welfare of its employees.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study delves into the experiences of BISS employees, highlighting their dedication and the organization's impactful role in supporting vulnerable populations. The findings reveal several key aspects.

Employees often transition from other professions driven by a passion for social work, as seen with one who shifted from management to social assistance. This reflects a broader trend of individuals seeking meaningful work that aligns with personal values. During the COVID-19 pandemic, BISS remained operational, emphasizing the importance of social contact and financial stability for their clients. This unwavering commitment showcased the organization's adaptability and essential role in the community.

Positive aspects included the sense of duty and freedom experienced by employees, which mitigated the widespread panic during the pandemic. Conversely, internal pressures, particularly regarding vaccination, highlighted challenges in maintaining a balanced and respectful workplace. The organization ensured financial stability through state support and encouraged employees to secure regular employment contracts, providing them with social



security benefits. This strategic approach underscores the importance of sustainable financial practices in social enterprises.

BISS's inclusive hiring practices, including employing individuals with criminal records, emphasize their commitment to providing second chances and fostering a non-judgmental work environment. This inclusive approach contributes to the personal growth and societal reintegration of these individuals.

The study's insights into BISS's operations and employee experiences offer valuable lessons for similar organizations. BISS's ability to maintain operations during the pandemic underscores the critical role social enterprises play in supporting marginalized communities. Their flexible and inclusive employment practices not only provide economic stability for vulnerable individuals but also promote social cohesion and reduce recidivism. However, the internal pressures related to pandemic measures, particularly vaccination, highlight the need for clear, empathetic communication and policy-making within organizations. The experiences of BISS employees underline the importance of balancing organizational safety with individual autonomy and respect.

Future research could expand on several areas to deepen understanding and improve practices within social enterprises like BISS:

- Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of BISS's employment practices on employees' lives and societal reintegration.
- Comparative Analysis: Comparing BISS's strategies with other social enterprises globally to identify best practices and innovative approaches.
- Client Perspectives: Incorporating the perspectives of BISS clients to gain a holistic view of the organization's impact and identify areas for improvement.
- Policy Development: Developing frameworks for crisis management and employee support that other social enterprises can adopt, ensuring resilience in times of global crises.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The primary data source is only one interview, which may not capture the full spectrum of experiences within the organization. Additionally, the study's focus on BISS limits the generalizability of findings to other contexts or organizations. Future research should include a broader range of data sources and participant perspectives to enhance the robustness and applicability of the

This study offers a comprehensive look at BISS, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting marginalized individuals through employment and social support. The findings highlight the organization's resilience, inclusive practices, and the profound impact on both employees and the community. While challenges remain, particularly in balancing internal policies with individual autonomy, BISS's model presents a compelling case for the potential of social enterprises to drive positive societal change. Future research should build on these insights, expanding the scope and depth of understanding to further enhance the effectiveness of social enterprises worldwide.

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# HOW ADOLESCENTS PERCEIVE THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG USE AND SMOKING, AND HOW IT IMPACTS THEIR ADAPTATION TO SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** *In schools in Cameroon, there seems to be an increasing trend in the consumption of drugs and tobacco products, which has an impact on how adolescents adapt to school. The main focus of this article is to explore how the perception of risks influences adolescent school adaptation. A survey revealed that 23.88% of students are smokers, with the most commonly used substances being shisha, cigarettes, hemp, and cocaine. Adolescents often use these substances to fit in with their peers, out of curiosity, to cope with stress, or deal with issues related to self-esteem, such as reprimands at school or disappointments. This can lead to temporary disconnection, attention and sleep problems, and a decrease in study time and concentration. Furthermore, these substances can harm the brain development of children and have adverse effects on their liver, kidneys, and lungs, making them physically and mentally vulnerable and affecting their ability to handle the pressures of school. Effective interventions involving education, family support, and social initiatives can help promote healthy school adaptation among adolescents and prevent behaviors that may hinder their academic success.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Risk, Drugs, Smoking Products, School Adjustment.

## 1. Introduction

Substance use among teenagers poses a serious public health concern, impacting their physical, mental, and social well-being. This issue is particularly troubling in school settings, where students spend a significant amount of time and their academic performance can be affected by various factors, including drug-related behavior. Central to this issue is the perceived risk associated with adolescent use of psychoactive substances. This perception varies among individuals and plays a key role in their decisions and actions regarding drug use and academic adaptation. The rise of drug trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa has heightened, raising concerns about the drug problem in the region (Odejide, 2006). Globalization has facilitated the spread of new drugs like heroin and cocaine into Africa. Schools have become a target for drug dealers, taking advantage of young students who may not fully understand the consequences of their choices.

Addiction to drugs can have detrimental effects on mental, psychological, and physical health, leading to school drop-outs and criminal activities. This not only wastes educational resources but also jeopardizes the future of students and undermines the effectiveness of the education system. The consumption of psychotropic substances increases significantly during high school, as many young people in this age group are introduced to alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. (Chen & Jacobson, 2012, Health Canada, 2018). Drugs and school do not mix when considering the impact of drug use on students and the role of educational institutions in shaping elite individuals through the teaching of civic and moral values, as well as knowledge and awareness. Research conducted by Chaffi (2017). Drug use in various forms has become a common practice among students in Cameroonian high schools and universities, leading to issues such as indiscipline and the exclusion of students. Cameroon is currently grappling with various educational crises, including decreasing academic performance, low pass rates in national exams, and a rise in incidents of school violence and drug use at both secondary and higher education levels. Every year, there are multiple instances of rule violations, particularly related to the sale and consumption of drugs within school premises. The presence of drugs in

schools poses a significant public health concern and hinders the progress of education in Cameroon, potentially becoming a leading cause of school drop-outs. Despite this, there is limited documentation on the extent of psychotropic drug use and its factors in French-speaking Africa, with most available data coming from fragmented surveys focusing on tobacco and alcohol consumption (Netti Nzouzi and Piette 2007). To address this gap, a study is being conducted to examine the connection between adolescents' perception of the risks associated with substance use and their academic performance in Cameroon. This study aims to identify the factors influencing this perception and assess its impact on the health and well-being of young individuals in a school setting.

## **2.Methodology**

The present study investigates how adolescents perceive risk and adapt to it. It is exploratory in nature, meaning it aims to uncover any issues associated with the topic.

### **3.Population And Selection Of Samples**

Our sample consist of students from the first, second, and final grades in the Yaoundé VI and Mbalmayo districts. Non-probability sampling was employed in this study for its economic and temporary advantages, as it allows for selection based on specific criteria and objectives. The sample size for our study is 734 students.

### **4.Instruments used for collecting data**

Our research involves conducting a questionnaire survey with the study population

### **5. Methods for processing and analyzing data**

The data was stored and processed using the Epi INFO version 7 software. The first step was to give a code to each response modality or each proposed response. Thus, each open response modality was designated by an alphanumeric code (A1, A2, ... B1, B2...). And for each question asked, numbered from 1 to 53, the different answers were designated by a capital letter (A, B, C, ...) and the associated response methods being designated by a number added as a subscript. After this coding, the data were recorded in an EPI INFO 7 input mask. The data were then extracted using a SPSS spreadsheet. The columns represented the questions in ascending order (from 1 to 53) and the lines the response methods given by the respondents (A1, A2, etc.). In each cell, the response modality given was indicated (A1, A2, An...B1, B2, Bn, etc.). Once the entry was complete, we induced a dynamic cross-tabulation for each question to obtain the frequencies of each response category and determine the corresponding relative and absolute values. This also allowed us to produce the necessary graphics. The descriptive analysis was carried out using EXCEL 2016 and Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 26 software.

### **6. Ethical considerations**

The research was placed on the sign of anonymity to respect the personal data of the respondents. Furthermore, the necessary authorizations were previously obtained from the heads of secondary school institutions in Yaoundé VI and Mbalmayo. All study participants voluntarily agreed to complete our questionnaires.

### **7. Results**

The analysis of the data collected made it possible to highlight the socio-demographic characteristics of the students, the prevalence of psychotropic drug consumption and the associated risk factors.

### **8. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

The data collected shows that in total, this sample is made up of young people aged 12 to 23. The main characteristics of the sample of students survey are summarized in Table I. in

this table of the 734 students who actually responded, 143 students (19.5%) are in second grade, 227 (30.1%) in first grade, and 364 (49.6%) are in Table 2. Likewise, this sample is made up of 336 (45.8%) women and 398 (54.2%) men. Among which, 140 (19.1%) repeaters and 594 (80.9%) non-repeaters. 08 students (1.1% of the sample) are in the bracket [12.14 years] [, 235 (i.e. 32%), in the bracket [15.17 years] [, 415 (i.e. 56.5%) in the bracket [18, 20 years] [, and 76 (10.4%), are in [21.23 years].

**Table 1: Distribution Of The Study Population By Class Attended And According To Age Group**

Attended Class	Second		First		Terminale		Total workforce	Total percentages
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Age range								
12-14	7	0.95%	1	0.14%		0.00%	8	1.09%
15-17	86	11.72%	59	8.04%	90	12.26%	235	32.02%
18-20	44	5.99%	142	19.35%	229	31.20%	415	56.54%
21 and over	6	0.82%	25	3.41%	45	6.13%	76	10.35%
Grand total	143	19.48%	227	30.93%	364	49.59%	734	100.00%

As for the class attended, the study of this population tells us that almost half, or 46.59% of the students survey are in final year class. 30.93% are in first grade, while 19.48% of the students survey are in second grade. Regarding the age group, more than 56% of the students surveyed are in the 18-20 year old bracket. Followed by those in the 15-17 year old age group, with 3.02% of those questioned. These two categories constitute nearly 88% of the population studied. In the second cycle, the students are aged between 12-14 years have the lowest numbers who represent only 1.09%, which means that in the study population, the problems of school adaptation are evident when considering that over two-third of high school students are 18 years old and still attending school, more than 66.5% of the student body. Furthermore, more than 10.35% of those over 20 are still in high school. To this, we must add (5.99+19.35=25.34%) those over 17 who are still in first or second year. This represents a percentage of approximately 35.69% of the population who are likely to have a school adjustment problem because they are at least 3 years behind school age.

### 9. Presentation of data related to the consumption of smoking products

	Number of students concerned	Percentage
NON SMOKERS	559	76.16%
YES SMOKERS	175	23.84%
Grand total	734	100.00%

23.84% of the students surveyed are smokers. Against 76.16% of non-smokers. Out of the 175 smokers, 33.71% (59) are girls, compared to 66.29% (116) boys. Likewise, the number of smokers, 74.29% (130) are non-repeaters, while 25.71% (45) are repeaters. Furthermore, 142 students out of the 734 interviewed are both smokers and alcohol consumers.

### 10. Types of products consumed by smokers

The students who were interviewed were invited to openly disclose if they smoked, and if they did, specify the type of product they preferred to smoke. The outcomes are detailed as follows.

**11. Identification of smoking products used by students**

Product Types	Number	Percentage
NO	559	76.16%
YES/ SHISHA	87	11.85%
YES/ SHISHA AND CIGARETTES	23	3.13%
YES/ CIGARETTES	26	3.54%
YES/CHALK/GLUE	5	0.68%
YES/HEMP/CANNABIS	12	1.63%
YES/ ALL THESE PRODUCTS (OR MORE THAN 3 CHECKED PRODUCTS)	8	1.09%
YES/PAPER	13	1.77%
YES/PAPER AND BEAN STALK	1	0.14%
	734	100.00%

23.84% of the individuals surveyed were found to be smokers. Out of the respondents, 14.98% believed that shisha can be considered as a type of smoking product. Shisha smokers make up the largest group, accounting for approximately 3.58% of the population. The second largest group consists of users of hard drugs such as (hemp, cannabis, papers, and glue) which make up around 5.31%. Combined, these two groups account for a total of 23.88% of smokers in the population.

**12. Determining the drugs and narcotics used by students**

This time, the students interviewed were asked about other types of products (other than smoking products) that they like to consume as narcotics.

Labels lines	Number of hard drug users	Percentage
Non Consumers	566	77.11%
Hookah	112	15.26%
THE PAPER	17	2.32%
Cannabis/Marijuana	10	1.36%
Chalk/Glue	9	1.23%
Trama dol /Tramolé	8	1.09%
Cocaine	5	0.68%
THE GUE	4	0.54%
Pebbles/Straws	3	0.41%
Grand total	734	100.00%

In addition to the smoking products mentioned above, young smokers also indulge in hard drugs. 15.26% of the total population surveyed estimated that Shisha is rather classified as a hard drug, and consequently admitted to being a Shisha user. 2.32% are paper consumers. 1.36% take Cannabis; 1.09% are Tramadol/Tramol users, and 0.68% are cocaine users. 0.95% are consumers of Gue, Pebbles, straws. 77.11% of the population surveyed do not use hard drugs.

**13. Risk perception associated with drug use and tobacco products**

Reasons for using drugs and smoking products	Number	Percentage
YES/ ATMOSPHERE/ PARTY/ RELAXATION/ ENTERTAINMENT	46	26.29%
YES/PLEASURE/WANT	29	16.57%
YES / CURIOSITY / PLEASURE / STRONG FEELING	26	14.86%
YES/ IMITATION/ FASHION EFFECT/ MASS	26	14.86%
YES/BAD COMPANY	17	9.71%
YES/WORRY/DEPRESSION/SADNESS	10	5.71%
YES/ ANGER	7	4.00%
YES/ STRESS/FEAR/PROBLEMS/PRESSURE	5	2.86%
YES/GIVE YOURSELF COURAGE OR STRENGTH	4	2.29%
DISTRACTION AND SENTIMENTAL PROBLEMS	3	1.71%
YES/ILLNESS/HEALTH REASON	2	1.14%
TOTAL	175	100.00%

Asked about their perception of the risk of consuming drugs and smoking products, 23.84% of the study population, who are drug users, gave the reasons which push them to consume drugs. 26.29% of consumers take narcotics to blend the atmosphere, particularly party occasions, and entertainment accessions. 16.57%, to satisfy a desire, or derive a certain pleasure from it. 14.86% consume it out of curiosity, and to seek exhilaration. The same number, that is 14.86%, do so through imitation, fashion effect and by mass effect. The influences of bad companies are around 9.71%. The victims of depression, sadness, worries, and boredom are 5.71%. Then, problems such as stress, anger, health problems, emotional challenges and the need to gain courage explain the rest in the risk-taking of the population studied, in terms of drugs consumption and products to smoke.

Presence of health difficulties when consuming these products (cigarettes, cannabis, tramadol, tramol, cocaine, shisha, other...)	Number	Percentage
NO	676	92.10%
YES	58	7.90%
Grand total	734	100.00%

7.90% of those questioned, drawn from among consumers, have already experienced health problems while consuming these narcotics. 37.93% (or 22) are girls, and 62.07% (or 36) are boys. Among those who have already experienced these health problems, 32.76% (or 19) are repeaters, while 67.24% (or 39) are non-repeaters.

Products for which the presence of health difficulties has been observed during consumption	Number	Percentage
NO/WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION	676	92.10%
YES/ ALCOHOLIC DRINKS	31	4.22%
YES/SHISHA	7	0.95%
YES/JOINT PAIN FOLLOWING Cocaine	6	0.82%
YES/CANNABIS/HEMP	5	0.68%
YES/ TRAMADOL	3	0.41%

YES/CIGARETTE	3	0.41%
YES/CHALK PAPER	2	0.27%
YES/ALL PRODUCTS	1	0.14%
TOTAL	734	100.00%

Among the 7.90% of the total population who experienced health problems, 4.22% were due to alcohol consumption. 0.95% following the consumption of Shisha, and 0.82% experienced joint pain following the consumption of cocaine. 0.68 were as a result of the consumption of Cannabis/Hemp. The rest are users of tramadol, cigarettes, paper, chalk, and other combinations.

**14. Examining the links between how people perceive the risks associated with drug use, smoking, and how well they adapt to school**

Young people are starting to smoke at a younger age. 7.22% of the population consists of smokers under the age of 17. Adolescent between 11-17 years old are more inclined towards tobacco addiction during this period when their bodies are sensitive to new substances such as nicotine, making them more susceptible. When they start smoking, young individuals often believe they have control over their habit, only to realize later that they have become addicted. Despite being warned by adults about the dangers of smoking, teenagers often rebel and see smoking as a form of defiance and a way to assert their independence. Smoking is viewed as a symbol of rebellion and a means of displaying toughness. Adolescents who start smoking are likely to have low self-esteem, perform poorly academically, and rebel against authority figures, including the education system. Teenagers often experiment with smoking at parties, where they can engage in rebellious behavior and feel a sense of freedom. They may smoke to mimic adults and to feel a sense of empowerment in making their own choices.

The decision by authorities to display warnings on cigarette packets about the dangers of smoking and to make it illegal to sell tobacco products to minors has not had a significant impact on reducing adolescent consumption. Many young people who purchase cigarettes will deceive others by claiming they are buying them for adults. Additionally, many adolescents smoke self-rolled tobacco. I am looking forward to the introduction of electronic cigarettes as a safer alternative, as there have been no established risks for both the smoker and those nearby. Our research also found that a large number of teenagers are using cannabis. Typically, they consume marijuana, made from the plant’s upper leaves and dried flowers, mixed with tobacco and smoked in joints or papers. The THC content in cannabis has increased by 30% due to scientifically grown crops in greenhouses and miniature domestic models available for purchase online. The immature teenage brain is especially susceptible to the effects of drugs and tobacco due to its lack of full development. When under the influence of hard drugs, self-control diminishes rapidly, leading to impulsive and aggressive behaviors. It is not always a desire for a risk or rebellion that drives young people to experiment with substances, but rather the influence of peers and the need to feel accepted within a group. Health risks that may arise later in life are often a priority for adolescents, as they are perceived as too distant to be of concern.

Similar to how adults strengthen their bonds through sharing drinks, they often exclude those who do not partake. Smoking marijuana together creates a sense of unity, making individuals feel like they are part of a collective cloud. For teenagers who may lack a common ideology, using cannabis, shisha, or cigarettes can serve as a way to identify with a specific group. In addition to group drug use at parties, some individuals also consume substances on their own. Seeking excitement alone is common among young teens feeling stressed and pressured, who turn to drugs to escape and unwind, especially during the evening. There are even a select few who use substances to help them fall asleep at night.



**15. Examining the statistical relationship between the perception of risks associated with drug use, smoking, and school performance**

Table legend:

**CHI-SQUARE TEST**

**1) DEGREES OF FREEDOM IN THE PEARSON CHI-SQUARE TEST**

**2) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BILATERAL ASYMPTOTIC 4) PHI ANF CRAMER’S V DECISSION OR CONCLUSION**

Table of connections (Chi square) between VI (Consumption of drugs and smoking products) and VD (School adjustment)

VD	4)Are you repeating?	32) If you are in first or final year (Resp. 2nd) have you already repeated from second (resp. 3rd)	33)Have you changed school in the last five years?	35)Since the beginning of the year, have you been reprimanded by one of your teachers?	36)In general, would you say that your relationships with your teachers are good?	38)Since the beginning of the year, have you been blamed by your parents because of your academic results?
VI						
9) Have you ever smoked?	1) 6,565 2) 0.010 3) 1 4) 0.095 5) independence (And we find these differences 9.5 times out of 1000)	1) 0.397 2) 0.528 3) 1 4) 0.023 5) independence (And we find these differences 2.3 times out of 1000)	1) 6,628 2) 0.010 3) 1 4) 0.095 5) independence (And we find these differences 9.5 times out of 1000)	1) 18,563 2) 0.000 3) 1 4) 0.159 5) low dependency	1) 2,883 2) 0.089 3) 1 4) 0.063 5) independence (And we find these differences 6.3 times out of 1000)	1) 3,383 2) 0.066 3) 1 4) 0.068 5) independence (And we find these differences 6.8 times out of 1000)
13)Have you ever had health problems while consuming these products?	1) 3,379 2) 0.066 3) 1 4) 0.068 5) Independence	1) 7,488 2) 0.006 3) 1 4) 0.101 5) independence	1) 2,584 2) 0.108 3) 1 4) 0.059 5) independence	1) 11,247 2) 0.001 3) 1 4) 0.124 5) addiction	1) 0.260 2) 0.610 3) 1 4) 0.019 5) independence	1) 1,450 2) 0.229 3) 1 4) 0.044 5) independence

**SERIES II**

VD	39) Since the beginning of the year, have you been reprimanded by your parents because of your behavior at school?	40) Overall, are you satisfied with your academic results over the past two terms?	43) Do you regularly do your homework?	47)In general, do you like going to school?	52)Have you ever been absent from your classes for no particular reason during this school year?
VI					
10)Have you ever smoked?	1) 19,181 2) 0.000 3) 1 4) 0.162 5) addiction	1) 1,319 2) 0.251 3) 1 4) 0.042 5) independence	1) 18,251 2) 0.000 3) 1 4) 0.158 5) addiction	1) 21,775 2) 0.000 3) 1 4) 0.172 5) addiction	1) 20,263 2) 0.000 3) 1 4) 0.166 5) addiction
13)Have you ever had health problems while	1) 10,023 2) 0.002 3) 1	1) 0.000 2) 0.992 3) 1	1) 6,585 2) 0.010 3) 1	1) 13,923 2) 0.000 3) 1	1) 11,690 2) 0.001 3) 1

consuming these products?	4) 0.117 5) addiction	4) 0.000 5) independence	4) 0.095 5) independence	4) 0.138 5) addiction	4) 0.126 5) addiction
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Investigation into the statistical correlations between how drugs, tobacco, and school adjustment are perceived. The examination of relationships through Chi-square testing revealed connections between tobacco use and drug consumption, as well as how adolescents adapt to school. It was found that there is a weak correlation between drug use among teenagers and their school adaptation. This suggests that the two variables have some shared influence, where changes in one may affect the other.

☒ Have you received a reprimand from any of your teachers since the beginning of the year? (Addiction).

It is evident that individuals who dedicate a significant amount of their time to consuming tobacco, which can have negative effects on the respiratory system and brain due to lack of oxygen, will likely experience declines in physical, intellectual, and mental performance. As a result, they may have less time for studying compared to their peers who are focused on academics. This only leads to criticism from teachers for poor academic performance but also can result in fatigue and attention issues that do not go unnoticed by vigilant educators, who will not hesitate to reprimand these students in hopes of guiding them back on track. In fact, 85 out of 175 teenage smokers, accounting for 48.57% admitted to receiving reprimands from their teachers during the study year.

☒ Do you generally enjoy attending school? (Addiction).

Every day, grown-ups repetitively lecture teenagers in an attempt to mold them into the ideal image their parents have envisioned. Consequently, teenagers tend to showcase their individuality by indulging in risky behaviors, such as smoking, as a way to rebel and assert their independence. Smoking is seen as a symbol of defiance, a statement that they are capable of making their own decisions and showcasing a tough exterior. Adolescents who are more likely to take up smoking usually struggle with low self-esteem, perform poorly academically, and rebel against authority figures in various aspects of their lives. The constant reminders and pressures from adults and the education system can greatly decrease a student’s motivation to attend school, leading them to associate it with a place of distress where they are torn between their desire to smoke and the negative effects it has on their performance and well-being. A study found that a significant percentage of adolescents smokers disliked going to school. Despite their lack of interest in education, many students continue to stay in the school system due to societal expectations and the believe that obtaining a diploma is necessary for success and escape poverty.

☒ Have you missed any of your classes without a specific reason this academic year? (Addiction).

The aftermath of celebrations, where the young individual has enjoyed themselves with laughter, food and smoking, often comes with negative effects such as headaches, breathing issues, addiction, and the temptation to repeat the experience. This can lead teenagers to skip classes in order to smoke during school hours to have fun or connect with friends, resulting in missed class. According to the study, 60.57% of alcohol consumers or 106 out of 175 smokers confessed to skipping classes without a valid reason multiple times during the school year.

☒ Have your parents scolded you for your behavior at school since the start of the school year? (Addiction).

Adolescents who spend a considerable amount of time consuming tobacco face negative effects on their respiratory system and brain, resulting in decreased physical and intellectual performance as well as a lack of endurance in tasks. This leads to less time dedicated to studying compared to their peers who are actively studying. These adolescents may also be absent from classes and labeled as drug addicts with poor attendance, prompting reprimands from their parents for their academic shortcomings. Consequently, parents may criticize their character and substance use in an attempt to steer them back on track. Out of the 175 adolescent smokers

surveyed, 50, or 28.57% reported receiving criticism from parents due to their behavior at school.

☐ Do you regularly complete your assignments? (Addiction)

As mentioned before, individuals who spend a significant amount of time engaging in tobacco use, socializing with friends, and attending parties can only enjoy these forbidden pleasures away from the disapproval of family and school, meaning away from academic responsibilities. In addition, smoking tobacco can lead to negative effects on the respiratory system and brain, resulting in decreased physical and cognitive performance. This ultimately leads to less time spent on studying and completing homework compared to non-smoking peers. A study found that 53.14% of the adolescent smokers admitted to not regularly completing their homework, possibly due to being absent from class or simply not being aware of the assignments given.

Nowadays, there is a widespread of drugs in the streets and schools. Teenagers often come into contact with both consumers and sellers right outside of school premises. The use of cannabis is becoming increasingly normalized, with adults openly consuming in public. Some parents exhibit leniency towards their children's drug use, citing it as a sign of the current generation's development. Other parents appear resigned as their attempt to advise their children against drug use prove ineffective, making them unintentional enablers of their children's deviant behavior. Despite youngsters using cannabis with a high THC concentration for relaxation, socializing, and amusement, it remains a psychoactive substance with detrimental neurochemical effects on adolescents, leading to a decrease in physical and cognitive abilities as well as academic performance. Regardless of the motivations behind teenagers using drugs, they are addictive and often lead to risky behaviors, prompting young individuals to hide their consumption in secluded areas, such as abandoned buildings, or in the wilderness, to share the experience with peers. This addiction inevitably consumes the time teenagers should be dedicating to their studies, resulting in a decline in academic achievements across all subjects. Parents should adopt an educational and non-punitive approach towards addressing their children's drug use, understanding that adolescents typically engage in substance use not to rebel against authority figures or society, but to fit in with their peers or alleviate medical issues like anxiety, stress or depression.

## 16. Logistics regression

In this section, logistic regression was utilized to modify our explanatory models that examine the relationships between independent variables and dependent variables, considering that the response variables were binary. We were interested in understanding how exposure to risks and risk perception, considered as independent variables, can impact the likelihood of experiencing difficulties in school adjustment. In other words, we aimed to determine if exposure to risks and risk perception as independent variables could influence the probability of facing challenges in school adjustment.

- The research indicated a statistically significant correlation between school repetition during the second cycle and health difficulties resulting from the consumption of psychotropic substances (coef: 0.7514208;  $Z=2.70$  and  $P(>|Z|) = 0,007$ ). The coefficient linked to this factor shows a positive correlation, indicating that encountering challenges after consuming psychotropic substances raises the likelihood of grade repetition. The findings indicated that there was a significant statistical correlation between the independent variable who like attending school (love for school) and the predictor variables associated with smoking (coef: -0.5523218;  $Z=-2.36$  and  $P>$ ) the experience of facing health issues while using the products (cigarettes, cannabis, tramadol, tramol cocaine, chicha, other, etc.) (Coef:  $|Z| = 0,018$ ) -0.8053435;  $Z= -2.47$  and  $P(>|Z|) = 0,013$ ). The negative coefficients are associated with smoking and already having pre-existing health issues while

consuming the products (cigarettes, cannabis, tramadol, tramol cocaine, shisha, amongst other.)

When these substances impact the well-being of adolescents, they decrease the likelihood of being able to attend school and enjoy it.

### **17. Suggestions and recommendations**

- Intensify the fight against trafficking in psychotropic substances in schools.
- According to article 35 of Law N° 98/004 dated April 14, 1998 regarding the direction of education in Cameroon, it is ensured that the physical and moral well-being of students is protected with the educational system. The law prohibits physical abuse, violence in any form, discrimination, as well as the sale, distribution, and use of tobacco and drugs.
- Educational institution leaders should be cautious about small businesses emerging near their schools, following the rules mentioned. Surprise inspections with the presence of administrative officials must be arranged. Currently, drugs are easily accessible on the streets and even in schools. Youngsters often come into contact with drug users and sellers disguised as candy vendors outside schools, engaging in illegal drug trade.
- Parents in our families should be informed that adults who openly consume cannabis are contributing to the trivialization of drug use. Some parents tolerate drug use by their children under the mistaken belief that it is necessary for the current generation's development. Other parents have given up trying to advise their children, becoming complicit in their children's deviant behavior.

However, when it comes to the presence of illicit drugs in households, parents need to have a clear attitude of zero tolerance. These substances have harmful effects on the brain and body, so it would be inappropriate to allow teenagers to have them and use them freely. If it is discovered that a teenager is a frequent user, then the issue of addiction needs to be addressed. If they cannot stop using drugs, it maybe necessary to seek help from a professional such as psychologist or specialized medical facility. Punishing the teenager, taking away their allowance or forbidding them from seeing certain friends is not an effective solution. In any case, parents should approach the situation with an educational and non-repressive mentality. The adolescent is not using drugs to rebel against their parents or society, but rather to fit in with their peers. For some, drug use is a form of self-medication to cope with anxiety, stress, or depression.

### **18. Discussion**

The study's goal was to improve understanding of the connection between how individuals perceive the risk associated with drug use and smoking products. Our findings indicate that among young individuals, the main smoking products consumed are shisha, cigarettes as well as hazardous substances like hemp and cocaine. As anticipated, the influence of peers in the consumption environment of the participants is significant. The outcomes from the research align with existing scientific writings (Bot et al, 2005). During adolescents, the influence of peers is significant. According to research by Wone et al (2004), the prevalence of cannabis use is 19.7% and typically begins around ages 16 and 17, but in our study, it starts between ages 11 and 13. It is important to acknowledge that the environment can contribute to early substance use among young people. Harrabi et al (2002) found that factors such as school, family, and friends have a significant impact on the consumption of various psychoactive substances by youth.

White Labouvie and Vasiliki (2005) emphasize the influence of family members' cigarette consumption on 18-years olds who are on the verge of leaving high school. The research illustrates that student, regardless of their aspirations for higher education, exhibits higher rates of cigarette and marijuana use and encounter more alcohol-related issues upon entering secondary school compared to their peers who are still in high school but are closer in age to

adults. The study sheds light on the reasons why our participants are tempted to experiment with psychotropic drugs, with 73% of them having a parent or relative who uses drugs. Asen (2021) suggests that despite efforts to raise awareness, the environment in Cameroon contributes to the rising drug consumption rates. According to the author, adults who are expected to set a positive example, paradoxically serve as a risk for psychotropic drug use in the country. In conclusion, the examination of research indicates a notable link between how adolescents perceive risk and their behavior related to substance use. This underscores the significance of enhancing risk perception in programs aimed at preventing substance use.

## 19. Conclusion

At the conclusion of our investigation, it is important to review the research conducted on the topic of *“risk perception and school adaptation among adolescents”*. This study focuses on how the lack of awareness regarding the risks associated with drug and tobacco use among students in various grades impacts their performance in school. Despite efforts made by the education sectors to reduce the rate of academic failure in many countries, it continues to be a prevalent issue. This led us to examine the relationship between school adjustment and students' perceptions of the risks involved in using drugs and tobacco. Our goal was to demonstrate how students are influenced by various factors that hinder their focus on academics.

In the end, this research on how adolescents perceive the risks associated with drugs use and smoking revealed that these young individuals, attempting to exercise a similar level of freedom as adults, engage in behaviors that deviate from societal norms, involve risk-taking, and include moderate and acceptable failures and justifications, as they navigate their way towards adulthood. Through their deviant actions and willingness to take risks, adolescents gradually move closer to the boundaries of what is considered acceptable behavior, learning from their experiences and readjusting their understanding of the freedoms and responsibilities that come with adulthood. Within the space provided for their growth, adolescents express a desire to be released from constant supervision, scrutiny, and accountability, urging adults to refrain from incessant criticism and advice that fails to acknowledge their perspectives and aspirations. When asked about their perceptions of adults, adolescents often criticize them for being overly anxious, suspicious, and excessively negative. However, above all else, teenagers also express a fear of being abandoned and left alone. Young individuals comprehend the fact that adults are concerned about safeguarding them from potential dangers that may come their way, steering them clear of negative influences, shielding them from the perils associated with traffic accidents, the harms of drugs, violence, crime, risky sexual practices, and sexually transmitted diseases. Continued use of drugs and alcohol among youths can have adverse effects on their education, physical well-being, and mental well-being throughout their teenage years and into adulthood (Hall & Degenhardt, 2009; Heradstveit, Skogen, Hetland, & Hysing, 2017; Kelly et al., 2015; Meier, Hill, Small, & Luthar, 2015). Adults only commit to helping young people succeed in their education, and they often offer advice to influence their decision base on their own preferences. Research also indicates that the consumption of drugs is heavily influenced by parents, friends, behavioral issues, academic struggles from skipping classes, and engaging in activities at inappropriate times.

We believe that a more comprehensive study, which includes both rural and urban areas, as well as young people in school and out of school, would help create a complete map of young people's consumption of psychoactive substances in our country. However, the findings of this article suggest that surveillance, awareness-raising, and support activities are needed in Cameroonian cities and educational institutions to address the growing issues of substance abuse among young people.

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## INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** *In this article we were interested to find out when grandparents appear in the lives of grandchildren and the role they play in the extended family. We started from a few questions to which we tried to find answers, relying both on specialised literature and on data obtained through qualitative methods, in particular interviews and observation. In what situations do grandparents appear in the lives of grandchildren? What role do they play in their lives? What factors influence their role? To what extent has their role changed in contemporary society? What are the repercussions for the family? The field survey was carried out in two stages: the first stage in 2009-2011 and the second stage in 2014-2015, where we used qualitative methods in data collection and the thematic method in data analysis. A corpus of fifteen interviews conducted with parents, grandparents, teachers, students, priests, psychiatrists and school counsellors was thematically analysed, with the central theme of the roles of grandparents, both in the communist period and after 1989. The role of grandparents in the family has as effects, on the one hand, their participation in the upbringing, education and training of grandchildren, the maintenance of family memory, providing emotional and affective stability, and on the other hand, their permissiveness with the mistakes of grandchildren can lead to delinquent acts among minors.*

**Keywords:** grandparents, grandchildren, role and intergenerational solidarity.

The specialised literature shows that the family is the most important socialisation environment for children. However, some researchers note that this socialisation function is neglected by some families, and this leads to dissatisfaction and conflict between generations or within the same generation, particularly in the relationship between the wife or husband and the in-laws (Mitrofan, Voinea, Ciupercă, Apostu). Family solidarity is conditioned by the action of factors external to the family (sanctions: legal, social, religious, used by society to avoid family dissolution; negative attitudes towards those who do not conform to models of family solidarity; economic hardship, but also by internal factors such as: emotional and affective reciprocity, convergence of aspirations, adherence to established values, joint activities (Mihăilescu, 1999: 100). In contemporary society too, the special bond between mother and daughter or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is still present, with grandparents caring for grandchildren, who are at the heart of relationships between generations, under the sign of duty and dedication (Segalen, 2010: 329).

The figures of the grandfather and grandmother come from a fairy-tale setting in Romanian literature, “symbols of eternal beauty”: “an old white-haired man with bushy eyebrows like Santa Claus” (Popescu, 1988: 3) or “Grandfather with his white curly locks, as if they were bunches of white flowers; his eyebrows, his moustaches, his beard...on all of them have snowed many and heavy years. Only my grandfather's eyes have remained as they once were: gentle and caressing... I can see my grandmother clearly, just as she was. Tall, slender, with white, curly hair, brown eyes, a tight mouth and an upper lip notched in comb teeth from the nose downwards” (Delavrancea, 1965/2005: 90 and 102).

The pleasure of being a grandfather is described by Andrei Pleșu<sup>1</sup> as follows: “Grandparents love their grandchildren in a different way from their parents. Freed from their old pedagogical responsibilities, free from the demands of their own careers, less busy and less harassed by personal vanities, they disinterestedly savour the charm of their grandchildren, with their undomesticated vitality (...) their love does not, in fact, want

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<sup>1</sup>In Dilema veche, Andrei Pleșu presents the dialogue he had with another well-known essayist, Alexandru Paleologu.

anything... It is contemplative, playful, and almost ecstatic. And all these states are showered on children as a gift. Comparing himself to "Master Alecu Paleologu", Pleșu concludes the dialogue with regrets that he did not have such "consistent and lasting encounters with the institution of grandparents", and goes on to list the risks to which any person could be exposed, "a certain emotional instability, a certain inner rigidity, a mixture of frustration, inhibition... In the absence of grandparents, childhood is shorter, more monotonous and sad. In such situations, you can have only one hope: to make up for what you did not have by assuming the condition of grandparent yourself" (Pleșu, 2016). Similar views were echoed by some interviewees, who said they would devote more time to their grandchildren than they did to their own children: "Working in the education sector, I did not always have enough time for my children, but I realised that later, but I cannot say that I was not there for them and that is why I think grandparents are much better, more tolerant for grandchildren than for parents and I think they will spend more time with them" (teacher from Iași, 52 years old).

Ever since *the inter-war period*, there have been differences in the way in which parents involve their children in their work. Thus, rural parents focus more on physical work in the yard or in the fields, while urban parents tend to devote more attention to school-type education, Bărbulescu (Roman, 2015: 73). Referring to the place grandparents occupy in the family in the absence of both parents, P. Stahl places grandparents in second place<sup>2</sup> (34% of cases) after uncles and aunts (40.5% of cases), followed by the pupil's sister, stepbrothers or stepsisters (5.7% of cases), and stepfathers (2.85% of cases). Grandparents are also in second place in the category of income sources, with grandparents' salary accounting for 22.70% plus their pension 5.37% of cases, after the aunt or uncles' salary (34.37% of cases). Another author, Xenia Castoforu<sup>3</sup> identifies a number of situations of grandparents' intervention in grandchildren's lives: grandparents' role is natural or complementary, "The granddaughter is brought up with great joy by her grandmother" (E.C.); some grandparents take on the upbringing of love grandchildren of one of their own children; others occur in the case of complete dissolution of the parents' marriage, through death or divorce (Castoforu, 2004: 194-197).

Moreover, Stănculescu, drawing on the literary works of Romanian writers (Creangă, Sadoveanu, Caragiale), argues that the role of grandparents is not an autonomous one, but rather that of a substitute or competitor of the parent. Thus, the presence of grandparents in the lives of grandchildren seems to be linked to certain circumstances, such as:

- the professional orientation of one's own grandchild or the maintenance of family memory; grandmothers maintain the feeling of small childhood in the popular classes, and in the middle and upper classes, grandparents are frequent and continuous presences in the child's life, providing the child primarily with expressive resources (Ion Creangă, "Amintiri din copilărie" - *Childhood memories*, 1956);
- if Mihail Sadoveanu (in "Dumbrava minunată" - *Wonderful grove*, 1906) describes a grandfather whose daily presence cultivates respect for the elderly, Ion Luca Caragiale (in „Domnul Goe” - *Mister Goe*) presents "the caricature of an ultra-affectionate, ultra-careful maternal grandmother who does not hesitate to identify and show complicity with the child even when the latter's actions affect the family budget or the smooth running of a public institution" (Stănculescu, 2002: 82-85). However, there are also grandparents who show their authority towards their own grandchildren: "In your grandparents' house, do not speak loudly and do not speak without being asked, do not laugh stupidly, do not touch things that do not belong to you, do not touch cats, do not do naughty things...

<sup>2</sup> The survey was conducted on two schools in Bucharest, with a total of 983 students examined by Paul H. Stahl, at the Centre for Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Research in the period 1949-1952.

<sup>3</sup> Xenia Castoforu was a member of the Seminar of Sociology and participated in the monographic campaigns, coordinated by Dimitrie Gusti, between 1927-1931, in the villages of Nerej, Fundul-Moldovei, Drăguș, Runcu and Cornova.



- Then what shall we do?
- Be good." (Teodoreanu, 1938/2010: 11).

During the *communist period*, the relationships between the generations gradually changed, particularly along the lines of the increasing independence of the young from the elderly or the detachment of the younger generation from the authority of the head of the family by moving from the individual lot to work in agricultural cooperatives, producing a spatial and temporal cleavage of the peasant family members, particularly between the grandchildren and the grandparents (Damian, 1972: 198). In the urban environment, the working class is constituted, which produces a change in the family workplace and from the fields to the enterprises, with the effect for some parents of delegating the educational and socialisation function to schools or other institutions (Voinea, 2005: 41). To be in line with communist ideology, Lăscuș identifies two negative aspects in the educational activity carried out by grandparents: too much love for grandchildren, manifested by tolerance for grandchildren's mistakes (raising a spoiled child, taking everything for granted) and the gap of social, political, moral conceptions about education, "the criteria of our morality are based on the scientific conception of life and society, and communist education cannot be conceived and realised without educating children in an atheistic-scientific spirit" (Lăscuș, 1974: 24-25). With regard to the second perspective, we can state that grandparents carry out a positive socialisation, but discordant in relation to the norms promoted by the socialising agents controlled by the totalitarian state during the communist period (Voinea, 2005: 118).

After 1990, in Romania, especially with the retrocession of agricultural land in rural areas, parents offer help in agricultural work to grandparents aged 45-64, and grandparents give them advice and counselling, along with money and food, while for grandparents over 65, the ratio is the reverse, with the predominance of care for grandparents or material goods and food, moral and emotional support by parents, etc. (Iluț, 2005: 173). In the urban family, the support of grandparents over 65 is differentiated according to the needs of the grandchildren, who continue to help their grandchildren only when they need it.

The involvement of grandparents is also described by researcher Teodorescu:

- "grandparents are no longer as much co-opted to make decisions", but rather their relationship functions „as a support department of the mono-nuclear family, having diminished and predominantly non-educational roles”;

- some grandparents live vicariously through their grandchildren, although they claim that their role in the upbringing and education of their grandchildren is minimal or even non-existent, seeking their source of happiness in trips abroad or in the freedom to do what they like;

- other grandparents claim that they have learned to be neutral about grandchildren's upbringing or to resign themselves in situations when there are tensions between children and parents, calling themselves "grandparents with limited roles and counting themselves a failure from the point of view of a traditional old age" (Teodorescu, 2022: 177).

In another vein, some urban elderly people<sup>4</sup> compare their childhood period with the current period of their grandchildren, "the easy pleasant life of their grandchildren against the high severity of their childhood", "our parents and teachers used to beat us if we did not listen, but they only scold their grandchildren", but this too not constantly (excerpt from the interview with Iancu M, 70 years old, retired, secondary education, Cluj, in Tîrhaș, 1993: 146-148). In general, grandparents are rather pessimistic at this stage of their lives, projecting their optimism and contentment in their grandchildren and children: "I have a granddaughter, she is in Alba at school, I don't know what to call her, she is becoming a journalist or a teacher

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<sup>4</sup> The study "Representations of the life cycle in the Transylvanian rural and urban family - a qualitative approach" was carried out in the period 1997-2003 in three rural and urban areas of the Apuseni Mountains (Valea Drăganului, Cluj County, Gârda de Sus and Sohodol, Alba County). A total of 53 rural informants and 16 urban informants were interviewed, in three age categories (20-44, 45-64, 65+) and with different schooling and residence.

... she is in the second year. She's very good, she's learning well, but I have two other grandchildren at high school in Câmpeni. They like it here because the air is fresh, they help us with the hay, with the cows" (Negrea A, 73 years old, Dobrești, Gârda de Sus, in Tîrhaș, [Iluț, 1996: 146-148]).

### **Field survey on intergenerational relationships**

The interviewees attribute a decisive place to the family in education through the "formation of an appropriate behaviour with love for work" and the "transmission of authentic values". In addition to the father and mother, education specialists also mention other members of the extended family who have played a decisive role in their socialisation, such as grandparents and aunts, siblings - "older sister", "two older brothers", "a cousin of my mother's whom I consider as my second mother". With regard to the influence of the family in their upbringing, the pupils mention "strict grandparents" who wanted perfection and responsibility for their actions, family friends, aunts or uncles close to the pupils' age, guardians.

It should be noted that the "Role of grandparents in the extended family" was not a main theme of the interview guide in the 2009-2011 survey, but it was tangentially addressed by some interviewees in the chapter "Family education". Compared to the families of the interwar period, we did not interview recomposed families, but we interviewed several family members: father-wife, mother-daughter, mother-son, father-son, grandparents, pupils - headmaster.

Grandparents' occupations included: farmers, carpenters, mechanics, plumbers, accountants, teachers, nurses, economists, psychologists, painters and doctors. Their role is thus recalled by the interviewees: they help young mothers in the household, become role models for their own grandchildren, supervise their behaviour, transmit values such as: "common sense, respect for others and living creatures, altruism, generosity", "rigid upbringing in the sense of hard work and discretion", support them when they have a hard time, especially with homework, teach them foreign languages or transmit Romanian specificities, guide them in their choice of profession. "My grandmother taught me most of the notions. My parents worked in the health sector and wanted me to be a doctor, but to their surprise I chose to go to the seminary and then to the Faculty of Theology" (priest from Iași, 54). But there are also cases where the stances of some grandparents cause tensions in the family or, on the contrary, some grandchildren choose to spend their holidays in other places rather than with their grandparents. Also, in some families, few values unite grandparents and grandchildren: "Parents are at work in the morning to bring their children's phones, laptops or pocket money. Or, more than that, one goes abroad for good and the children stay with grandparents. The grandfather does not understand the grandson, the grandson does not want to carry out any chores, he is at the age when he rejects any interference from any adult, it is the distance of a generation" (school counsellor from Iași, 59 years old).

We identified several types of grandparents. We included in the category of *grandparents in need*, the grandparents whose children remarried or died and grandchildren remained in their care. "My father died when I was 12, and my mother and paternal grandmother took over my father's role". Similarly, Mrs. X, a mathematics teacher at a high school in Iași, calls her grandparents her "parents" because they raised her, her mother died, and her father rebuilt his life and did not want his daughter to interact with his new family. "For me, my role model in my upbringing was my family, my grandparents, because unfortunately my mother died before I met her and my grandparents raised me. I was careful not to embarrass my grandparents. I was an example to the community and everyone appreciated me. In the village, I was seen as the daughter of old Andrei". (teacher from Iași, 52).

Another type is that of *grandparents who are permissive* with their grandchildren's mistakes: "I wished to have a different family environment, to have the atmosphere of my

grandparents, they behaved differently with me, they were attentive, they gave me what I needed and let me do what I wanted. And now in the 10th grade I go to them, I feel better there. There's a difference between my grandparents and my parents. I wish my parents would listen to me more, to accept my points of view, to communicate more with me, i.e. the way I feel about my grandparents" (student from Iași, 16 years old). Also, another interviewee says: "The Grandma of my husband used to make all the grandson's whims. He was a rebellious child, an only child, a child with whom you have to be very patient. He was raised by his grandmother, to whom he was much attached. My mother-in-law told me that from the age of 3 he lived with his grandmother. He didn't want to live with his parents, indeed his mother was cold, and his father was very authoritarian, although she appreciated him at school, but sparks would fly between them when they saw each other. His grandmother was the person who did all his whims, while his mother the person with the rules." (Teacher from Iași, 38).

*Playful grandparents* are those grandparents who take the time to read stories to their grandchildren and then explain to them, "when I was little, my grandmother read me stories, helped me learn poetry" (student from Iași, 17) or teaches them various games, regardless of age: "grandpa inspired my passion for sports" (student from Iași, 16). Similarly, an Italian writer describes his way of communicating with his own grandson, "because I played with the little ones, I tried to communicate, to teach them to manage on their own. It was a new activity with my own grandson in some ways. I was using a different language to communicate, it was a new environment, but at the same time it was still a growing person and therefore it was interesting to think about what game to propose, what toy to invent for him, always with the aim of helping him to better shape himself as a human being" (Fresco interview with Bruno Munari).

Another type is that of *authoritarian grandparents*. Most often, they live either with their grandchildren or close to them, in our case in Iași or Paris. "I live close to my grandparents and we see each other quite often. Sometimes we have disagreements about the time we spend preparing lessons for school because they want us to learn more and we want to play" (pupil in Paris, 17). Grandparents' authority is not always recognised, as grandchildren want as much independence as possible. Other grandparents "imposed a rigorous program to be respected, creating benchmarks for the child. For example: now you write, you draw, you colour, you go outside to play, you don't do what you want...The child is good to have certain tasks to accomplish at any time according to his age level" (school counsellor from Iași, 37 years old).

In addition to the types of grandparents mentioned above, in the specialised literature we note: war grandparents; factory/business grandparents; consumerist grandparents who "give their grandchildren presents, trinkets with no meaning for young people"; young grandparents (they have a job, are active, energetic, helpful, comforting, available, but do not want to give up occupations that make them feel good); anxious grandparents (they are tender, generous with grandchildren, but take your breath away with their constant reminders: "Be careful!"); *missing grandparents* (intrusive, choleric, possessive grandparents who like to intervene or, on the contrary, *passive* ones who live isolated in the house, cautious and almost "gone", before their time, avoiding participating in family life (Fresco, 2018: 39-128).

"Before 1989, the family relied heavily on the support of grandparents, at least after the age of two because until the child was two years old the mother stayed on maternity leave, then she would send the child to the grandparents for two or three years until they enrolled the child in school. In rural areas, children lived with extended families. Parents would take their children from the countryside with habits, with flaws, and many children got lost in that. The children became accustomed to the village and it was very difficult for them to integrate in the city schools when their parents took them." (School counsellor in Iași, 37). When the action of grandparents goes against the parents' principles, the education and balanced development of grandchildren are affected, leading to "hyper-protectiveness and hyper-

permissiveness, favouring the development of psycho-behavioural traits such as: de-duplication, infatuation, insincerity, relationship difficulties, maladjustment, etc.". (Mitrofan, Mitrofan, 1991: 61)

Also in this period, the role of the parents in transmitting religious education was taken over by the grandparents, where families lived together for several generations in both rural and urban areas: "Grandmother lived in the same house with us and she had many tasks to fulfil in relation to us, because the parents left home at 4.30 a.m. and returned in the evening from the fields, working in the CAP - Kolkhoz. Our grandmother told us our tasks, we didn't ask questions. We woke up with her (...) We went to church with her, she talked to us about God..." (priest from Paris, 43 years old) or another interviewee, "My parents worked a lot and I spent many hours in the presence of my maternal grandmother, living in the same apartment until the age of 20. As we know, in Bucharest, more than in other cities, there were huge queues to buy groceries and a lot of time my parents and I spent in these queues (psychiatrist in Paris, 40 years old).

Living together was characterised by a collective involvement of family members, the home was not just a shared space, but an environment for relating, getting to know each other and founding solidarity between generations, emphasising a series of values, such as trust, responsibility, generosity, communication, authenticity, duty, sincerity (Apostu, 2016: 14). However, the living together of several generations also causes some material (housing, income), psychological and social problems, characterised by a series of tensions, ultimately explainable by different life experiences, different levels of education and training, attitudes and beliefs determined by the economic emancipation of young people, modernisation and change processes in society (Voinea, 2005: 14).

A pupil in the 12th grade tells nostalgically about her childhood years spent with her maternal grandparents: "At least in the 1st-4th grades I spent more time with my maternal grandparents. This was when the stairs were being cleaned and my parents kept me away from the dust, as I also had some health problems. My grandfather, in particular, would take me to school, bring me, I remember him checking my homework - multiplication tables in particular, and my grandmother was with geography. So, everyone was helping me in their own way with something, that's why I was more inclined towards the math and sciences track. I also remember my grandfather frequently telling a neighbour boy to watch out for me at school, meaning if someone said insulting words to me or even beat me up, this boy would defend me. But I only visited my paternal grandparents during the major holidays, Easter and Christmas" (student from Iasi, 19 years old).

Another interviewee describes the tasks she has in the presence of her three grandchildren, who live in the same house in Iasi: "I bring the grandchildren from school, kindergarten or the Children's Club, because in the morning my son-in-law brings them and I do it all week. We live in the same house with the daughter; the grandchildren only come downstairs and go to our bedroom. They come and wreak havoc at my place, because they have their toys upstairs, so they don't have to carry them, they knock them all over the place. We sit with them when they cry or whatever. We don't have channels that we watch together, being young they are more with the games and especially in the cold season they stay in the house, upstairs, at their special little tables for children, more with their tablets, phones, and all these new kids of wonders. Sometimes they bother us when we go to sleep." (Grandfather from Iasi, 67). A quantitative research in Iasi shows that the role of grandparents in preparing grandchildren for school ranks third with 9% (2% constantly, and 7% sometimes), after the mother (14% constantly, 32% sporadically) and the father 6% yes, and sometimes 20%). In this research, only the responses of students who are not only children were selected (Vasiliu, 2019: 109).

In the field survey, we also notice grandparents who are constantly present in grandchildren's lives and support them in all aspects, becoming guardians as shown in the excerpt below:

"Grandmother played the most important role in my upbringing. Since 2006, grandmother took me as my guardian. My mother has a chipping worker qualification and currently lives in Portugal for 18 years and my father in Spain. My mother is a hairdresser and divorced my father soon after my birth... Although my grandmother by all she could do for me tried to replace the absence of my parents, I did not reach her expectations. She is a woman of faith, when I was a child I went to church with her and confess to a priest..." (student from Iași, 18 years old). Against the background of the phenomenon of children left at home with parents working abroad, Law 272/2004 was amended and supplemented in 2013, mentioning the delegation of parental authority to relatives of the pupil up to the fourth degree, and since 2019, adding that minors may also stay with other persons with whom the children "have developed attachment relationships or with whom they have enjoyed family life" according to art. 105, para. 1 of Law 272/2004 with subsequent amendments and additions. The law also mentions the need to draw up the legal formalities for the delegation of parental authority, i.e. the registration of these children falls within the attributions of the Public Social Welfare Service of the City Halls. The impact on the children left in the grandparents' care can present both positive aspects (familiarity with them, grandparents' participation in the upbringing, education and training of the grandchild from the moment of birth), but also negative aspects caused by the age difference, the influence of the entourage and the adolescent's terribleness, which can lead to delinquent acts (Stanciu, 2023: 103).

Finally, after 2007 we also identify a category of younger grandparents who work in the country or abroad and see their grandchildren very rarely, possibly hearing them on the phone from time to time. The first sub-category is that of grandchildren whose grandparents stayed in Romania. They keep in touch with their grandchildren, facilitated by technology, mostly by telephone, audio-video calls and, less frequently, in writing, only on special occasions, holidays or anniversaries. From France to Romania, grandchildren talk as often as possible and grandparents are extremely willing to listen to them, without questioning whether it is time to do their lessons, in the case of young school-age grandchildren. But as they reach secondary school, some grandchildren may come into conflict with grandparents.

Another sub-category of grandparents, particularly after Romania's accession to the European Union, is grandparents who migrate to France or Canada to help their children, including grandchildren, by becoming French or Canadian citizens. In these families the Romanian language is spoken, you hear the children speak with a "sweet Moldavian accent, with a Maramureș or Oltenia accent from Craiova, because at home the grandparents teach their grandchildren Romanian as they speak it." (priest from Paris, 38 years old), "Grandparents came with us to France, living close to us and we see each other quite often." (student from Paris, 17 years old).

### **Conclusions**

The presence of grandparents in the family is justified by their wisdom, their unconditional love for their own grandchildren, their rich life experience, their help or their direct or indirect participation in the family. Factors influencing the increasing role of grandparents in the extended family include: grandparents' age and health, engagement of one spouse in another relationship and abandonment of children of the other partner or in-laws/grandparents, internal or external migration of parents for a short or long period of time, women's employment and their focus on career or personal development, some mothers leave their children to grandparents because new partners do not accept children from another relationship. There are strong emotional ties between grandparents and grandchildren, manifested in continuity and complementarity, but also in situations of resistance or conflict, especially in adolescence. Grandparents provide material, financial and educational support to their children and, by extension, to their grandchildren, can pass on new skills, in some cases have full custody of their grandchildren, and feel valued by caring for their grandchildren. Therefore "through grandchildren we discover childhood as a delicacy,

different from the childhood of each one of us, we discover the childhood of humanity: all the children in the world who are (or represent) what mankind will be in the future” (Fresco, 2018: 118).

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# THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL POLICIES ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MAYORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the perceptions of mayors and social workers on the effectiveness of social policies at the local level, with a focus on policy implementation and community impact. Using a quantitative research approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to a diverse sample of local government officials and social workers. The study aims to assess how these key stakeholders evaluate current social policies, the challenges they face in implementation, and the gaps between policy design and practice. Results indicate significant differences in how mayors and social workers perceive policy effectiveness, with mayors often emphasizing resource constraints while social workers focus on operational inefficiencies. The findings contribute to a better understanding of the barriers to successful policy implementation at the local level and suggest several practical recommendations for policymakers to improve outcomes. This research highlights the need for more collaborative approaches between local governments and social service providers to enhance the effectiveness of social policies.*

**Keywords:** social policies, local governance, mayors' perspectives, social workers' perspectives, policy implementation

## 1. Background and context

Social policies play a fundamental role in shaping the welfare of communities by addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, education, and health. These policies are typically developed at the national or regional level, but their implementation largely occurs at the local level, where they interact directly with the needs of citizens. Local governance, including the roles of mayors and municipal leaders, as well as social workers who deliver services on the ground, is crucial in ensuring that social policies are applied effectively and equitably. According to Pierson, social policies are “a set of principles and frameworks designed to promote social well-being and address social inequalities” (Pierson, 2011: 28). While these policies provide a foundation for societal improvement, their success often depends on how they are adapted and managed locally.

Local government officials and social workers are at the forefront of this adaptation process, translating broad social policy goals into actionable programs. Mayors, as local decision-makers, play a critical role in allocating resources and setting priorities for their communities. Social workers, on the other hand, are responsible for the direct delivery of services to individuals and families in need. This dual involvement makes local governance a vital arena for understanding the impact and effectiveness of social policies.

However, the relationship between policy design at higher levels of government and its practical implementation locally is often fraught with challenges. This is particularly true in the context of fiscal constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the complexity of meeting diverse community needs. “The local implementation of social policies is shaped by not only the available resources but also the administrative capacity and political will of local governments” (Lipsky, 1980: 71). Understanding how local actors such as mayors and social workers perceive these challenges is essential for improving policy outcomes.

Despite the critical role that local governance plays in the success of social policies, there are significant barriers that hinder effective implementation. One of the major challenges is the disconnect between the design of social policies and the realities of local governance. National-level policies are often crafted with broad, standardized goals that do not always take into account the unique circumstances of different localities. As a result, mayors and social workers must navigate a complex landscape of policy directives, budgetary limitations, and community-specific needs. According to other authors (2009), “the top-down approach to policy design frequently overlooks the nuances of local governance, leading to implementation failures or suboptimal outcomes” (Newman and Clarke, 2009: 45).

Another significant challenge is resource allocation. Local governments often face financial constraints that limit their ability to fully implement social policies. Mayors may be forced to prioritize certain areas of policy at the expense of others, creating gaps in service delivery. These financial challenges are compounded by bureaucratic inefficiencies that further slowdown the implementation process. As Pressman and Wildavsky argue, “implementation is inherently a complex process that involves multiple actors, each with their own interests and constraints, making it difficult to achieve the intended outcomes of policies” (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973: 112).

Social workers, as frontline providers of services, also face challenges that affect the effectiveness of social policies. These challenges include high caseloads, insufficient training, and limited access to resources. This can result in social workers being unable to meet the diverse needs of their clients, undermining the goals of social policies. According to Lipsky, social workers often operate as “street-level bureaucrats” who must make decisions on resource allocation and service provision, often with limited guidance and support from higher levels of government (Lipsky, 1990: 49). This discretion can lead to uneven application of policies, further complicating efforts to address social inequalities. In Romania, one of the most important challenges “the lack of qualified social workers at all its levels” (Sorescu, 2015: 369; Niță & Goga, 2018).

The importance of effective social policy implementation at the local level cannot be overstated. Local governments and social workers are the primary actors responsible for translating national policy objectives into tangible outcomes for communities. If policies are not effectively implemented, vulnerable populations may not receive the support they need, exacerbating social inequalities. Some authors suggest, “policy failures at the local level can have widespread consequences, not only for the intended beneficiaries of the policies but also for public trust in government and social institutions” (Bovens and 't Hart, 1996: 231). Also, it is very important to analyse the public policies of a society and how they are related (as a response) to its social realities, especially in crisis situation (see Otovescu, 2022, Chapter V).

## 2. Theoretical framework

Social policies are often understood within a variety of theoretical frameworks that explain the interaction between policy design, governance, and social outcomes. One of the most prominent frameworks is the *welfare state theory*, which posits that the state plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of its citizens (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Welfare state theory suggests that governments develop policies to redistribute wealth and provide services such as healthcare, education, and social security. According to this theory, the extent and effectiveness of social policies depend largely on the political and institutional configurations of a given state, as well as the local capacities to implement those policies (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 58).

In the context of local governance, the *multi-level governance theory* is also relevant. This theory emphasizes the diffusion of power across different levels of government and the need for coordination between national, regional, and local authorities in the implementation of policies (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). The theory argues that successful policy outcomes depend on how well these different levels work together, particularly in decentralized



governance systems where local authorities, such as mayors and social workers, have a significant role in policy execution (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 5).

Another important concept in the literature is *Lipsky's street-level bureaucracy theory*, which highlights the role of frontline workers—such as social workers—in shaping the implementation of social policies. Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats exercise a considerable amount of discretion in how they apply policies, making them crucial actors in the implementation process. Their ability to translate abstract policy goals into practical services directly affects the success or failure of social policies at the local level (Lipsky, 1980: 13). This theory is especially relevant in understanding how social workers experience challenges like resource constraints, caseload pressures, and inadequate training, all of which can impact policy outcomes.

A substantial body of literature has focused on the relationship between social policies and local governance, particularly in terms of how policies are implemented and the factors that contribute to their success or failure. One key area of research has examined the *effectiveness of social policies* at the local level, with many studies highlighting a gap between policy design and actual outcomes. Newman and Clarke argue that social policies designed at the national level often fail to account for the specific needs and capacities of local governments, leading to problems in implementation. They suggest that the “one-size-fits-all” approach commonly used in policy design can result in policies that are not adaptable to the unique social, economic, and political contexts of different localities (Newman & Clarke, 2009: 103).

Other studies have explored the role of local government officials, such as mayors, in shaping policy outcomes. Mayors often serve as the key decision-makers who must prioritize various policy areas, allocate resources, and oversee the implementation process. According to Pierre and Peters, local leaders play a pivotal role in determining the success of social policies, particularly in decentralized systems where they have more autonomy. They argue that mayors are “critical in translating national policy goals into local actions,” but their effectiveness is often constrained by budgetary limitations and competing demands (Pierre & Peters, 2000: 87). This perspective highlights the importance of understanding the local political dynamics that influence policy implementation.

In terms of *social workers' roles*, several studies have focused on the challenges they face in delivering services. Research by Evans highlights that social workers are often constrained by insufficient resources and excessive caseloads, which make it difficult to effectively implement social policies. Evans also found that social workers frequently struggle with the bureaucratic demands placed upon them, which can divert attention away from the core task of helping individuals and families (Evans, 2011: 219). Similarly, Ellis notes that social workers are often expected to deliver high-quality services with minimal resources, leading to what he calls “service delivery under austerity” (Ellis, 2013: 12).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research design**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the perspectives of mayors and social workers on the implementation of social policies at the local level. Qualitative research was deemed the most appropriate approach as it allows for in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena, such as the challenges faced by local actors in implementing social policies. Specifically, the study used focus groups and semi-structured interviews to gather rich, detailed data on the experiences and viewpoints of the participants. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is particularly effective when the goal is to understand how individuals construct meaning from their experiences within a specific context (p. 45). In this case, the context was the local implementation of national social policies, and the participants were key actors involved in this process.

The focus group sessions with mayors were structured to encourage open discussion about their experiences with social policy implementation. The semi-structured format allowed us to cover essential topics while providing flexibility to explore emerging themes.

The semi-structured interviews with social workers were designed to explore their day-to-day experiences in delivering services under national social policy frameworks. This format allowed for in-depth, personal insights while maintaining a focus on key themes.

### **3.2. Research hypothesis**

**Hypothesis 1:** *Resource constraints significantly hinder the effective implementation of social policies at the local level, affecting both mayors and social workers.*

**Hypothesis 2:** *The design of national social policies does not align with the specific needs of local communities, leading to implementation challenges.*

**Hypothesis 3:** *Lack of collaboration and communication between local government officials and social workers exacerbates the challenges of policy implementation.*

### **3.3. Participants**

Two distinct groups of participants were involved in the research: mayors and social workers. A total of **17 mayors** (from Dolj County, South West Region of Romania) participated in two focus groups, each consisting of 8 and 9 participants, respectively. These mayors were selected to represent a diverse range of localities, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. The selection process was purposeful, aiming to capture a variety of experiences and perspectives from leaders in different types of municipalities. The **23 social workers** who participated in the study were individually interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Social workers were selected based on their direct involvement in implementing social policies at the local level, and efforts were made to include a range of social workers from different service areas (e.g., family welfare, health services, housing support).

### **3.4. Data analysis**

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. First, all transcripts were read multiple times to achieve familiarity with the content. Initial codes were then generated based on recurring ideas and concepts within the data. After coding, similar codes were grouped together into broader themes. This process was iterative, involving the refinement of themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. Themes were then reviewed in relation to the research questions and existing literature.

The analysis was conducted using NVivo software, which facilitated the coding and organization of the data. Key themes were identified both within and across the two groups (mayors and social workers), allowing for comparison of their perspectives. The final themes were discussed and validated through consultation with a second researcher to ensure reliability and accuracy.

## **4. Results**

The qualitative analysis of the focus groups with mayors and the interviews with social workers revealed several key themes related to the challenges of social policy implementation at the local level. While the perspectives of mayors and social workers were distinct in many ways, there were also areas of overlap, particularly regarding the resource constraints that both groups identified as significant barriers to effective policy implementation.

### ***Theme 1: Resource constraints***

Both mayors and social workers emphasized the severe impact of resource limitations on their ability to effectively implement social policies. Mayors repeatedly referred

to **budgetary constraints**, noting that financial allocations from the central government were often insufficient to meet the needs of their communities. One mayor stated:

*“We’re constantly asked to do more with less. The funding we receive is barely enough to cover the basics, let alone address all the social issues our community faces”* (Mayor, Focus Group 1).

Social workers echoed these concerns, but from the perspective of frontline service delivery. Many social workers reported struggling with high caseloads and inadequate resources to provide the support their clients needed. One social worker explained: *“We have so many families coming to us for help, but there just isn’t enough funding or staff to give them the attention they deserve. It feels like we’re constantly putting out fires instead of being able to really help people”* (Social Worker, Interview 12).

This theme was consistent across urban, suburban, and rural areas, with both mayors and social workers describing the mismatch between the scope of social problems and the available resources to address them.

Thus, both mayors and social workers consistently highlighted the insufficient financial support from central government as a critical issue, with mayors pointing to inadequate budgets that barely cover basic needs, and social workers describing overwhelming caseloads and limited staffing. This mismatch between the growing complexity of social issues and the resources available to address them was evident across different types of localities—urban, suburban, and rural alike. As a result, both local government leaders and frontline workers are forced to prioritize immediate, urgent needs over long-term, sustainable interventions. These constraints undermine the capacity of local authorities to fully implement national policies and meet the diverse needs of their communities, ultimately contributing to gaps in service delivery and widening social inequalities.

### ***Theme 2: Disconnect between policy design and local needs***

A second major theme was the perceived disconnect between the design of national social policies and the specific needs of local communities. Mayors were particularly critical of the one-size-fits-all approach of national policies, arguing that these policies often failed to take into account the unique socio-economic conditions of their municipalities. One participant noted: *“The policies coming down from the central government don’t always make sense for us. What works in a big city doesn’t necessarily work in a rural community like ours”* (Mayor, Focus Group 2).

Social workers also pointed out that rigid policy frameworks limited their ability to tailor services to individual client needs. Many felt that they were constrained by overly prescriptive policies that did not allow for the flexibility required in complex cases. One social worker described the situation as follows: *“Sometimes we have to follow these strict guidelines that don’t really fit the situation we’re dealing with. It’s frustrating because we know what would help the person, but we’re bound by the rules”* (Social Worker, Interview 5).

Mayors mentioned that social workers’ input was often missing during key policy discussions, while social workers felt excluded from decision-making processes that directly affected their work. One mayor stated: *“We need to hear more from the people delivering these services. Their insights are invaluable, but there’s a gap in how we communicate”* (Mayor, Focus Group 1). Meanwhile, social workers pointed out the lack of direct consultation when policies were being designed or adapted at the local level. One social worker explained: *“We’re expected to implement policies without having had any say in them. It feels like we’re always dealing with the consequences of decisions made far away from our reality”* (Social Worker, Interview 8).

### ***Theme 3: Collaboration and communication challenges***

Another key theme that emerged from the data was the challenge of collaboration between local governments and social workers. While both mayors and social workers

acknowledged the importance of working together to implement social policies effectively, there were significant communication barriers between these two groups. Mayors often felt that social workers were not providing enough feedback on the success or failure of policies on the ground, while social workers reported that they were rarely consulted during the policy-making process. One mayor commented: *“We need better communication with our social workers. They’re the ones on the frontlines, and we rely on their feedback, but we don’t always get it”* (Mayor, Focus Group 1). On the other hand, a social worker noted: *“We’re not included in the decision-making process, even though we’re the ones who have to implement the policies. It feels like we’re just expected to follow orders without any input”* (Social Worker, Interview 20).

This lack of collaboration was seen as a major barrier to the successful implementation of social policies, with both groups calling for improved channels of communication and more collaborative decision-making.

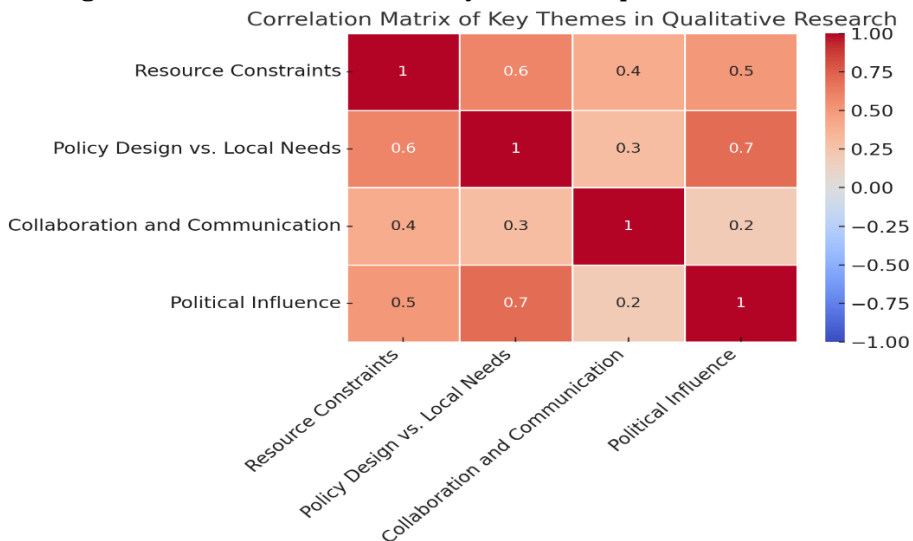
**Theme 4: The Impact of political priorities**

Finally, mayors frequently discussed the influence of political priorities on the implementation of social policies. Many mayors indicated that their decisions regarding resource allocation and policy prioritization were influenced by political pressures from constituents and higher levels of government. One mayor candidly remarked:

*“At the end of the day, we have to balance the needs of our community with political realities. Sometimes that means social policies take a back seat to other issues that are more visible or politically urgent”* (Mayor, Focus Group 2).

Political dynamics were also highlighted as an obstacle to the consistent implementation of social policies. Several mayors described how local political pressures often forced them to prioritize highly visible issues, such as infrastructure or economic development, over less tangible but equally important social issues. One mayor observed: *“Social policies can sometimes take a back seat when we’re pressured to focus on more immediate or politically popular projects”* (Mayor, Focus Group 2). Social workers noticed the same dynamic, with one worker commenting: *“Sometimes, the resources go to the programs that are easier to showcase or have more political traction, even if they’re not what our clients need the most”* (Social Worker, Interview 14).

**Figure 1. Correlation matrix of key themes in qualitative research**



Source: generated by the authors

The correlation matrix from Figure 1 highlights key relationships between the core themes of the qualitative research. Resource constraints show a moderate positive correlation with both the gap between policy design and local needs (0.6) and political influence (0.5), suggesting that as resources become more limited, the challenges in adapting policies locally and the influence of political priorities grow. Additionally, political influence strongly correlates with policy design (0.7), indicating that political factors play a significant role in shaping whether national policies meet local needs.

Although collaboration and communication are moderately linked to resource constraints (0.4) and policy design (0.3), they are less affected by political influence (0.2), implying that operational factors beyond politics and resources impact the level of cooperation between mayors and social workers. Overall, political priorities and resource limitations emerge as key barriers to aligning policy goals with local realities, while improved communication and flexibility in policy design may help mitigate these challenges

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The results of this study highlight the significant challenges that both mayors and social workers face in the local implementation of social policies. Resource constraints, a disconnect between national policy design and local needs, collaboration challenges, and political influences all play a critical role in shaping the effectiveness of social policy outcomes. These findings suggest that greater attention must be paid to the specific needs of local actors and the structural barriers they face in order to improve the implementation of social policies at the local level.

The first hypothesis of our research was *validated*. The results of the focus groups and interviews consistently showed that both mayors and social workers identified resource limitations—such as insufficient funding and staffing—as a major barrier to implementing social policies. Mayors frequently discussed budgetary challenges, while social workers pointed to high caseloads and inadequate resources as obstacles to delivering quality services.

Also, the second hypothesis was also *validated*, because both mayors and social workers reported that the one-size-fits-all approach of national policies often failed to address the unique socio-economic conditions of their municipalities. Mayors, in particular, highlighted the difficulty of adapting policies designed for urban centers to rural communities. Social workers echoed this concern, noting that rigid policy frameworks limited their ability to tailor services to individual client needs.

As for the third hypothesis, this one was *partially validated*: while both groups recognized the importance of collaboration, the findings showed that there were significant communication barriers. Mayors felt that social workers were not always providing enough feedback, while social workers indicated that they were often excluded from the policy-making process. However, some participants acknowledged that collaboration was improving in certain areas, suggesting that while communication challenges exist, they are not universal.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the implementation of social policies at the local level:

### a) Increase funding and resource allocation

One of the most pressing needs identified by both mayors and social workers is increased funding for social services. National governments should consider revising their funding frameworks to better support local governments, particularly those in economically disadvantaged areas. Additionally, targeted grants and financial support programs could be developed to help localities with higher social needs.

Both groups suggested that revised funding frameworks are needed at the national level to better support local governments, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas where the demand for social services is higher. Mayors proposed targeted grants and financial support programs aimed at localities with greater social needs, allowing them to tailor

services to their specific communities. These solutions would ensure that funding is allocated based on the level of need rather than applying a uniform approach across all municipalities, which often disadvantages poorer regions

b) *Strengthen collaboration between local governments and social workers:*

In response to the challenge of lack of communication, both mayors and social workers suggested that regular feedback mechanisms would improve the flow of information and collaboration between local government officials and frontline workers. Mayors proposed the creation of joint planning meetings where social workers could provide input on policy adaptations and resource allocation based on their direct experiences. Similarly, social workers recommended the establishment of **advisory boards** that include frontline professionals in policy discussions. These boards would create formal channels for social workers to offer feedback on ongoing policies and contribute to future planning

Improved communication and collaboration between mayors and social workers is essential for the successful implementation of social policies. Local governments should establish regular feedback mechanisms, such as joint planning meetings or advisory boards that include social workers, to ensure that their insights and experiences are taken into account during the policy-making process.

c) *Develop training and professional support for social workers:*

Social workers require continuous professional development and access to training that enables them to manage their caseloads effectively and navigate the complex demands of policy implementation. Investment in training programs, mentorship, and support networks for social workers can help alleviate the pressures they face and improve service delivery. During the interviews with social workers, a recurring theme was the need for continuous professional development and access to training in order to manage their increasingly complex caseloads and effectively implement social policies.

Many social workers expressed frustration at the lack of adequate training to address the diverse and evolving needs of their clients, particularly in areas such as mental health, substance abuse, and housing instability. The social workers interviewed frequently cited the need for specialized training programs that would not only enhance their technical skills but also provide them with tools to manage the emotional toll of their work. Several participants highlighted the importance of mentorship programs, where experienced professionals could guide newer social workers through difficult cases.

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# ORIENTATION OF SOCIAL DOMINANCE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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**Abstract:** *The increase in the number of people with intellectual disabilities further creates more or less satisfactory interactions between them and the population. Previous research has shown that this contact leads to negative attitudes toward them. This study aims to verify whether attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities vary depending on the orientation of social dominance. The results obtained from two hundred students from the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon show that the orientation of social dominance predicts negative effects, cognitions, and behaviors adopted towards the persons living with intellectual disabilities. Individuals who score high on the portrait social dominance orientation and/or pro trait anti-egalitarianism orientation of social dominance, develop tension, disgust, fear, or get up and leave when in the company of the latter. However, pity, serenity, sympathy, and the desire to converse are observed when the situation arises in a context where the respondent has a high social dominance countertrait and/or anti-egalitarianism countertrait score.*

**Keywords:** orientation of social dominance, attitudes, human rights, person with intellectual disability.

## 1. Introduction

According to Ajzen (2005: 3), “attitude is a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to an object, a person, an institution or an event.” Recent research on people's attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities reveals that these attitudes are mostly negative. They are often associated with expectations and actions which have the consequence of limiting the autonomy and integration into society of people with intellectual disabilities (Antonak et al., 1995). To understand and implement strategies to change public attitudes and reduce barriers to social inclusion, it is important to question their orientation to social dominance. Thus, it would be interesting to better understand the attitudes of certain people such as students who can play an important role in the integration of people with disabilities (Geskie et al., 1988).

Social dominance orientation (SDO), is, among other things, a powerful predictor of persecution, generalized prejudice and positive/negative attitudes towards groups. a person with low potential such as the poor, ethnic minorities, foreigners, women, immigrants and refugees, street children and people with intellectual disabilities (Altemeyer, 1996; Asbrock et al., 2010; Costello et al., 2011; Kteily et al., 1999; Thomsen, et al., 2008).

As shown by studies in which SDO predicts intergroup attitudes in novel situations, SDO is a generalized orientation not reducible to an individual's socialized attitudes toward specific social groups. Thus, in addition to fueling biases toward familiar and actual knowledge of social groups, SDO predicts affective responses to minimal groups, new social categories, and new social policies (Amiot et al., 2005; Ho et al., 2013; Krosch et al., 2013; Pratto et al., 1994; Reynolds et al., 2007; Sidanius et al., 1994; see Kteily et al., 2012).

Unlike previous measures of social dominance orientation that were designed to be unidimensional, a new conceptualization of this measure, the “social dominance orientation seven” (SDO7) is introduced to indicate differences in preference for hierarchy based on the group and inequality (Sidanius et al., 2015). The new measure (SDO7) integrates two sub-dimensions theoretically based on SDO-Dominance (SDO-D) and SDO-Egalitarianism (SDO-E). SDO-D constitutes the oppression of lower status groups such as people with disabilities. SDO-E constitutes a preference for equality between the dominated and the dominant. Within the framework of a multi-level theory of intergroup relations, social dominance theory posits that



individuals' attitudes towards inequality between social groups in general, or their orientation of social dominance, interacts with societal and institutional forces to produce and reproduce systems of social inequality (Pratto et al., 1994).

At the individual level of social domination, orientation was found to predict intergroup attitudes and behaviors over time and across cultures. This psychological construct occupies a solid role at the heart of society (Lee et al., 2011). The overall orientation is broken down into two sub-dimensions: support for intergroup domination and intergroup anti-egalitarianism, making it possible to predict with even more precision intergroup attitudes and behaviors (Ho et al., 2012). The domination dimension is characterized by support for overt oppression and aggressive intergroup behaviors aimed at maintaining the subordination of one or more groups, while the anti-egalitarianism dimension implies a preference for inequalities maintained by an interrelated network of subtle hierarchies. Despite the progress made in the discovery of the sub dimensions of SDO7, there are very researchers who have studied it to understand the attitudes towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

The theory of social dominance evokes a type of founding myths which has the function of attenuating social equalities and relations of domination between groups. These myths attenuating the social hierarchy can be defined as a greater allocation of positive resources to the groups that dominate within the social hierarchy. Among these myths or ideologies which attenuate the social hierarchy we can cite feminism, multiculturalism, socialism, universal human rights and external attributions to poverty. The subfactors of the SDO7 that guide acceptance are the pro trait social dominance and the pro trait anti-egalitarianism. Those who imply rejection are: the social dominance counter-trait and the anti-egalitarianism counter-trait. These two types of ideologies which are the basis of the theory of SDO. In other words, a fundamental hypothesis of the theory of the dominance of individuals in relationships with people with disabilities, as measured by the SDO scale, determines the adherence or rejection of these ideologies. This attitude towards domination can therefore represent a general explanatory factor making it possible to account for behaviors deemed negative with can to human rights of people with disabilities. Research has confirmed this perspective. Thus, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) were able to show that people obtaining a “relatively low” score on this SDO7 scale favor myths or ideology which attenuate social supremacy. Conversely, people demonstrating a “high” social dominance orientation are more supportive of ideologies whose adherence allows maintenance or an increase in superiority. This link between the SDO and the various legitimizing myths is confirmed in numerous researches (Altemeyer and al., 1999).

If the acceptance of the ideology, I prove to accentuate, the hierarchy seems to depend on the level of the SDO expressed, the same goes for the social roles assumed by individuals when they are confronted in situations requiring them to enter in relation to the other. In the same way, as these ideologies, it is possible to categorize the social roles which, thoughts, their exercise, make it possible to maintain and accentuate affects, systems of thought and more or less negative behaviors towards people of low potential (Sidanius and Pratto , 1999).

However, in an interindividual or intergroup relationship, the attitude towards the intellectually disabled person vary depending on the SDO

## **2. Context**

A society's conception of disability has a very significant impact on the answer to this question and on the way in which people with disabilities is considered in the collective consciousness. Disability evokes social overload, the weight of the inactive, fear, shame often provoke repulsion and remains for many the “paradigm of social uselessness” (UN,2006).

On a global scale, the World Bank and WHO report(2011), estimates the population of people with disabilities at 15% of the world population. That is to say between 110 and 190 million people. Furthermore, in the same report, the prevalence of disabilities is higher in

developing countries than in developed countries. The socio-economic situation of people with disabilities is marked by inequalities compared to the rest of the population: lower level of education, poorer health outcomes, higher unemployment and poverty rates (Tremblay & Perrier, 2006).

The most recent demographic statistics of Cameroon shows that, the population of people with disabilities is 10% of the total population of Cameroon (BUCREP, 2010). The consequences of disabilities are of varying intensity and affects multiple dimensions of lives: medical, social, economic, cultural, legal, etc. In Cameroon, a person with disability is legally designated in Law No. 83/013 of July 21, 1983 relating to the protection of people with disabilities, in its first article.

### **3.Method**

This study is exploratory. The research method adopted is quantitative. The field investigation was carried out using a questionnaire with students from the University of Yaounde I chosen in a non-probabilistic and accidental manner.

The objective of this study is to examine whether the attitude towards persons with intellectual disability varies depending on the factors of social dominance orientation. To achieve this, four research hypotheses below are formulated based on the dimensions of the SDO7 and tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson's test and Student's t test. 1) the attitude towards the intellectually disabled person varies depending on the pro trait social dominance. 2) the attitude towards intellectually disabled person varies depending on the social dominance counter-trait. 3) the attitude towards intellectually disabled person varies depending on the anti-egalitarianism trait. 4) the attitude towards intellectually disabled person varies depending on the anti-egalitarianism counter-trait.

### **4.Participants**

The verification of the research hypotheses was carried out using data collected from two hundred students at the start of the first two university years (118 men and 81 women, 01 participant did not mention their gender). The students came from different university faculties: the faculty sciences of education (n= 90), faculty of sciences (n= 53), faculty of biomedical sciences (n= 44), faculty of Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences (n=44). Remember that the participants were mainly adults, that is to say, aged between 22 and 40 years old (M = 27.5; SD = 4.63).

### **5.Instrument**

The questionnaire was completed collectively or individually. More precisely, at the end of the lecturers' course in the amphitheater, participants without disabilities were accidentally chosen and invited to participate in a short session for a few minutes of filling out data collection instrument. They were free to refuse or accept. On the first page of the questionnaire there were a number of recommendations and information. Thus, it was specified how to use the scales-like type in 7 and 5 points from orientation to social dominance and multidimensional attitudes. The confidentiality of the responses was clearly mentioned that the questionnaire was anonymous. The instrument consisted of two measures; including the Social Dominance Orientation Scale Seven and a measure of multidimensional attitudes. The new social dominance orientation scale is in 16 items and in four dimensions (against social dominance trait, pro anti-egalitarianism trait and against anti-egalitarianism trait), by Sidanius et al., (2015), from the two-dimensional version from 1994, was used. The reliability of this scale is satisfactory following the test of Cronbach's Alpha and Omega McDonald (see table 1).

**Table 1: Internal consistency of the ODS**

		$\alpha$	$\omega$
<b>Social Dominance Orientation Subscales</b>			
A1	Certain groups of people need to be kept in their place.	.71	.66
A2	It's probably a good thing that some groups are at the top and others are at the bottom.	.54	.72
A3	An ideal society requires that some groups be at the top and others at the bottom.	.42	.64
A4	Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.	.63	.70
<b>Pro trait social dominance subscale</b>		.69	.76
AT 5	The groups at the bottom deserve just as much as the groups at the top. (-)	.75	.75
A6	No group should dominate society. (-)	.63	.65
A7	The groups at the bottom should not stay in their place. (-)	.61	.67
AT 8	Group domination is a bad principle. (-)	.59	.63
<b>Subscale versus social dominance trait</b>		.72	.73
A9	We should not push for group equality.	.74	.75
A10	We should not try to ensure that every group has the same quality of life.	.68	.75
A11	It is unfair to try to make groups equal.	.65	.70
AT	Group equality should not be our primary goal.		
12		.76	.78
<b>Pro trait anti-egalitarianism subscale</b>		.78	.79
A13	We must work to give all groups equal opportunities to succeed. (-)	.72	.73
A14	We must do what we can to level the playing field for different groups. (-)	.57	.70
A15	Whatever efforts are necessary, we must strive to ensure that all groups have an equal chance in life.(-)	.56	.72
A16	Group equality should be our ideal. (-)	.67	.74
<b>Subscale versus anti-egalitarianism trait</b>		.73	.78
<b>Social Dominance Orientation Scale</b>		.73	.76

*N = 200; (-) = reversed items;  $\alpha$  = Alpha ofCronbach and  $\omega$ Omega ofMcDonalds*

In order to measure participants' attitudes towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities (PSHI), the English version adapted from “The Multidimensional Attitudes Scale toward Persons with Disabilities” (MAS), by Findler & al., (2007), was used. The MAS consists of a scenario involving a person with an intellectual disability in the relationship of imaginary companionship at the table with the interviewee. (for example: Imagine the following situation: “A man or woman went to lunch with friends in a café. An idiot or person with Down syndrome whom this man or woman does not know enters the café and joins the group. The idiot or person with Down syndrome is introduced to this gentleman or lady as an intellectually unbalanced person, and shortly after, everyone else leaves, only the gentleman or lady. Down syndrome stay at the table for 15 minutes to wait for their turn to leave” and three subscales: (affective in 16 items, from B1 to B16; cognitive in 10 items from B17 to B26 and behavioral in 8 items from B27 to B34) , using a 5-point Like scale, specifying the degree of probability from “not at all to very likely” (see Table 2). The Cronbach and  $\omega$  McDonald scores of the attitude subscales are also high, ( $\alpha$ Affect =.76,  $\omega$ Affect = .77); ( $\alpha$ Cognition = .82,  $\omega$ Cognition = .82) and ( $\alpha$ Behavior = .82;  $\omega$ Behavior = .82), this means that the psychometric properties of this questionnaire is considered satisfactory in terms of the items, the reliability and homogeneity of the inventory, the reliability, homogeneity and independence of the two factors identified. A total score of each subscale is the sum of the responses and a higher score suggests negative behavioral predispositions towards people with intellectual disabilities.

**Table 2 MAS internal consistency**

MAS subscale	Affect		Cognition	Behavior
	$\alpha$	$\omega$		
B1 Tension	.73	.74		
B2 Stress	.73	.74		
B3 Incapacity	.74	.75		
B4 Nervousness	.73	.74		

B5	Shame	.75	.76			
B6	Relaxation (-)	.75	.76			
B7	Serene (-)	.75	.76			
B8	Calm (-)	.76	.77			
B9	Depression	.75	.76			
B10	Fear	.73	.74			
B11	Disturbs	.74	.76			
B12	Guilt	.74	.75			
B13	Shyness	.74	.75			
B14	Pity	.76	.77			
B15	Disgust	.75	.76			
B16	Vigilance	.76	.77			
<b>Affect subscale</b>		<b>.76</b>	<b>.77</b>	<b>α</b>	<b>ω</b>	
B17	He/she seems like an interesting guy/girl. (-)		.81	.81		
B18	He/she seems like an OK person. (-)		.82	.83		
B19	We can get along very well. (-)		.80	.81		
B20	He/she seems friendly. (-)		.79	.80		
B21	I like to meet new people. (-)		.79	.79		
B22	He/she will enjoy knowing me. (-)		.80	.80		
B23	I can always talk to him about things that interest us both. (-)		.80	.80		
B24	I can make him feel comfortable. (-)		.80	.81		
B25	Why not get to know him better? (-)		.80	.81		
B26	He/she will appreciate it if I start a conversation. (-)		.81	.82		
<b>Cognition subscale</b>			<b>.82</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>α</b>	<b>ω</b>
B27	Ask her to move away from him.		.77	.77		
B28	Ask him to get up and leave.		.78	.78		
B29	Read the newspaper or talk on a cell phone.		.80	.81		
B30	Continue what he was doing.		.82	.83		
B31	Find an excuse to leave.		.78	.79		
B32	Move to another table.		.79	.80		
B33	Initiate a conversation if he/she doesn't make the first move. (-)		.81	.82		
B34	Start a conversation. (-)		.81	.82		
<b>Behavior subscale</b>			<b>.82</b>	<b>.82</b>		
<b>Multidimensional Attitudes Scale</b>			<b>.80</b>	<b>.80</b>		

*N = 200; (-) = reversed items; α = Alpha ofCronbach and ω =Omega ofMcDonalds.*

## 6.Results

Relationship between pro trait dominance and attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities

The analysis of tables 3, 5, 7, and 9 show that the participants have a score higher than average ( $M=3$ ), attitude towards the human rights of people in situations of intellectual disability ( $M_{\text{affect}} = 3.07$ ;  $M_{\text{cognition}} = 3.13$ ;  $M_{\text{behavior}} = 3.16$ ). This means that our participants have negative attitudes towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities, whether emotionally, thoughts and/or actions during interactions. The results in (Table 3) also show that individuals have a pro trait social dominance score below the average ( $M = 4$ ;  $M_{\text{pro trait social dominance}} = 3.16$ ;  $SD = 1.35$ ). In other words, the individuals questioned have a weak tendency towards behaviors favorable to the superiority of one group; to the detriment of others. The processed data in (Table 3) also show a positive and significant correlation between the pro-social dominance trait and the attitude towards people with intellectual disabilities: affect dimension  $r(200) = .359$ ,  $p < .001$ ; cognition dimension  $r(200) = .351$ ,  $p < .001$  and behavior dimension  $r(200) = .296$ ,  $p < .001$ . In other words, people who have a general behavioral tendency favorable to the domination of certain groups with others are also those who, when involved in a situation with a person with an

intellectual disability; among other things, feel tension, stress; think they are not interesting people; find an excuse to leave.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation between pro trait dominance and attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities**

	NOT	M	AND	Affect	Cognition	Behavior	Pro_trait_D
Affect	200	3.07	0.78	—			
Cognition	200	3.13	0.71	.318**	—		
Behavior	200	3.16	0.76	.249**	.393**	—	
Pro_trait_D	200	3.16	1.35	.359**	.351**	.296**	—

Note: \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; Pro\_trait\_D = Pro trait social dominance; M = Average; SD= Standard Deviation; N = Number of participants.

The regression analysis (Table 4) confirms and clarifies the relationship between the pro trait social dominance and the attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, it shows that the pro trait social dominance is a predictor of the affective, cognitive and behavioral dimension of the attitude towards people with intellectual disabilities. More precisely, the pro trait social dominance explains 12.8% ( $F(1.198) = 25.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of the affective dimension; 12.3% ( $F(1.198) = 22.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of the cognitive dimension and 8.7% ( $F(1.198) = 14.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ) of the behavioral dimension. An increase of one degree on the pro trait social dominance increases the level of affect, cognition and behavior respectively by 35.3% ( $\beta = .353$ ,  $t(198) = 5.212$ ,  $p < .001$ ), 35.2% ( $\beta = .352$ ,  $t(198) = 3.435$ ,  $p < .001$ ), 29.7% ( $\beta = .297$ ,  $t(198) = 7.214$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, the behavioral tendency favorable to the superiority of one group over another explains the negative predisposition of individuals towards people with intellectual disabilities. The higher the participants' level of this trait, the more negative they have affective, cognitive and behavioral attitudes towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. For the counter trait dominance, its score is recorded in table 5.

**Table 4 Linear regression between the pro-dominance trait and attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities**

VD	VI	$\beta$	T	r	adjusted r2	F
Affect	Pro-dominance	.353	5,212**	.359	.128	25.21**
Cognition		.352	3,435**	.351	.123	22.60**
Behavior		.297	7,214**	.296	.087	14.61**

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ , VD = dependent variable; VI = independent variable;  $\beta$  = Beta; T = Student's t; r = Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Relationship between counter trait dominance and attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities

Table 5 indicates a negative correlation between the counter trait social dominance and the attitude towards human rights of people with physical disabilities: affect dimension  $r(200) = -.243$ ,  $p < .05$ ; cognition dimension  $r(200) = -.385$ ,  $p < .05$  and behavior dimension  $r(200) = -.155$ ,  $p < .05$ . This result shows that people who have a behavioral tendency, generally oriented towards the principle, according to the domination of the weak group with the other stronger one, is a bad thing, because human rights are threatened, others have pity for people with intellectual disabilities and fear of violating their human rights. They know

that they can get along well with the latter or take the first step towards them, to initiate a conversation with the aim of establishing social balance. Table 6 presents the regression analysis of this result.

**Table 5. Descriptive statistics and correlation between the counter trait dominance and attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities**

	NOT	M	AND	Affect	Cognition	Behavior	Contract_D
Affect	200	3.07	0.78	—			
Cognition	200	3.13	0.71	.318**	—		
Behavior	200	3.16	0.76	.249**	.393**	—	
Contract_D	200	3.15	1.41	-.243*	-.385*	-.155*	—

Note: \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; *Contre\_trait\_D* = Counter trait social dominance; *M* = Average; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *N* = Number of participants.

(Table 6) confirms and clarifies the link between the counter trait social dominance and the attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, it shows that the counter trait social dominance is a predictor of the affective, cognitive and conative dimension of the attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. More precisely, the counter trait social dominance explains 5.9% ( $F(1,198) = 33.29, p < .001$ ), of the affective dimension; 14.8% ( $F(1,198) = 23.68, p < .001$ ), from the cognitive dimension and 1.9% ( $F(1,198) = 4.89, p < .001$ ), from the behavioral dimension. An increase of one degree on the counter trait social dominance decreases the level of affect, thought and behavior respectively by  $-.244\%$  ( $\beta = -.244, t(198) = -6.582, p < .05$ ),  $-.385\%$  ( $\beta = -.385, t(198) = -5.804, p < .05$ ),  $-.084\%$  ( $\beta = -.084, t(198) = -2.212, p < .05$ ). In conclusion, people who have a behavioral tendency favorable to balance between dominated and dominant groups, can be explained by the predispositions of positive attitudes that they manifest towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities situation. The higher the participants' counter-trait dominance score, the less negative they have affective, cognitive and behavioral attitudes towards human rights. Table 7 presents the results against trait dominance.

**Table 6. Simple linear regression between the anti-dominance trait and attitude towards people with intellectual disabilities**

VD	VI	$\beta$	<i>T</i>	<i>r</i>	adjusted <i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>F</i>
Affect	Anti-dominance	-.244	-6,582*	-.243	.059	33.29*
Cognition		-.385	-5.804*	-.385	.148	23.68*
Behavior		-.084	-2.212*	-.155	.019	4.89*

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ , *VD* = dependent variable; *VI* = independent variable;  $\beta$  = Beta; *T* = Student's *t*; *r* = Pearson correlation coefficient.

Relationship between pro anti-egalitarianism trait and attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

Table 7 presents the results of the descriptive statistics of the correlation between the anti-egalitarianism trait and attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. The results in this table show that the pro trait anti-egalitarianism factor of the SDO is strongly related to the attitude dimensions. (Affect dimension  $r(200) = .261, p < .001$ ; cognition dimension  $r(200) = .253, p < .001$  and behavior dimension  $r(200) = .295, p < .001$ ). This means that people who generally have behavioral tendencies favorable for the

domination of certain individuals over others, are also those who, when involved in an interactive situation with a person with intellectual disability feel, tension, stress, think they are not interesting people and often find an excuse to leave. In other words: individuals who support inequality between social groups do not respect human rights. The regression study will be done in table 8.

**Table 7. Descriptive statistics and correlation between the anti-egalitarianism trait and attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities**

	NOT	M	AND	Affect	Cognition	Behavior	Pro_trait_AE
Affect	200	3.07	0.78	—			
Cognition	200	3.13	0.71	.318**	—		
Behavior	200	3.16	0.76	.249**	.393**	—	
Pro_trait_AE	200	3.66	1.36	.138*	.285*	.384**	—

Note: \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; Pro\_trait\_AE = Pro anti-egalitarianism trait; M = Average; SD= Standard Deviation; N = Number of participants.

The regression analysis (Table 8) confirms and clarifies the relationship between the anti-social egalitarianism trait and the attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Indeed, it shows that the anti-social egalitarianism trait is a predictor of the affective, cognitive and behavioral dimension of the attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. More precisely, the anti-social egalitarianism trait explains 6.5% ( $F(1.198) = 3.86, p < .05$ ), of the affective dimension and 8.1% ( $F(1.198) = 38.26, p < .05$ ), of the cognitive dimension. For the behavioral dimension, it is significant at 14.4% ( $F(1.198) = 10.42, p < .001$ ). An increase of one degree on the pro trait anti-social egalitarianism increases the level of affect, cognition and significantly the level of behavior respectively by 12.9% ( $\beta = .129, t(198) = 1.96, p < .05$ ), 27.9% ( $\beta = .279, t(198) = 42.63, p < .05$ ), 38.1% ( $\beta = .381, t(198) = 8.07, p < .001$ ). Ultimately, the behavioral tendency favorable for the supremacy of groups compared to weak ones explains the participants' negative attitudes towards the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. The higher the degree of this trait individuals have, the more they have negative affective, cognitive and behavioral attitudes towards people with physical disabilities. Table 9 presents the results of the analysis of the anti-egalitarianism counter-trait.

**Table 8. Simple linear regression between the pro anti-egalitarianism trait and attitude towards people with intellectual disabilities**

VD	VI	$\beta$	T	r	adjusted r2	F
Affect	Pro anti-egalitarianism	.129	1,960*	.138	.019	3.86*
Cognition		.279	2,637*	.285	.081	38.26*
Behavior		.381	8,074**	.384	.144	10.42**

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ , VD = dependent variable; VI = independent variable;  $\beta$  = Beta; T = Student's t; r = Pearson correlation coefficient.

*Relationship between anti-egalitarianism counter-trait and attitude towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities*

Table 9 presents the results of the descriptive statistics and correlation between the anti-egalitarianism trait and attitude towards human rights of people with intellectual

disabilities. The correlations obtained after the analysis of the data collected are negative and significant only for the first and second attitude factors: affect dimension  $r(200) = -.332, p < .001$ ; cognition dimension  $r(200) = -.486, p < .001$ , and behavior dimension  $r(200) = -.160, p < .05$ . These results show that people who generally have a favorable behavioral tendency for equality, between social groups are those who, when involved in an interrelation with a person who has intellectual disability, feels, pity, empathy, enjoy their company and enjoy talking with them. This means that individuals who are driven by behavior against anti-egalitarianism respect human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. The regression data is shown in Table 10.

**Table 9. Descriptive statistics and correlation between anti-egalitarianism trait and attitude towards people with intellectual disabilities**

	NOT	M	AND	Affect	Cognition	Behavior	Contract_trait_AE
Affect	200	3.07	0.78	—			
Cognition	200	3.13	0.71	.318**	—		
Behavior	200	3.16	0.76	.249**	.393**	—	
Contract_trait_AE	200	2.10	1.75	.332**	.486**	.160*	—

Note: \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; Con\_trait\_AE = Against anti-egalitarianism trait; M = Average; SD= Standard Deviation; N = Number of participants.

The confirmatory analysis of the regression in (Table 10), effectively shows that there is a relationship between the anti-social egalitarianism counter-trait and the attitude towards human rights of people in a situation of intellectual disability. This regression obtained (41.46% ( $F(1.198) = 41.46, p < .001$ ), of the affective dimension; 58.26% ( $F(1.198) = 58.26, p < .001$ ); of the cognitive dimension and 5.23% ( $F(1.198) = 21.31, p < .05$  of the behavioral dimension), shows that the anti-social egalitarianism counter trait is a 95% sure predictor of the affective and cognitive dimension and 50% of the behavioral dimension when the bearer of this trait is faced with a person with an intellectual disability. An attenuation of one degree on the score of the counter trait anti-social egalitarianism reduces the level of affect, cognition and behavior respectively by -32.1% ( $\beta = -.321, t(198) = -8.45, p < .001$ ), -48.2% ( $\beta = -.482, t(198) = -7.63, p < .001$ ), -11.3% ( $\beta = -.113, t(198) = -2.29, p < .05$ ). Ultimately, the behavioral tendency favorable to equality between social groups compared to others is explained by the positive attitudes of individuals towards human rights. 'Man with intellectual disability. The higher the participants have a degree of this trait, the less they have negative effects, thoughts and behaviors towards people with intellectual disabilities. So, they are promoters of human rights.

**Table 10. Simple linear regression between the trait against anti-egalitarianism and attitude towards people with intellectual disabilities**

VD	VI	$\beta$	T	r	adjusted r2	F
Affect	Trait against	-.321	-8,451**	-.332	.101	41.46**
Cognition		-.482	-7,634**	-.486	.221	58.26**
Behavior		-.113	-2,296**	-.160	.012	5.23*

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .05$ , VD = dependent variable; VI = independent variable;  $\beta$  = Beta; T = Student's t; r = Pearson correlation coefficient.



## 7. Discussion

This study investigated the seven dimensions of social dominance orientation (SD7), and attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities. A sample of university students from Cameroon, and from general point of view, there are relationships between these two scales. The synthesis of the main specific results that the pro trait social dominance, counter trait social dominance, and the counter trait anti-egalitarianism pro trait anti-egalitarianism significantly predict the quality of affect, system of thought and behavior vis-à-vis towards the person with disability.

In accordance with the literature on the SDO, this scale measures the support which an individual endorses or does not endorse dominance/equality between social groups. The new version of this measurement instrument (SD07) in four dimensions provides more precisely on the positioning of respondents. Thus, for a person whose predominance is oriented towards the pro trait social dominance or pro trait anti-egalitarianism, goes beyond the fact, that he has in mind the supremacy and valorization of his group of belonging above others, judged as groups of less potential, to behavioral predispositions which rebel against equality with people who have intellectual disabilities. That is to say, among these people, the predominant myth is one which emphasizes not only the power to dominate, but also, the desire to oppress the lower group. Thus, Guimond et al. (2003) showed that the simple fact of randomly assigning participants with a dominant position (for example: a high leadership score, a director role), was sufficient to generate an increase in racism and sexism compared to a control condition in which participants were assigned to a lower social position. Therefore, the negative affective, cognitive and behavioral tendencies observed in the latter towards the rights of people with disabilities are the result of these traits.

Furthermore, works that examine the effect of power or status reveals similar results. For example, since the work of Kipnis (1972), the deleterious effects of power have been widely documented in literature. It appears that people in positions of power resort more to negative and stereotypical judgments when it comes to evaluating the performance of their subordinates (Fiske, 1993; Georgesen & Harris, 1998; Goodwin et al., 2000; Richeson & Ambady, 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2000). Similarly, members of high-status groups are less tolerant and more discriminatory than members of low-status groups (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1987; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Adherence to legitimizing ideologies would can people in positions of power and/or enjoying a high social status to justify their hierarchical or oppressive social position, and at the same time, to legitimize the social inequalities that exist within them. arise (Guimond et al., 2003; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Levin, Federico, & Pratto, 2001; Yzerbyt, Schadron, Leyens, & Rocher, 1994). This set of results suggests that social dominance is a central factor underlying negative attitudes towards human rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

Should we conclude that a dominant social position almost automatically generates an increase in intolerance and cognitions aimed at justifying social inequalities and maintaining the status quo? Some models using power as a generic concept suggest an affirmative answer to this question. Power can irremediably be a source of “intellectual corruption” (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). However, a limitation inherent in existing work leads us to qualify such an assertion. Social dominance is exercised in an specific context; you can be the director of a multinational companys just as you can be the director of a human rights activist organization. Does the dominant social position occupied by these two directors generate the same effects? It may be that the effects of social dominance depend, at least in part, on the context in which it operates. To our knowledge, there is no research to directly answer this question. Indeed, existing research has either ignored the context in which social dominance or power was exercised, or they have located themselves in evaluation and performance contexts conducive to the expression of negative judgments towards subordinates (Kipnis, 1972; Richeson and Ambady, 2003). However, beyond the first over-mentioned dimensions, the SD07 through its dimensions against social dominance trait and against anti-

egalitarianism trait generate other attitudes when the carriers of this trait enter into relationships with people who have disabilities.

According to the theory of social dominance (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999), it is important to distinguish the type of trait predominant in the individual: those which “accentuate the hierarchy or “oppression” (the pro social dominance trait & the pro anti-egalitarianism trait), and those “reducing hierarchy” (the dominance counter-trait & the anti-egalitarianism counter-trait), (Haley & Sidanius, 2005; Sidanius et al., 2003; Sinclair et al., 1998). Proponents of counter-trait social dominance or counter-trait anti-egalitarianism are in total disagreement with oppression, attenuate social inequalities and in relations of intergroup domination advocated by “pro traits.” In other words, each time a degree of this factor (counter trait) increases in these individuals, their affects, thoughts and behaviors towards the person with a disability gradually increase and their negative intentions for this purpose disappear. . This means that, as opposed to those who are governed by the pro trait, they are significantly predisposed to respect human rights because whenever they are involved in interactions with people who have intellectual disabilities , they emotionally experience, good intentions, think that they are people, and enter into conversation with them, without prejudice or taboo. Basically, social dominance orientation is a construct proposed by Pratto, Sidanius et al. (1994), which has two components: opposition to social equality and group-based dominance (Jost & Thompson, 2000). These two components usually operate coherently although some research has also shown the importance of distinguishing them (see Duarte et al., 2004). The SDO7 version, developed here, is from the same authors with four dimensions which, according to the results of this study, predicts attitudes towards people living with intellectual disabilities. It is important to take these traits into account for better understanding. The perspective defended in this present research seems more compatible with Turner's theory of power (2005: 1). This theory postulates that: “power emerges and functions through certain social relations having a very specific social, ideological and historical content”. Faced with the widespread idea in social psychology according to which power and dominance can be defined without regard to certain specific attitudes and behaviors (Guinote, 2007; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003), this present work therefore represents a first a modest step in the direction of a new conceptualization of attitudes and the orientation of social dominance, the merits of which, in our opinion, deserve to be carefully examined.

### **8.Limitation of the study**

On a methodological level, the characteristics of the data collected and to a lesser extent, on the representativeness of the sample which produced the information. In fact, our approach adopted is purely quantitative approach. Combining this with the qualitative approach would allow us to identify more comprehensively the positioning of the respondents on the different aspects measured. From this point of view, of representativeness, the number of participants in the different surveys is not less important, it would have been more advantageous to work with a more interesting number of participants. Let us note, that had it not been for the reservations on the part of certain students asked to complete our questionnaire, we would have been able to obtain a larger sample. Many students did not respond favorably after expressing their concern to participate in the survey. This must be added those who formally refused to participate, citing a lack of time and too much work.

In this study, the attitude towards people with disabilities varies depending on the orientation of social dominance. However, according to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), attitudes are a function of beliefs about the subject. Beliefs are related to the information people have about the subject. Therefore, changing attitudes toward people with disabilities requires a change in beliefs brought about by the introduction of new information through persuasive communication to promote learning.

## 9. Conclusion

According to Doré, Wagner and Brunet (1996), “attitudes are predispositions that lead a person to react, favorably or not to a situation with another person.” They are directly linked to behaviors and emotions. This study provides an overview of the orientation of the dominance of Cameroonian citizens towards the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. It is important to know that the dimensions of the SDO7 significantly predict the level and quality of affects, thoughts and behaviors when an individual is interacting with another. In other words, when the degree of social dominance counter-trait and anti-egalitarianism counter-trait increase in an individual, his level of negative attitude and oppression towards PSH attenuates and predisposes him to respect human rights. Conversely, when the level of pro social dominance trait or pro anti-egalitarianism trait increases in an individual, the more he has negative affects, thoughts and behaviors of oppressive types towards PSHI, the more he is predisposed to non-respect of human rights.

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## DUAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION – EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

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**Abstract:** *Once it became part of the European Union, Romania is required to adjust its education system according to European standards, while also adapting them to suit internal peculiarities and needs. It is essential to respect the objectives set at the Lisbon Summit in 2000, which aimed to transform the European Union into a knowledge-based, highly competitive and dynamic economy capable of generating sustainable economic growth, quality jobs and cohesion increased until 2010. In this context, a review and adjustment of vocational education and training systems is needed to keep pace with social changes and citizens' demands, providing the necessary skills for a knowledge-based society, ensuring the quality of education and training, promoting equality and inclusion, as well as integrating a European dimension in education. Education, which has always had a crucial role in shaping society, is now expanding its influence, supporting social, technological and economic transformations in the contemporary world. This represents a significant challenge for political leaders and educational administrators in securing financial resources for sustainable progress. Recent detailed studies have provided comparative data that have contributed to the development of new educational approaches designed to respond to current economic demands, including more flexible methods to meet the expectations of education beneficiaries.*

**Keywords:** dual, education, professional, high school, strategy.

### 1. Introduction

The choice between general and vocational education routes is not the only important decision, as in many countries, vocational and vocational education offer opportunities for continuing higher education. In various countries, the relevance of educators and counsellors, who frequently collaborate with psychological services, such as in Belgium or Luxembourg, is emphasized to support students in developing a better self-understanding, thus facilitating informed and rational decision-making.

In Germany, some trades require a training program ranging from one to three years, including periods of practice or work experience, carried out in various types of vocational education institutions, among which vocational colleges and specialized secondary schools are the most sought after. In France, students obtain intermediate vocational education and training after completing secondary education, followed by advanced vocational training in higher education institutions after the baccalaureate.

In Finland, initial vocational education takes place both in educational institutions and through the apprenticeship system. In Spain, vocational training is structured at several levels, including basic vocational training, specific vocational training for young people who have not completed compulsory secondary education, intermediate vocational training and advanced vocational training.

These systems are designed to facilitate the efficient integration of graduates into the labor market, support the development of communities and ensure social and economic cohesion. However, there are persistent challenges, such as the insufficient development of mechanisms to monitor professional progress, declining birth rates, migration, school dropouts and a lack of local motivation and involvement.

Vocational and technical education has the mission of preparing qualified young people for various fields, recognizing the diversity of individual talents, which can be harnessed and developed at different stages of life. The educational system should respond to

the specific needs and educational traditions of the society it serves.

In the current economic and social context, vocational training is based on guidance and training in school under the guidance of specialized staff. Evaluating the quality and efficiency of the education system in relation to international indicators is essential to ensure quality education and to respond to society's demands.

Romania, as a member state of the European Union, must align itself with the imposed educational standards and adapt its norms to local requirements. To facilitate this transition, it is crucial to allocate adequate funds for education and training, improve financing and provide effective career guidance to young people.

In conclusion, vocational and technical education plays a crucial role in training the young workforce, contributing to the economic and social growth of the country. It is important that education systems adapt to social, economic and technological changes and focus on the acquisition of skills necessary for a knowledge-based society.

## **2.Evaluation of the current situation of professional and technical education**

In order to understand the current state of vocational and technical education in Romania, it is essential to examine both the favorable elements (strengths) and those that prevent optimal functioning (weaknesses), with the aim of developing strategies and action plans that will improve system performance by taking into account external influencing factors. The assessment of the situation must include a detailed analysis of the characteristics of vocational and technical education, while also identifying the present challenges and opportunities, in order to properly orient the direction of development.

## **4.Human capital resources**

Human capital is a vital element for educational processes, involving the workforce necessary for their development. The planning of human capital resources must be consistent with the socio-economic policy in the medium and long term and consider the quality and volume of the labor force, the level of its professional training, as well as the necessary professional orientation and reorientation. Adjusting the required level of training to the existing one is a key aspect for the economic activity of companies. According to an analysis carried out by the National Institute of Statistics, 63.6% of the analyzed entities projected the long-term labor force requirement, and 56% evaluated the degree of qualification of the employees.

Human capital in the educational context is constituted by the number of students and teaching and auxiliary staff engaged in the educational process.

## **5.Financing vocational education**

Romania is currently facing significant economic difficulties, including the closure or restructuring of a large number of large companies, which is causing the relocation of the workforce. In addition, local public administration institutions face a weak economic organization, which leads to a decrease in the resources available for the education sector.

In the past, state-owned enterprises supported vocational education by financing it to the extent of 90-95%. However, this support declined drastically in the following years, accounting for only 7% of total vocational education in 1995. This led to a reliance on funding from the European Union, which became a crucial source of support for vocational training programs.

The financing of school institutions is influenced both by the level of economic development of the region where the school is located, and by the relations established between the teaching staff and the authorities. Significant differences in economic development between regions and teachers' dissatisfaction with the authorities may explain the discrepancies in infrastructure and learning conditions between different locations. Schools in rural areas are worst affected, with poor learning conditions, less qualified teachers

and poorer academic results, leading to low confidence in the education system.

A more decentralized approach to funding at school unit level and a more equitable distribution of responsibilities between schools and local public administrations could improve the quality of educational services. However, Romania's existing educational infrastructure faces numerous problems, including outdated schools due to previous earthquakes or lack of maintenance. Many educational facilities lack essential workshops, cabinets and laboratories, and existing equipment is outdated.

It is essential to pay special attention to the infrastructural problems in the educational sector in Romania, as well as to find solutions to ensure optimal learning conditions for students and teachers.

### **6.Organizational management**

Improving the teaching and learning process, carefully selecting school textbooks, recruiting qualified teachers, providing the necessary equipment for effective implementation, effective use of allocated financial resources and granting increased autonomy to regional school units, using analytical reports and self-evaluation, developing appropriate strategies , establishing partnerships with economic entities and other financial institutions, long-term analysis of the quality of education and quality management should be key objectives for the Ministry of Education and for the management of educational institutions. Therefore, the educational policy in Romania must adopt a more strategic approach and respond more effectively to the challenges related to the development of human resources and changes in economic and social needs. Given that in any field, for example agriculture, industry, services or construction, the private sector is the majority and the educated and skilled workforce mainly serves these companies, it is essential to have adequate planning to ensure that the needs of the industry are fulfilled. It is important not only to monitor the number of graduates per industry and allocate financial resources accordingly, but also to provide training to employers in different sectors. Sometimes the emphasis in management activities is on administrative aspects, neglecting managerial aspects such as projects, evaluations or marketing. The development of financial autonomy and the decentralization of education funding to local authorities are not always effective in poor rural areas, where extrabudgetary sources are limited.

Local authorities often take over school buildings and land without consulting the schools, making them dependent on funding from NGOs. In rural areas, schools face tight budgets, insecure funding and financial instability due to a lack of consultation in financial decisions and problems with building maintenance or purchasing equipment. Poor administration of material resources, lack of resources in laboratories and workshops for disadvantaged students, lack of school programs and textbooks, difficulties in organizing practical training according to school plans and problems related to adaptation to the training needs of different profiles or professions represent other challenges encountered.

In Romania, the vocational and technical education system is based on schools that have the main responsibility for initial vocational training. Recent reforms introduced a three-year vocational program after the eighth grade, strengthening work-based learning and adopting principles of the dual training system. This system involves training in two different locations, internship contracts between students and host companies, and a significant weight of practice in student training. Coordination between schools and partner companies is essential to the success of this program, ensuring that students acquire the necessary skills and are ready for the job market.

The implementation of a dual system similar to the one in Germany requires appropriate institutional and legislative adaptations in Romania. This model is based on apprenticeship and involves the economic and educational sectors in the distribution of responsibilities. Vocational and technical education in Romania is facing significant changes and challenges, and the implications of these reforms can bring benefits to different categories

of people and society as a whole. Educational partnerships between students, schools and partner companies bring mutual advantages and contribute to the alignment of students' professional training with European standards. The SWOT analysis of the professional and technical education system in Romania highlights important aspects that can influence the evolution of this field.

**Strengths:**

- The adaptability of teachers to respond to the changing demands of the labor market;
- The presence of a significant number of qualified teachers through continuous training and specialization;
- Effective collaboration with local authorities and state institutions;
- The educational offer in accordance with the needs of students and the community;
- Effective integration of graduates on the labor market and access to higher education, including abroad;
- Increased interest in areas of specialization from students and parents;
- Productive partnerships with the economic environment and local communities.

**Weaknesses:**

- The outdated and inadequate school infrastructure for an optimal educational environment;
- Lack of a suitable gym for physical education and sports classes;
- The physical boundaries of the school premises show damage and lack of maintenance;
- Use of common spaces with other educational institutions.

**Opportunities:**

- Extracurricular activities and meetings that strengthen the teaching team;
- Access to various training and professional development programs;
- Developing partnerships with various organizations and participating in national and international programs;
- A dynamic teaching staff at the beginning of the career;
- The diversity of professional options for students and the need to be informed about the educational offer.

**Threats:**

- Socio-economic problems in students' families;
- The tendency of parents to transfer the responsibility of education exclusively to the school;
- Lack of clear post-educational prospects for students;
- The mentality of some parents not adapted to current educational requirements;
- Difficulties in attracting sponsorships and partnerships with local companies;
- Insufficient financial resources due to the current economic context and the preparation of the local community for collaboration in the educational field.

Evaluating and improving internships in the vocational and technical education system involves identifying and addressing the real needs of principals, instructors and specialized teachers, in order to align education with the dynamic demands of the labor market. In order to find effective and sustainable solutions, it is crucial to analyze the needs of all parties involved, taking into account various aspects such as:

- The endowment and resources available in schools;
- Customized study programs for local communities;
- The educational materials used;
- The practical experience gained by students;
- Professional guidance services offered to students;
- Anticipating labor market trends and requirements in the region.



**7. Proposals for objectives and strategic directions include the following aspects:**

- Assessing and regularly reviewing the demand for new trades in the local market that could be useful for students;
- Expanding students' knowledge of current and future professions;
- Recognition of the social importance of various professional fields;
- Encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students with special needs;
- Increasing the number of students who get involved in professional training in real work environments;
- Introducing students to the specific professional sector of the partner companies;
- Facilitating the transition from education to career, to increase the employability of graduates.

The monitoring and evaluation of the internships are carried out by specialists, based on the feedback received from the students involved, the instructions received from the coordinating teachers and the contribution of the internship tutor. The practice tutor is responsible for highlighting the students' presence at work, respecting the established schedule and completing the prescribed number of hours, supervised by the practice internship specialists.

At the end of the practice period, the tutor will present an evaluation report of the student, which will be used as a monitoring and evaluation tool by the coordinating teachers. They use attendance lists and minutes for meetings with students and practice tutors, ensuring that practice activities are in line with planning.

The practical tutor's evaluations include interviews and analyzes of the activities carried out by the students, and the generated documentation helps to monitor the practical progress of each student. Practicum specialists use tools such as observation and monitoring sheets, assessment sheets and questionnaires to:

- Consolidation of collaboration with economic agents through appropriate methods;
- Clear definition of roles in practical training teams in educational partnerships or dual education;
- Implementation of efficient management and monitoring systems, based on cooperation with the economic sector;
- Monitoring the participation and involvement of students in scheduled activities;
- Ensuring compliance with the daily plan according to established contracts;
- Analysis of the practicality of the activities carried out;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the evaluation methods used;
- Measuring the degree of achievement of the learning objectives;
- Evaluation of the level of satisfaction of the participants.

The education and professional training system must respond to society's needs, promote creativity and innovation, developing the necessary skills for active citizenship, personal development and integration on the labor market of graduates, including those with special needs.

The German Professional School Kronstadt is an innovative example in vocational education in Romania, focusing on market-driven skills. Established in 2012-2013, it became legally recognized in 2013 and stands out as the first institution in Romania closely collaborating with local economic partners. Students from various backgrounds benefit from an adaptable curriculum and adequate guidance.

The school emphasizes supporting partnerships with businesses, developing comprehensive curricula, promoting educational quality, providing counseling to students, and ensuring necessary resources for effective and modern education. Additionally, there is a focus on integrating children with special needs and providing ongoing adult education. Partnerships between schools and economic entities are essential to meet labor market demands.

The expansion of education and increased labor force efficiency have caused changes in social perceptions of work and employment, influencing how young people approach the transition to professional careers (Heinz, 2009; MacDonald, 2011). Preventing the destandardization of the transition process to the labor market, the prolonged education of young people has led to less linear and diverse professional paths (Marques, 2015). This phenomenon has delayed professional independence, aiming to create a workforce that is flexible and adaptable to the demands of a market in search of highly qualified personnel. Extended education fulfills this need by providing more educational opportunities and promoting equal and equitable access to maximize the use of human resources (Preoteasa, 2011; Naghi, 2014).

In the educational landscape marked by the expansion of higher education and economic decentralization, vocational and arts and crafts schools (SAMs) have suffered the greatest losses. Increasing access to college education has changed the educational focus for many young people (Teichler, 2007, 2008). The professionalization acquired during secondary education has been replaced by the aspiration to higher education. After 2004, the expansion of higher education included more socioeconomic and administrative fields, responding to the needs of the service-oriented market, but neglecting the technical field (Voicu et al., 2010). The 2008 decision of the Ministry of Education to restrict the tuition fee for SAMs accelerated the decrease in the number of students in vocational education (Petrescu, 2016). In addition, decentralization affected the existence of SAMs at the territorial level, especially in economically dependent regions, due to the lack of local budgets for the administration of these institutions.

Vocational education in the dual system, inspired by the German model, is considered a successful example in the revitalization of professional, technical and vocational education, and an effective strategy for improving the integration of young people into the labor market.

The case study of the Kronstadt Vocational School in Braşov demonstrates that operating in a dual system as an education and training provider facilitates the transition of young people to the labor market.

The German Professional High School in Kronstadt, Brasov, offers specialized technical programs with a remarkable graduation success rate. Active collaboration with local companies and the Brasov County School Inspectorate ensures program adaptability to market needs. Students are selected based on interviews with employers and written tests, supported by an annual internship contract.

Students' motivations for choosing a German school are linked to future employment opportunities. The decision to pursue these programs is influenced by advice from relatives and friends, encouraging them to make good choices for their future.

"I accidentally arrived here, initially I wanted to attend a high school with a theoretical profile in mathematics and computer science, but my mother advised me to choose a German orientation school" (Student, boy, 15 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov). "My parents work in the company where I practice and give me advice" (Student, girl, 15 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

"I came here with a colleague from a regular school. He decided to enroll in this school to study and work. Initially I thought I would be guaranteed a job in the future, but I did not anticipate the difficulties of the university. However, I want to continue teaching, knowing that it will help me in the future to have my own career... I am thinking of staying in the same field, at the Department of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, because I am passionate about automobiles" (Student, boy, 16 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

Another example of extrinsic influence comes from the experiences of older siblings, who guide their career choices according to their success or failure in the job market, thus allowing students to better understand the demands of future jobs:

"I chose this school because my sister graduated from college and a master's degree in computer science, but she could not find a job in this field and worked as a saleswoman for 7

years... That's why I opted for the German school, because I had the opportunity to learn a trade and then follow teaching" (Student, boy, 16 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

One of the 17-year-old ninth graders made an exception in terms of motivations for choosing SGK: he decided to enroll in this school after an unsatisfactory experience at a theoretical high school:

"I studied natural sciences at a theoretical high school until the tenth grade. Later, I decided to repeat the ninth grade at a German school because I felt the need to start a technical high school. In the theoretical environment, I felt bored and I had the feeling that I was not learning anything, so I felt the need to do something practical" (Student, boy, 17 years old, electromechanical, SGK, Brasov).

In addition to parents' advice to attend vocational school for vocational training, the experiences of siblings or former colleagues/friends already studying at SGK can influence the decision to choose this high school, which can be an effective strategy to attract students. Eighth graders head to vocational schools, which do not enjoy a very good reputation among middle school students.

"Initially I didn't want to come to this school. I chose to come because of my brother, who also graduated here. Now I do not regret the decision" (Student, boy, 16 years old, electromechanical specialization, SGK, Brasov).

Their concern about their future careers stems from both normal age limitations and the negative image associated with vocational schools, considered less attractive compared to the diversity of options offered by theoretical high schools. The options urge them to consider university studies without completing evening classes:

"My parents guided me and I already had a friend who was a student here... I chose to come here to build a future and to have the opportunity to go to university, which I find very beneficial" (Student, boy, 16 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

The students' future plans include specialization in the field for which they are preparing and continuing university studies in the same field. Those who participated in focus groups consider teachers to be their main source of inspiration to continue their studies, most of them wanting to enroll in evening schools after graduating from year 11. They can be hired immediately after finishing vocational school, and they can also continue high school to get a bachelor's degree, which is an advantage for them:

"We don't have many theoretical subjects, which is a plus. We do not study music or other options, we focus only on the basic subjects of the bachelor's program, which gives us time and opportunity to study" (Student, boy, 16 years old, Electromechanical, SGK, Brasov).

However, students who participated in focus groups stand out among their colleagues at SGK with their plans to continue their university studies. They also realize that in order to pursue these studies, their motivation must be strong and based on their constant efforts to improve in school.

"Not many students at our school want to go to university. Even if they do, evening classes are an option. The best students are selected from each class, because the school has only one evening class with 30 students" (Student, boy, 16 years old, Electromecanic, SGK, Brasov).

Even if they admit that it will be difficult to combine work with evening classes, they do not exclude this possibility because they are determined and motivated to fight for their professional future. SGK's values of building a solid career strongly influence the life decisions and principles of students, who are aware of the training and professional development options available in the job market.

"Yes, it will be difficult, but if you want to build your future, you have to make sacrifices and fight for it, even if it is hard... so you find your motivation, even if you feel tired or lazy, if that's what you want, you have to get involved" (Student, girl, 15 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

"Because evening classes overlap with the work schedule, those in the first shift will work in the afternoon shift, those in the second shift will not work in the evening, and those in the third shift will also work in the evening shift... It's going to be difficult, but we're thinking about our future..." (Student, boy, 16 years old, electromechanical, SGK, Brasov).

Regarding the importance of scholarships in choosing a school, students consider that scholarships were useful during high school, but were not a decisive factor in the actual choice of their school. However, they admit that the scholarship motivated them to study and seriously prepare for future jobs. Students believe that they have an advantage in obtaining scholarships compared to other theoretical high schools and consider that maintaining these scholarships throughout their studies is an act of responsibility on their part.

"The scholarship is financed half by the state and half by the employer, it can be reduced depending on absences or grades, 200 and 200, the scholarship stimulates us to study" (Student, boy, 16 years old, electromechanic major, SGK, Brasov).

Given that SGK is an educational institution that focuses on workplace practice, students can also benefit from other advantages such as reimbursement of transport costs, gym subscription, private medical services (Regina Maria, Med Life, etc., depending on the case), health card, accommodation, meals.

"In addition to scholarships, there are other benefits: we provide accommodation, some companies pay in full, plus we provide transportation for practice, lunches during practice, protective equipment and other necessities. I think there are many other advantages... but these are the most significant" (Student, boy, 16 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

Students generally express a positive opinion of Kronstadt German Vocational School, even if it was not initially among their preferences. When asked to describe in a few sentences the advantages offered by SGK from their perspective, students considered school as an opportunity for them (5/8 respondents) and unanimously appreciated the fact that high school offers them the chance to build a future. Some of the interviewed students found the experience of learning at SGK interesting and different from other high schools, giving them unique opportunities for practice but also responsibility. They all believe that their main motivation for being students at SGK is the prospect of a guaranteed job after graduation.

SGK's workplace practice model is appreciated by students who see multiple opportunities for learning, vocational training and, last but not least, personal development. The interviewed students believe that they develop personally through the values of the school that values the work through the practice they have been carrying out since high school.

"The profession of the future, an internationally recognized diploma, if you are dedicated, you can advance and get a bachelor's degree" (Student, boy, 16 years old, electromechanic, SGK, Brasov).

„... Also, at the end of high school, if you do your job well and the employer appreciates your qualities, you can be sure of an assured job" (Student, girl, 15 years old, CNC, SGK, Brasov).

However, some students show misunderstandings about the rigid structure of courses and internships. Even if they are dissatisfied and feel that some teachers are too demanding, they are aware of the responsibilities and opportunities offered by this school compared to others. Among the necessary improvements, students want more language courses. They would like to have more English and German courses (not included in the current schedule).

SGK operates in the former building of the Rulmentul Industrial School Group, which was renovated by Braşov City Hall. Equipment for classrooms, offices and laboratories is provided by various economic entities and includes technical equipment, computers, projectors and software. The SGK admission process involves interviews with representatives of private companies and a general and cultural aptitude test. Students receive a monthly scholarship to motivate them to prepare for their future job. The school curriculum is focused

on the practical side, with a high percentage of practical hours in the curriculum.

The school has international partnerships, giving students the opportunity to acquire practical skills directly from employers. The companies involved provided technical equipment and software to ensure a proper training of the students. Teachers are trained and trained in collaboration with these companies to adapt to the demands of the labor market.

Students are placed on internships at various companies to develop their practical skills. Internship contracts are renewed annually based on student performance. The internship instructors are professional engineers, and the staff assigned by the companies take care of the students' practical activities. Staff recruitment is carried out in collaboration with the human resources of the partner companies.

There is a difference between students studying at industrial high schools and those at vocational schools in terms of level of training and qualification. Companies support the need to standardize the number of practice hours and skill level. Specific skills are essential, and employers also value transversal skills such as teamwork.

The companies involved invest in equipment and training programs to ensure adequate training of students. Staff recruitment is carried out on both the short and long term, with an emphasis on maintaining a skilled and loyal workforce. The close collaboration between the school, students and companies is a pillar of the success of the educational program at SGK.

### **8. Opinions on vocational and technical education**

The decline in population and aging represent serious challenges for economic institutions seeking solutions to develop a skilled workforce. One impactful solution in Braşov is the SGK vocational school, funded by German companies. This model emphasizes practical training and social responsibility, with a focus on public-private partnerships. Companies in the Braşov region proactively invest in training specialists to meet high professional standards. Future plans include conducting a study to identify workforce needs and establishing additional vocational schools. The University of Transilvania also plays a crucial role by offering a Master's program in Technical Profiles in collaboration with the German Economic Club, emphasizing practical workplace training.

Local stakeholders highlight various issues related to vocational and technical education. Employers stress the need for educational adaptability to meet business demands swiftly. Efforts are underway to replicate successful models like SGK at other schools. Challenges include resistance to change, lack of teacher testing, and outdated curricula. Employers advocate for performance-based teacher salaries and ongoing training. Attracting and retaining young teachers remains a concern due to low salaries.

Improving vocational education involves enhancing cooperation between ministries, schools, companies, and investors. Public-private partnerships are crucial for aligning education with current job market needs. Reforms in teacher evaluation, salary policies, and practical training hours are recommended. Promoting ethical and professional values from an early age is essential, along with changing parental mindsets towards vocational education. Flexibility in curriculum development based on industry demands is crucial for preparing students effectively for the workforce.

### **9. Summary**

The SGK system in Braşov benefits from a public-private partnership involving the Braşov City Hall, the School Inspectorate, Vocational Schools (SGK), and German economic actors. This partnership allows students to intern directly in companies, with involvement from private agents. Companies contribute to student admission processes and curriculum development. SGK focuses on continuous training opportunities and knowledge exchange with foreign teachers. The high-quality school infrastructure is supported by economic agents providing technical equipment, computers, software, and ensuring a steady supply. Students

and teachers appreciate the job security post-graduation and the practical training provided by employers. However, challenges include teacher training and motivation due to low salaries. Graduates from SGK have lower qualifications compared to theoretical or technical high school graduates, affecting students' decisions. Success factors include shared responsibilities between public and private sectors, immediate job placement after graduation, and adapting competencies to the labor market. Adapting the SGK model to local economic conditions through public-private partnerships is crucial for developing skilled labor and local employment opportunities.

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# THE EVOLUTION OF THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS IN SUBCARPATHIAN UKRAINE AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

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**Abstract:** *After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had to face a series of movements, with separatist tendencies, in the West of the country, on the territory of the Transcarpathia district. These movements came from the dominant minorities in the area, who claimed the return to a certain historical status from the period before the territorial annexation of the region by the Soviet Union in 1945, or for the respect of certain rights and freedoms. The 90s were loaded with events through which national minorities reaffirmed their position within the new democratic state. Therefore, this article deals with the issue of movements with separatist tendencies undertaken by the Ruthenian and Hungarian minorities to declare the autonomy of some territories within the democratic Ukraine. Movements that were guaranteed by some political actors, movements that in the end did not have any concrete success, the actions of the Ruthenian and Hungarian leaders being more for the official recognition or strengthening of the positions of these minorities in Transcarpathia.*

**Keywords:** separatism, autonomy, Transcarpathia, Ruthenians, referendum

## 1. Introduction

On today's territory of Transcarpathia district, according to the 2001 census, more than 80 ethnic groups recognized by the Ukrainian state live together, the most numerous being Russians, Hungarians, Romanians, Roma, but also Ruthenians, although to this today they do not enjoy official recognition as separate minority within Ukraine. After the fall of communism, the strongest separatist movement was the Ruthenian one. They, driven by a diaspora very well coagulated in the West, especially in the United States and Canada, campaigned for the restoration of the status of the region from the interwar period, when Transcarpathia enjoyed some autonomy within Czechoslovakia. These efforts had the greatest effervescence in the first years of post-Soviet democracy, but they continued in the years 2007 and 2008, based on the same requests.

The Ruthenian minority is not recognized by Kiev, despite all international requests and those coming from the local Ruthenian elites. Ukraine considered their demands to cross barriers of cultural identification, claiming it was a political movement seeking territorial division in the West. The debate was also held on the identity level. On the one hand, the Ruthenian minority claims that it is a completely different Slavic people from the Ukrainian one, and on the other hand, Ukrainian nationalists claim that the Ruthenians are nothing more than an identity branch of the Ukrainians. Another element fueling this dispute is the recognition of the Ruthenian ethnicity by Ukraine's neighbouring states. Thus, the Ruthenian self-determination movement continues to this day, without major inter-ethnic conflicts.

The Hungarians from Transcarpathia also had separatist requests, demanding the autonomy of the Berehove district at the beginning of the 1990s. This did not happen despite several actions organized by local representatives, including a referendum organized in 1991, together with the one through which the Ruthenians requested the independence of Transcarpathia. In contrast to the activity of the Ruthenians, the Hungarians were more moderate in their actions. But the political situation changed in 2010 with the election victory of FIDESZ and the appointment of Viktor Orban as Prime Minister. From this moment

onwards, a set of political events followed that brought back the idea of cultural autonomy in the Transcarpathian region to the public agenda.

## **2. Transcarpathia. A multi-ethnic area contested by four states**

Historically, Transcarpathia has been located in a confluence zone of three totally different cultural administrations for hundreds of years. The territory is comprised between the Tsarist Empire, Habsburg Galicia and the Kingdom of Hungary. Thus, an area dominated by the Carpathian Mountains, inevitably became the refuge of many ethnic groups that did not find their place inside the great kingdoms or empires. It inevitably became a multi-ethnic area that, throughout history, has been administered by different state entities.

Culturally, it is a transition zone between *Roman Slavia* and *Orthodox Slavia*. Politically, it is a territory located at the intersection of Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Romania. In the period 1848 and 1948, the very divided elite of the Ruthenians turned to various modes of action, of pro-Hungarian, pro-Slovak, pro-Russian or even pro-Ukrainian orientation. There was, however, another movement of national identification which sought the creation of a new, independent Ruthenian state. After the integration of Transcarpathia into the new Czechoslovak state, both the pro-Hungarian and pro-Slovak movements decreased in intensity. After the end of World War II, all governments around the region shifted the issue of Ruthenian national identity to Ukrainian national assertion to counterbalance the national policy of Sovietization. Thus, for a significant period of time, Ruthenian cultural, religious or linguistic values, considered distinct, were marginalized in the public space. This movement led to the reduction of the number of those who campaigned for an independent Ruthenian state southwest of the Carpathians, many of them becoming supporters of the formation of the Ukrainian state. (Smith,1997)

Historically, today's Transcarpathia had been part of the northeastern region of the Kingdom of Hungary for more than 1000 years. The defeat suffered by the Austro-Hungarian empire in the First World War has led to the transfer of the territory to the administration, initially of Hungary, where it acquired a kind of autonomy under the name of *Ruska Kraina*<sup>1</sup>, and then, by the Treaty of Trianon from 1920, the region passed under the administration of Czechoslovakia. Taking into account the ethnic and cultural differences between the newly annexed region and the rest of Czechoslovakia, the government in Prague promised to grant the region autonomy, something that never materialized. (Kocsis,2023:17). In addition to ethnic and cultural differences, Transcarpathia was also much more economically underdeveloped than the rest of the country. In the years 1920 and 1930, the economic situation changed, which allowed the emergence of some movements of the Ruthenian minority.

The last months of 1918 were marked by political and social changes throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire at the end of October, Poles, Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats and Romanians organized themselves into national councils that would ultimately determine the political future of these peoples. The Ruthenians living in the northeastern counties of Hungary also participated in this process. From November 1918 to May 1919, numerous councils were formed that proposed different political alternatives for the fate of Transcarpathia: autonomous region in Hungary, total independence or union with Russia, Ukraine or the new state entity Czechoslovakia. The international situation from 1919 showed that the most favourable decision for the region at that time would be a union with Czechoslovakia. (Magocsi,1975:360).

Transcarpathia was one of the most problematic regions of the interwar Czechoslovak state; the territory was integrated, together with that of Slovakia, into Czechoslovakia,

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<sup>1</sup> The name given to the region of Transcarpathia, which was briefly used by the Hungarian government in 1918 and 1919. The Hungarian government granted autonomy to Transcarpathia under this name. In December 1918 a Hungarian governor was appointed from Mucacevo and a minister of state for Ruthenia in Budapest. Encyclopedia of Ukraine, vol. 4, 1993.



immediately after the Paris Peace Conference, after the end of the First World War. The two eastern parts of the Czechoslovak Republic mentioned above were part of Hungary before 1918, since the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary, from the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Throughout the ages, Hungarian and Czech history have been influenced several times by the political affiliation to a common state in which both states existed, with greater or lesser autonomy, since 1526; but their socio-cultural and socio-political development were different in many ways. Even the period of strong centralization of the state, during the period of absolutism and neo-absolutism from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not change anything in this regard. The socio-cultural structures of the inhabitants' way of thinking from the Western and eastern halves of the common monarchy were affected by other experiences and historical political aspects. They have deep roots not only in the history of both states, but also in different socio-political and economic determinants resulting from different regional geopolitical factors. Therefore, Slovakia and Transcarpathia became part of Czechoslovakia at the same time, but were politically and socially connected to different political and socio-cultural centres for centuries.(Toth, 2016:57)

In addition, the idea of a unified Czechoslovak nation, which helped to implement on the international political stage the establishment of the independent state of the Czechs and Slovaks with their "fragile" supremacy over other large national groups, proved to be very unstable, and in the second half of the 1920s, the increasingly obvious deviation of Slovaks from the centralist state received more and more distinctive support among Slovaks. The Ruthenians' relationship with the Czechoslovak state was not a very close one. This was largely due to the very low number of representatives among their national elite. The interconnection of the Ruthenian population with the Hungarian environment was much closer than in the case of the Slovaks. (Toth, 2016:58).

The problem of the existence of Transcarpathia in the Czechoslovak Republic was also distinctive due to the fact that while Slovakia was connected to Czechoslovakia without other international legal conditions specifically regulating its position within the newly created state, due to the concept of unification, although the Czechoslovak nation was artificially created, the link between Transcarpathia and the Czechoslovak Republic was conditioned by the Entente Powers by awarding an autonomous position to that of being an integral part of the Czechoslovak state. Prague agreed to that international-legal commitment by signing the international treaty concluded at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the so-called Treaty of Saint Germain or Minorities Treaty, on September 10, 1919. The treaty was concluded between the Main Allied Powers, Entente and Czechoslovakia.(Toth, 2016:59)

The second chapter obliged Czechoslovakia to establish a "territory of the Ruthenians of Transcarpathia" in the Czechoslovak state as an autonomous unit "endowed with the widest autonomy compatible with the unitary Czechoslovak state"<sup>2</sup>. Czechoslovakia undertook to establish an autonomous council in Subcarpathia, thus giving it "legislative power in language, education and religious matters, as well as in matters connected with local government and in all other matters assigned to it by the laws of the Czechoslovak state".<sup>3</sup> By signing the international-legal document, Czechoslovakia also had to undertake the selection of public officials from Subcarpathia "if possible, from among the inhabitants of this territory".<sup>4</sup>

However, the autonomy of Transcarpathia in the Czechoslovak state was initiated not only by the Entente Powers. The Ruthenian population claimed allegiance to the Czechoslovak Republic on 8 May 1919 through the Ruthenian Central Council in Ujgorod, only on the condition that the widest possible autonomy would be granted to them in the common state of

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<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Saint Germain, signed on 10 September 1919, Article 2, available online at: <http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1919/TS0020.pdf>, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, Article 11, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, Article 12, p. 135.

the Czechs and Slovaks. However, from the perspective of the constitutional concept of the Czechoslovak Republic, this autonomy had to be compatible with the unity of the Czechoslovak state, as stipulated in the Constitutional Declaration of the Czechoslovak Republic. However, Prague, although it was bound by the international-legal agreement and ultimately the granting of autonomy to Subcarpathia, did not take this step either in the 1920s or in the 1930s. The Czechoslovak governments refused to respond to the desire for Ruthenian political representation, which constantly demanded the adjudication of the self-government of Subcarpathia.(Toth, 2016:60)

Czechoslovakia was very often extremely immune to the demands of a part of the Ruthenian elite, which insisted on granting sovereignty over the policies of Prague. Therefore, this led to a somewhat nostalgia for the old Hungarian administration.

After the start of the Second World War and, implicitly, the conflict between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, separatist movements in Slovakia and Transcarpathia were encouraged. Thus, on 15 March 1939 Transcarpathia became an independent republic under the name of Carpathian Ukraine. Avhustyn Voloshyn is appointed president, and anarchy is established throughout the territory. This new republic only lasts 24 hours, after which it becomes part of Hungary again. For one year, between 1944 and 1945, Subcarpathia functioned as a single entity with its own government and administration under the name Transcarpathian Ukraine. From 1945 it became an oblast/region of Soviet Ukraine.(Kubicek,2008:74)

### **3. The revival of Ruthenian nationalism in the period between 1989 and 1992**

During the Soviet period, the Ruthenian minority was repressed, but not suppressed. After the fall of communism, the issue of national identity around the Ruthenian minority reappeared in the public debate in Transcarpathia, but it went unnoticed by the majority of the population. The period between 1989 and 1992 represents a period of transition, of restoring the nationalist activity, of national self-determination that the Ruthenians carried out before 1945, when Transcarpathia was part of the Soviet Union.

Immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union, a number of organizations appeared both in Ukraine and in Slovakia that rejected the idea that Transcarpathia is part of the new national state of Ukraine, returning to the idea, developed in the interwar period, that in this area there is a Slavic people totally different from the Ukrainian one. The Carpathian-Ruthenian Society, established in Transcarpathia, Ukraine or the Ruthenian Renaissance Society located in the Prešov region of Slovakia tried a series of movements through which they pursued the cultural and artistic revival of the Ruthenians. However, mainly because of promoting an agenda that is very difficult to achieve, their actions have not been very successful. The ideas promoted initially had as their main goal the establishment of an autonomous zone within Ukraine and went as far as the formation of a new independent republic. The course of action was not one open to dialogue, but rather one of an aggressive manner, quashing any debate that would have blocked the idea of Transcarpathia being a totally separate nation. These groups, although they did not have notable results, still managed to keep this idea of independence alive, opening the way to new horizons. (Smith,1997:142)

The starting question is how did such a small group as the Ruthenian community managed to maintain its identity in such conditions, where the pressures exerted by the Soviet Union were very high and, moreover, immediately after the abolition of the repressive institutions in the communist states, to have territorial claims. In a plastic form, Professor Magocsi stated that the idea of forming an independent Ruthenian state will never die in Subcarpathia, but is just waiting for the right moment to materialize.(Magocsi,1975:334) As a parenthesis, although the issue discussed in this article is closely related to the territorial surface of the Transcarpathia region of today's Ukraine, the ideal of the Ruthenian nation also includes other regions in Poland or Slovakia, therefore, in some cases, reference is made to Subcarpathia rather than Transcarpathia.

Thus, after force could no longer be used to block such nationalist movements, it was very easy for the Ruthenians, both in Slovakia and Ukraine, to reintroduce a topic that had seemed long closed to the public agenda. It should also be noted that the Ruthenian group campaigning for independence is compact and less numerous than the Russophile or pro-Ukrainian group, a trend that has been maintained since the beginning of the Second World War.

The tendency was to argue that the reinvented Ruthenian nationalism after 1990 belonged to the masses, based on national sentiment, without any political involvement. However, it must be noted that there were, at that time, two distinct groups of the Ruthenian elite who, all the while, made sure that the feeling of ethnic belonging would not disappear. It is primarily the local elites, from Transcarpathia, but the most important support came from the second group, namely the diaspora elites. Although they had different agendas, the two groups ended up complementing each other.

The local elite, consisting of scientists, teachers, artists excluded from power during the communist era, used the leverage of Ruthenian nationalism to fight the other three groups that could have taken control of the region. Both the former communist rulers, who sought to maintain their place at all costs and retain local power in the region, as well as the Ukrainian or Slovak ultra-nationalist groups, who also claimed the area, or the central governments in Kiev, Prague or Bratislava who wanted to suppress any movement of local autonomy or separatism could only be counterbalanced by a strong movement of national identification of the Ruthenians. (Smith, 1997:143) As for the Ruthenian elite in the diaspora, it was largely composed of members from the academic space and priests, people specialized in the Ruthenian issue, whose research activity was mainly based on the existence of the Ruthenian people. Thus, Professor Raymond Smith from the New York University appreciates that the interest of these categories of people exclusively for the Ruthenian people is due to the direct connection between the subject and their professional career. For them, the restoration of the national self-determination movements of the Ruthenians in Central and Eastern Europe would have been vital from the perspective of the credibility of their intellectual endeavours. In this sense they can keep their ecclesiastical structures and keep their research field active in the academic space (Smith, 1997:144)

The interaction of the main groups promoting nationalist movements of national self-determination became the driving force of national building processes, such as linguistic codification, the appropriation of national heroes or the revitalization of local religious structures (Tuşa, 2023:155). For example, the problem of creating a Ruthenian literary language was taken up by the international conference organized by Professor Paul R. Magocsi from the University of Toronto, a Ruthenian born in the United States who settled in Canada. Also, the local elite, together with those settled in the United States, collaborated to recognize the great artist Andy Warhol as a Ruthenian national hero, arguing that all his works were inspired by the iconography of the Greek Catholic church. Furthermore, officials of the Greek Catholic Church in the United States, along with bishops from Transcarpathia lobbied the Vatican to preserve the status of the Mukacevo-Ujgorod Diocese as a separate entity from the newly created Greek Catholic Church of Ukraine. (Smith, 1997:145)

The reactivation of the Ruthenian problem after 1990 in Transcarpathia was viewed as a pleasant surprise by researchers. Whether we are talking about promotion in an organized form, as was the case with the Ruthenian Society, or through individual activists, the Ruthenian revival was based both on popular will and a combination of favourable factors at the time.

During the communist period, Transcarpathia, as an area, was completely isolated. Access to the press was relatively limited, and each publication was filtered through Soviet propaganda, ultimately describing the "road to success" under Soviet rule. Moreover, during all these years, all Western observers agreed on the most feasible hypothesis regarding the dominant and perennial nationality of Transcarpathia. And then everyone's answer was that,

taking into account the very diverse ethnic mix, the only solution is to promote national orientation towards Ukraine. However, the Ruthenian question reappeared on the public agenda in 1990.

After 1990, the asked question has been what is actually the Ruthenian movement in Transcarpathia? Is it really a mass movement or just an individual emotion? A definite answer has not been scientifically identified. Professor Magocsi argued that, although we do not know exactly how this nationalist effervescence can be framed, there were discussions related to the distinctive Ruthenian elements such as the grammar of the language, dictionaries, literary works or encyclopedias. At the same time, some even requested the restoration of local administrative autonomy from the interwar period.(Magocsi,1992:208) Therefore, separatist movements begin to appear in Transcarpathia.

In September 1990, the executive committee of the Carpatho-Ruthenian Society in Ujgorod ratifies the "Declaration on the return of the Transcarpathian region to the status of an autonomous republic", a document that is sent to President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and Ukraine, and to the United Nations. The reaction of the pro-Ukrainian elites did not take long to appear, three theories regarding the Ruthenian self-determination movement immediately appearing in the public space. First of all, they talked about the implications of the former KGB for the destabilization of Ukraine. Secondly, they were said to be nothing more than Hungarian and Czech efforts to restore the former colonial status of Transcarpathia in Hungary or Czechoslovakia. Last but not least, a new paradigm promoted by the Ruthenians settled in the United States and Canada, as a result of their interference with Western-type welfare, was discussed.(Magocsi,1992:209)

Ukraine immediately juxtaposed this movement of cultural revival with a political movement, considered threatening for the fate of the newly-formed state, and this is, in fact, also due to the political activities undertaken by the Carpatho-Ruthenian Society.

In addition to the interest shown in the development of a literary language and the development of local newspapers and later the opening of a cultural center in Mukachevo, the Society was much more interested in political issues. In the first instance, a separatist movement was attempted through which Transcarpathia would return to the status quo it had before 1945, namely as an administrative-territorial unit with a special status within Czechoslovakia. Representatives of the Carpatho-Ruthenian Society had numerous meetings in the 90s with government officials from Prague, on the one hand, and with minority parties, on the other. But this plan, despite existing sympathies towards their neighbours to the West, ended when, on 1 January 1993, Czechoslovakia dissolved as a political-administrative entity.

The national minorities, Hungarians, Germans, Romanians or Gypsies, led by the Carpathian-Ruthenian Society, put pressure on the Ukrainian state to resolve the issue of the autonomy of Transcarpathia in the referendum held on 1 December 1991 to declare the independence of Ukraine. Despite the protests of pro-Ukrainian activists in the area, the question of granting a special state through which Transcarpathia could be self-governing was introduced. This variant was granted to them as a preliminary form, in exchange for autonomy. The result was predictable. 92.5% of the voters answered favorably for the independence of the state of Ukraine, while 78% of the voters also opted for the self-government of the Transcarpathia region.<sup>5</sup> However, the results were considered unclear, because it was not known exactly how many of those who supported the independence of Ukraine and the special status of Transcarpathia agree with the granting of autonomy. The original proposal of the Carpatho-Ruthenian Society could have solved this, they proposed for the question to contain two separate answers, one for Transcarpathia to become an

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<sup>5</sup> Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, The December 1, 1991 Referendum/Presidential Election in Ukraine, Report 1992, p. 16.

autonomous, distinct republic, and the second to refer strictly to the granting of autonomy within Ukraine.

A week before the presidential elections, the President of the Parliament and candidate for the position of President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk went to Ujgorod to negotiate with the representatives of Transcarpathia on the issue of autonomy. At that time, he was giving everyone guarantees that the area would receive a special status if he was elected to take office. He was the one who also supported the introduction of the issue of the local referendum together with the one for the declaration of independence. Kravchuk won the election with 58%, and in the following months, several proposals regarding the status of Transcarpathia were made. Finally, the official document requesting the change of the status of the administrative unit into a „*self-governing special administrative territory*” was sent to the Ukrainian parliament for approval. The latter refused to authorize any form of self-government in Transcarpathia. President Kravchuk blamed the parliament for not realizing this referendum-voted ideal, while the autonomist Ruthenian elites blamed Ukrainian nationalist extremists in Galicia, who argued that Transcarpathia did not differ from Ukrainian national culture and thus should not receive any special status within the state. It should be noted that among those requesting autonomy were not only Ruthenians, but also other national minorities, such as Hungarians.(Magocsi, 2015:365)

The Ruthenian separatist movement was not deterred by the defiant opposition of Kiev officials. Through the Carpatho-Ruthenian Society, the pressures regarding the autonomy of Transcarpathia continued by sending petitions to the Government, the Parliament and even to the European Parliament or the United Nations. Last but not least, a permanent government was created in 1993 for the so-called "Republic of Transcarpathia", led by the leader of the Society Ivan M. Turianytsia.(Magocsi, 2015:366)

#### **4. The problem of Ruthenian separatism**

In Transcarpathia the most active separatist movement was by far that of the Ruthenian minority. Because Ukraine has not recognized the Ruthenian minority even to this day, tensions were born that were exploited by those who campaigned both for recognition and for a new republic on the international arena. The strained relations between the Kiev government and the Ruthenians are mainly due to the threat of territorial losses. A common problem among minority groups, as Maiz and Requejo note, is that many groups tend to consider themselves nations rather than asserting their demands for self-governance and cultural autonomy (Maiz&Requejo, 2005) This also applies to the Ruthenians of Transcarpathia. For their separatist-leaning demands, the group has always been viewed by Kiev as dangerous to state sovereignty. Thus, the Ruthenians have not received official recognition even to this day in Ukraine, although they are also registered in Poland, Slovakia or Romania.

The cultural organization immediately became a political one. In September 1990, the new regional party the Republican Party of Transcarpathia issued the statement on "The return of the Transcarpathian region to the status of an autonomous republic", and a year later addressed to the Czechoslovak government the request to support their endeavour regarding the unification of Transcarpathia with Czechoslovakia, thus returning to the status before 1945. Also, the status of an autonomous region was mentioned in this address to Prague (Belister,2018:7)

The political programme of the party centred on the establishment of an independent, neutral republic on the model of Switzerland, and it wanted both an economical and a political independence. In the summer of 1993, the Republican Party of Transcarpathia forms a provisional, shadow government, which was intended to be the alternative for when the region gains its independence. At this time the activities of the Ruthenian political movement gained momentum, expressed by numerous appeals addressed to the Ukrainian authorities, international organizations and foreign governments. The main request since then was the

annulment of the 1945 treaty between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, which officially made the territory part of the Ukrainian Socialist Republic. This was accompanied by an accusatory speech against the government in Kiev, drawing the attention of the international community to the fact that the "Ukrainian fascist nationalist regime" was pursuing a chauvinistic, even ethnocide policy against the Ruthenian minority. Their requests were sent to several international actors such as the United States Congress or the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation. In December 1994, Tybor Ondyk, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the government of the self-proclaimed Republic of Transcarpathia directly addresses President Boris Yeltsyn with the request to abolish the aforementioned treaty and asks him to introduce the issue of the Republic on the agenda of the Commonwealth of Independent States. That same year, Ivan Turyanytsa, the Prime Minister of the shadow government, sent a memorandum to the presidents of the United States and Hungary, drawing attention to Kiev's oppression of the Ruthenian and Hungarian minorities. (Belister,2018:9)

As a result of these actions taken by the so-called leadership of the Republic of Transcarpathia, The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, or simply UNPO, an international organization founded in 1991, adopts a special resolution on "the status of the autonomous Republic of Transcarpathia and the right of self-determination of the Ruthenians", by which condemns the presidents of Ukraine for their non-involvement in the Ruthenian issue and for not recognizing them as a separate nationality from the Ukrainian one.

The issue of transforming Transcarpathia into an autonomous region was somewhat resolved in 1996, when Ukraine adopted its constitution, the fundamental law of the Ukrainian centralized state, but the claims of the Ruthenian minority continued to exist. And these were fueled by the situation in other neighbouring countries such as Slovakia, Poland, Hungary or Romania, which recognized the Ruthenians as a separate ethnicity from the Ukrainian one. Thus, in October 1996, President Leonid Kuchma accepts the government's recommendations and proposes a ten-point document entitled "The Plan for the Resolution of the Ukrainian-Ruthenian Problem", a resolution which Professor Magocsi claims was nothing more than another Kiev front document to ease tensions. Moreover, he claims, the government never stopped asserting that the Ruthenian language and ethnicity never existed, does not exist and will never exist, ironically comparing it to the fact that the Tsarist Empire claimed the same thing about Ukraine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.(Magocsi, 2015:367)

The movement to affirm the Ruthenian minority continued to exist. In 2001, during the preparations for the first census after the fall of communism, several organizations in Transcarpathia requested the authorities to introduce Ruthenian ethnicity as an individual option in the questionnaire. The government ignored these requests and the results indicated only 10,090 of ethnic Ruthenians in Transcarpathia, officially classified as "an ethnographic group of the Ukrainian ethnicity." Moreover, in the official census results, the Ruthenian minority is not mentioned, although Ukraine recognizes more than 130 nationalities on its territory.

In the 2000s, the Ruthenian self-determination movement was supported by several international actors. Various deputies from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary or the United States expressed their disagreement with Kiev's refusal to recognize the Ruthenian minority. In October 2006, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended Ukraine to reconsider the position regarding the recognition of the Ruthenian minority as a national minority.<sup>6</sup>

The Orange Revolution and the subsequent election of the pro-Western President Viktor Yushchenko drew the attention of major international actors to Ukraine. The Ruthenian

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<sup>6</sup> International Convention On the Elimination Of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 9 of the Convention, CERD/C/UKR/CO/18, 22 August 2006, <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/CERD.C.UKR.CO.18.pdf>

problem thus receives the full support of American Senator John McCain, who sends a letter in which he shows his support for the Ruthenian minority, recommending that the authorities in Kiev respect the distinct cultural and linguistic aspects. Also, European institutions, such as the Council of Europe or members of the Ukrainian parliament supported the recognition of the rights of the Ruthenian minority.

A second moment of maximum effervescence regarding Ruthenian separatism in Transcarpathia takes place between 2007 and 2008. The Ukrainian parliament categorically refused such an approach. However, on 7 March 2007 the Transcarpathian Regional Assembly voted by an overwhelming majority (71 for, 2 against, 2 abstentions) to recognize the Ruthenians as a distinct national minority in the region. Moreover, the representatives requested that the same approach be taken by Kiev so that such an initiative would be applicable at the level of the entire country.(Magocsi, 2015:369)

Impelled by the result of the vote in the regional assembly, the Ruthenian activists, under the guidance of the Orthodox priest from Ujgorod, Dymytrii Sydor, are bringing the issue of territorial autonomy back into the public space. Claiming that Ukraine's refusal to recognize the ethnicity is tantamount to „ethnocide against the Ruthenian people”, the so-called Diet of Transcarpathia, headed by priest Sydor, and the National Council of Ruthenians of Transcarpathia, headed by doctor and deputy of the Regional Assembly Ievhen Zhupan, issued, on 15 December 2007, a declaration requesting the territorial right of self-government. Also, through this declaration, the support of the European Union and Russia is requested to protect and guarantee the resolution regarding the Ruthenian issue within the limits of international legislative norms. Half a year later, these two bodies convened the European Congress of Subcarpathian Ruthenians, in June 2008, which proclaimed, five months later, „the renewal of Ruthenian statehood in the form of the Republic of Transcarpathia”. According to the memorandum, if Kiev had no reaction regarding the restoration of the status of Transcarpathia to its 1938 form, autonomy will be unilaterally declared on 1 December 2008 (Magocsi, 2015:370)

None of these statements, considered by some analysts as pompous or misplaced, produced any legal effect. But they accentuated even more the existing tensions between the Ruthenian minority and Kiev, especially through the voice of the nationalist parties. The actions were considered against the Ukrainian unitary state. Officials of nationalist parties, such as Svoboda have argued that this entire endeavour represents an extensive action on Russia's behalf to destabilize the Ukrainian state.

Ukrainian nationalists accused the Ruthenian movement leaders of propaganda against the Ukrainian nation and state. They claimed that the Ruthenians constantly used televised propaganda to denigrate the history, culture and national consciousness of the Ukrainian people. Also on television, they argued for Russia's involvement, claiming that several events in Western Ukraine received increased attention from the Russian media, portraying Ruthenians as victims of Ukrainian nationalists. Priest Dymytrii Sydor, in addition to being a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, is said to have been involved in the 2006 parliamentary campaign for the Russian radical candidate Natalia Vitrenko.(Zawada,2008:3) Also, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko's party accuses President Viktor Yushchenko's Chief of Staff, from Transcarpathia, Viktor Baloha, of being directly involved in these separatist movements, supporting them financially. Moreover, the party leaders say that all movements in Crimea, Donbas and Transcarpathia are orchestrated by Russia to destabilize the Ukrainian state.(Korduban,2018)

### **5.The Hungarian separatist movement**

In the 90s, some of the biggest supporters of Ruthenian separatism were Hungarians. With a significant population settled in the southwest of the territory and with a history closely linked to the evolution of Transcarpathia, the Hungarian minority also had a series of manifestations with separatist tendencies after 1991.

Along with the regional referendum on the autonomy of Transcarpathia, a local referendum was organized requesting the transformation of Berehove district into an autonomous Hungarian administrative unit. With a population consisting mainly of Hungarians, over 80% of the inhabitants being of Hungarian ethnicity, the result was a predictable one. Over 81% of voters opted for self-government, under the name of Tisa district. (D'anieri et al, 2018:258) The government in Kiev rejected this approach, as in the case previously presented, regarding the autonomy of the Transcarpathia region. Ukrainian officials argued that any autonomy was contrary to the constitution, which claims that Ukraine is a unitary and indivisible state, administrative autonomy being considered a form of separatism. Also, a series of misunderstandings within the Cultural Association of Hungarians in the Carpathians reduced the scope of the movement. (Hughes&Sasse,2014:83)

During the communist period, the Hungarian minority was repressed by Moscow. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a period of cultural renaissance. In this sense, Hungary conducted several bilateral negotiations, started even before 1990, through which it demanded the guarantee of the rights of the Hungarians in Transcarpathia. (Hughes&Sasse,2014:84)

It should be noted that, according to the 2001 census, there are more than 160,000 Ukrainian citizens of Hungarian ethnicity in the area. In the first years after gaining independence, Ukraine had a favourable policy towards national minorities. The Hungarian separatist movement did not have the momentum and power of the Ruthenian one due to the fact that there were guarantees and protections from the Ukrainian state, based on bilateral agreements signed with Hungary. However, in the early 1990s there was the attempt at cultural affirmation led by Géza Gulácsi who proposed a bill that, once implemented, would have allowed minorities to self-govern themselves culturally. (Ferenc&Toth,2013:170)

In 2010, after Viktor Orban took power in Hungary, the parliament controlled by FIDESZ has adopted a series of amendments modifying the law regarding the granting of Hungarian citizenship. Thus, according to the new law, all Hungarians around the world can apply for citizenship in a much more simplified manner. Article 10 of the LV law of 1993, revised in 2010, provides that citizenship verification is done on the basis of an identity document, a passport, a citizenship certificate or a naturalization certificate issued by Hungary.<sup>7</sup> Thus, people who live outside the borders of Hungary, consider themselves Hungarian and can prove that they speak the Hungarian language, receive citizenship and implicitly the right to vote. (Csink et al.,2012:49) International experts argued that this was Orban and FIDESZ's way of consolidating their power, relying on very large support from the Hungarian minority in Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. Thus, Budapest started a "passport export" programme in Transcarpathia, this being a first moment of tension between Hungary and Ukraine, caused due to the problems of the Hungarian minority in Berehove.

In the upcoming period, Prime Minister Viktor Orban shows his direct support towards the Hungarian communities outside the country. On 26 April 2013 he made an informal visit to Berehove where he signed an agreement with the Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute granting 1.7 million euros from the Hungarian budget for the promotion of Hungarian culture in the region. The decision of the authorities to finance an institution in Berehove is considered by Budapest as part of the activities to support ethnic Hungarians outside the country to promote education and culture. In Transcarpathia, the focus is on the development of several secondary and higher education buildings and the development of several research departments in this regard. Thus, the issue of cultural autonomy reappears on the public agenda. (Ryabinin,2018, 82)

Budapest's cultural and educational development policy in Transcarpathia appears in the context of the intensification of the events in Crimea in 2014. On 10 May 2014 the Prime Minister Viktor Orban declared in the parliament that "ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine must be

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<sup>7</sup> LV Law of 1993 on Hungarian Citizenship, amended in 2010.



able to enjoy all the rights of the community and to be guaranteed the possibility of autonomy", later declaring that this is Hungary's official stand, which will be presented to the international community. (Gardner, 2014) Also, several representatives of the far-right wing in Hungary, such as Bela Kovacs, Csanad Szegedi or Márton Gyöngyösi, discussed the issue of protecting Hungarians in Ukraine and the existence of a decentralized self-governing region. (Cheyanida, 2016). All these incitements to separatist movements were harshly criticized by the authorities in Kiev, but also by Poland.

## 6. Conclusions

This is also the moment when the need for the existence of a cultural autonomy of the Hungarian minority in the area is declared, as well as the granting of dual citizenship to the Hungarians in Ukraine, which is prohibited by the Ukrainian state constitution. Ukraine has accused that this approach supported by Orban is coordinated with Russia's eastern movements. These allegations are supported by Orban's close relationship with Gazprom officials in 2014, when Russia blocked gas to Ukraine, and by the fact that Orban was one of the most vocal opponents of sanctions imposed by the European Union on Russia after its annexation of Crimea.

The turning point in recent relations between Ukraine and Hungary comes in September 2017 when Kiev adopts the new education reform. According to it, children in 1 to 4 grades will no longer be able to study in their mother tongue. Reactions came from all the neighbouring states, but the most vehement response came from Hungary, which in recent years has been constantly blocking any approach regarding Ukraine's accession to NATO and the European Union. On 13 October 2017, as a reaction to the education law, a protest action takes place in front of the Ukrainian embassy in Budapest, through which several extremists demand the right to self-determination of Transcarpathia. An action in which people carried with them the flag of Catalonia, through which they requested the freedom of Ruthenians, Poles, Romanians, Hungarians and all the minorities existing in the area. In response, Ukrainian extremists set on fire the headquarters of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association, the oldest organization for the promotion of Hungarian culture in the district in February 2018. However, the authorities in Kiev deny the involvement of Ukrainian nationalists in this event, claiming that everything was orchestrated by Russia, through two Poles who are members of the Falanga organization, to underline the already existing dispute in the area between the Hungarian minority and the Ukrainian state.<sup>8</sup>

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## STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG LOCAL POLICE OFFICERS

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to identify the level of stress and the coping strategies used by local police officers within their service activities. We seek to explore how stress affects workers' functioning and which coping strategies are predominant. The main objective of this study is to identify and analyze the stress levels of employees and the coping strategies used in stressful situations. The research hypotheses presume significant correlations between stress levels and social interaction, avoidance, and the seeking of social support. Data analysis was performed using the SACS questionnaire for behavioral coping strategies and the Stress Perception Scale developed by Levenstein et al. (1993). The high level of stress was negatively correlated with social interaction and positively with avoidance and seeking social support. Increased stress levels lead to lower social interaction and higher levels of avoidance and seeking social support. The results of this research highlight the importance of the relationship between perceived stress levels and the coping strategies adopted by local police officers. It was found that stress levels are negatively correlated with the quality of social relationships and positively with the tendency to avoid problems and seek social support. These results underline the need to develop and implement effective stress management strategies within the organization to optimize employee performance and well-being.*

**Keywords:** stress, coping strategies, employees, organizational field, performance.

### 1. Stress and Coping Strategies

#### a. Stress

Stress is recognized as a defining characteristic of modern life, and in certain professions, it can manifest in various forms and intensities. There are certain fields where the level of stress is considered higher due to the specific nature of the activity, the risks involved, or the complexity of technology and work schedule.

The concept of stress itself was introduced by Selye in the 1950s and initially became significant in the medical field, later expanding to psychiatry. According to Selye's concept, stress represents a general and biological reaction, manifested through a specific syndrome corresponding to nonspecific changes induced in a biological system. He initially described stress as an aggression, then as the subject's reaction to this aggression, with the aggression itself being considered a stressor.

In the early stages of his research, Selye was tempted to define stress as the degree of wear and suffering of the organism caused by functioning or injuries. Inspired by the ideas of Hippocrates, who considered illness not just as suffering but also as wear, injury, and the effort to return to the normal state, Selye discovered the mechanisms of the body's adaptation to the action of stressors, thus identifying the general adaptation syndrome.

Stress can have both positive and negative effects on the individual. Positive stress, also known as eustress, can act as an energizing factor, helping the person address situations as challenges in a much more effective way. On the other hand, negative stress or distress can

be problematic, as the overly mobilized body refuses to return to normal. The individual feels nervous, is ready to react, has increased blood pressure, and tense muscles. This type of stress proves to be a burden on the individual's mental and physical health.

The organization must be viewed as an open and dynamic system, characterized by a continuous process of input, transformation, and output. Essentially, organizations are composed of people and ultimately depend on their effort and involvement. Thus, human resources represent the essence of each organization, and the behavior of its members significantly influences its efficiency and effectiveness. At the workplace, stress often arises as a result of insufficient psychic resources to cope with professional demands and requirements. Studies such as those conducted by Bogathy (2004) and Cole (2000) have identified various causes of organizational stress at the subordinate level:

- Incompatibility with the management style, which can generate stress as a result of the conflict between the desire to maintain one's position and the tendency to retaliate against attitudes, behaviors, or gestures perceived as inadequate;
- Excessive delegation of tasks by superiors, which can lead to contradictory pressures between the desire for affirmation and promotion and the effort required to solve one's tasks, concurrently with the many and/or difficult tasks received from superiors;
- Fear of job loss, which primarily affects subordinates and can be generated by job insecurity;
- Family tensions, which can generate stress as a result of the conflict between the time and interest given to professional problems at the expense of family issues;
- Inefficient information system, which provides incomplete, untimely, or irrelevant information.

#### *b. Coping Strategies*

The concept of coping was introduced by Lazarus and Launier in 1978 and refers to the set of mechanisms and behaviors that an individual uses to deal with events perceived as threatening, with the aim of controlling, tolerating, or diminishing their impact on his physical and mental state. According to the definition by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping involves cognitive and behavioral efforts meant to control, reduce, or tolerate the demands and pressures that are external and/or internal and that test or exceed the individual's resources.

Legeron (2003) argues that each form of coping has both advantages and disadvantages, and their effectiveness can vary depending on the stressors, the timing of their appearance, and their duration. Later studies, such as those conducted by Folkman and her colleagues in 1986, found that problem-solving-focused coping strategies are positively associated with well-being, while predominantly emotion-management-focused strategies can be associated with poor mental health.

Moss and Billings (1984), along with Headey and Wearing (1992), argued that emotion-focused coping strategies are less adaptive compared to problem-solving-focused strategies. They concluded that adapting to stress by focusing on problem-solving can contribute to positive experiences at the workplace, while strategies focused on managing emotions can lead to negative experiences.

According to Baban (1998), there are two types of coping strategies:

- Problem-focused coping: This strategy involves actions directly aimed at solving, redefining, or minimizing the stressful situation. It is an active approach, used in potentially reversible situations. The person makes a mental assessment of the available options, recalls possible previous successes in similar situations, relies on social support, seeks information, explores solutions, and ultimately devises a plan of action.
- Emotion-focused coping: This strategy aims to reduce emotional tension without changing the situation itself. It is a passive approach, where the individual avoids

direct confrontation with the severity of the situation. Instead of trying to solve the problem, the subject adopts strategies of denial, avoidance, resignation, fatalism, or aggression. This approach is used especially in situations considered no-exit or irreparable, such as deaths or job losses.

The potential effects of stress can be grouped into five main categories, according to Floru (1974):

- Subjective/emotional effects: These include anxiety, aggression, apathy, boredom, fatigue, malaise, decreased self-confidence, nervousness, and the feeling of loneliness.
- Behavioral effects: These involve a predisposition to accidents, alcoholism, excessive coffee consumption, the tendency to eat and/or smoke excessively, as well as impulsive behavior.
- Cognitive effects: These consist of decreased ability to make rational decisions, poor concentration, reduced attention, hypersensitivity to criticism, and mental blocks.
- Physiological effects: These include increased blood sugar, pulse, blood pressure, dry mouth, cold sweats, and pupil dilation.
- Organizational effects: This type of effect involves absenteeism, reduced productivity, isolation, job dissatisfaction, reduction of responsibilities, reduced loyalty to the organization, and resignations.

## 2. Research Methodology

For a better understanding of the level of stress perceived by employees and the coping strategies used, the following research themes were chosen:

1. Identifying a correlation between the stress level and social interaction
2. Identifying a correlation between the stress level and avoidance;
3. Identifying a correlation between the stress level and seeking social support.

The hypotheses constructed for this paper aim to address the aspects presented in theory, as well as to provide answers to the research questions previously addressed.

1. It is presumed that there is a correlation between the stress level and social interaction;
2. It is presumed that there is a correlation between the stress level and avoidance;
3. It is presumed that there is a correlation between the stress level and seeking social support.

The sample chosen for our research consists of 60 subjects, 20 male and 40 female, with over 10 years of experience (47), 5-10 years of experience (7), and 0-5 years of experience (6), coming from both urban (49) and rural environments (11).

For testing the hypotheses, the following tests were used:

- SACS (Strategic Coping Scale)
- Stress Level Assessment Scale developed by Levenstein et al. in 1993.

## 3. Analysis and Interpretation

**Hypothesis 1:** *It is presumed that there is a correlation between stress level and social interaction.*

From the results obtained on stress and social interaction, it was observed that both variables had a p-value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov coefficient (Sig.) greater than 0.05, indicating that both distributions respect normality.

**Table 1 – Normality Test for Hypothesis 1**

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Stress	.110	60	.069	.946	60	.010

Social interaction	.090	60	.200*	.955	60	.028
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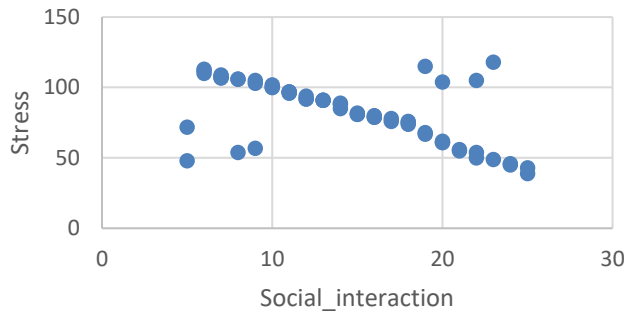
Following the correlation analysis between the two variables, a Pearson coefficient value of  $-.582^{**}$  was obtained. This value indicates a negative correlation between the stress level and social interaction; as the stress level increases, social interaction decreases.

**Table 2 - Correlation for Hypothesis 1**

Correlations		Stress	Social interaction
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	$-.582^{**}$
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	60	60
Social interaction	Pearson Correlation	$-.582^{**}$	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	60	60

To observe whether the values are uniformly distributed, we have attached the scatterplot for the variables of the hypothesis.

**Figure 1. Scatterplot - Correlation between stress and social interaction**



The negative correlation between stress level and social interaction indicates that as stress levels increase, the capacity to maintain positive social relationships and interact with others decreases. This can be attributed to a tendency toward isolation or social distancing during stressful periods, potentially affecting collaboration and cohesion within the organization.

**Hypothesis 2:** *It is presumed there is a correlation between stress level and avoidance.*

From the results obtained on stress and social interaction, it was observed that both variables had a p-value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov coefficient (Sig.) greater than 0.05, indicating that both distributions respect normality.

**Table 3 – Normality Test for Hypothesis**

Tests of Normality	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Stress	.110	60	.069	.946	60	.010
Avoidance	.111	60	.064	.939	60	.005

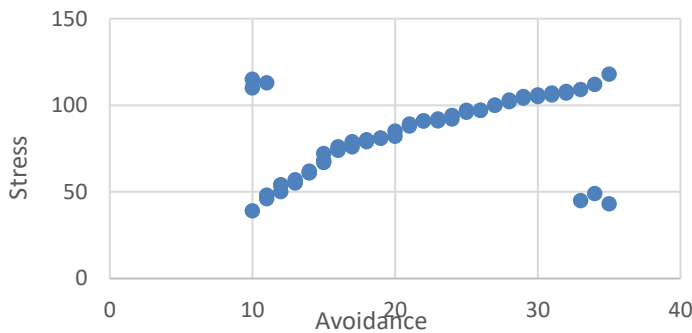
Following the correlation analysis between the two variables, a Pearson coefficient value of .496\*\* was obtained. This value indicates a positive correlation between the stress level and avoidance; as the stress level increases, the level of avoidance also increases.

**Table 4 – Correlation for Hypothesis 2**

Correlations		Stress	Avoidance
Stres	Pearson Correlation	1	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	60	60
Evitare	Pearson Correlation	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	60	60

To observe whether the values are uniformly distributed, we have attached the scatterplot for the variables of the hypothesis.

**Figure 2. Scatterplot - Correlation between stress and avoidance**



A significant positive correlation between stress level and behavioral avoidance suggests that employees tend to avoid more situations or responsibilities as their stress increases. This avoidance may lead to inadequate task management and a decline in performance in the work environment.

**Hypothesis 3:** *It is presumed that there is a correlation between stress level and social seeking support.*

From the results obtained on stress and social interaction, it was observed that both variables had a p-value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov coefficient (Sig.) greater than 0.05, indicating that both distributions respect normality.

**Table 5 - Normality Test for Hypothesis 3**

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Stress	.110	60	.069	.946	60	.010
Social support seeking	.114	60	.052	.974	60	.221

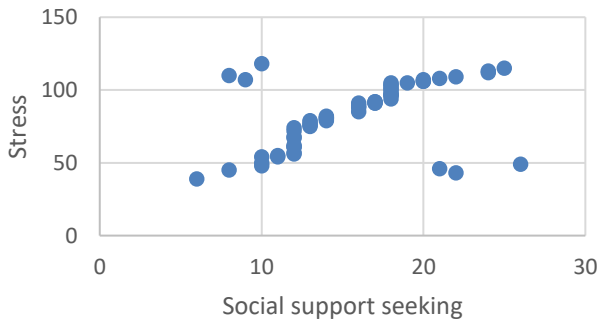
Following the correlation analysis between the two variables, a Pearson coefficient value of .485\*\* was obtained. This value indicates a positive correlation between stress level and seeking social support; as the stress level increases, the level of seeking social support also increases.

**Table 6 – Correlation for Hypothesis 3**

Correlations		Stres	Social support seeking
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.485**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	60	60
Social support seeking	Pearson Correlation	.485**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	60	60

To observe whether the values are uniformly distributed, we have attached the scatterplot for the variables of the hypothesis.

**Figure 2. Scatterplot - Correlation between stress and social seeking support.**



For the significant positive correlation between stress level and the search for social support, it indicates that during stressful periods, people tend to seek support within their social network. This search for social support may be an adaptive strategy to cope with stress and to manage the associated emotions.

**4. Conclusions**

The analysis of the data obtained highlights a significant interdependence between the stress level and the social behavior of employees in an organizational context. The results reveal distinctive aspects of this relationship, highlighting how stress can influence the ways of interaction and social adaptation of employees.

Firstly, the results from the first hypothesis indicate a significant negative correlation between the stress level and social bonding. This suggests that in situations of increased stress, employees tend to reduce their involvement in social interactions or temporarily withdraw from them. Thus, in an attempt to cope with professional or personal demands, individuals may adopt self-protection strategies that involve reducing exposure to social interactions.

In the research on occupational stress, the study 'Mediating role of coping style on the relationship between job stress and subjective well-being among Korean police officers' provides a valuable perspective on how coping styles mediate the relationship between professional stress and subjective well-being. The results indicate significant links between



high levels of professional stress and the inefficient use of coping strategies, with a direct impact on positive affect and satisfaction in social relationships (BMC Public Health, 2018).

The second hypothesis reveals a significant positive correlation between the stress level and behavioral avoidance. This result reflects the fact that as stress increases, employees may develop an avoidance behavior towards situations or activities that generate stress. Avoidance can be considered an adaptation strategy by which individuals try to reduce or minimize potential threats or discomforts associated with stressful situations.

'Evaluating real-time momentary stress and affect in police officers using a smartphone application' is a study that examines the impact of momentary stress on the behavior and affect of police officers. Using a mobile application, the research provides a detailed perspective on how police officers manage stress in varied situations and how it influences their behavior of avoiding difficult situations. The study leader, Park, J. H., highlights how increased stress levels can affect officers' ability to interact effectively in their daily work.

Also, a significant positive correlation between the stress level and the search for social support is observed. This indicates that, in the face of stress, employees may seek support and advice from colleagues or other social sources. The search for social support can be interpreted as an attempt to obtain external resources to cope with stress and to maintain emotional balance during difficult periods.

The study 'Examining the Effects of Coping and Social Support on Work and Life Stress Among Police Officers', conducted by George T. Patterson, explores how seeking social support functions as a buffer between stressful events and the psychological stress of police officers. The results suggest that seeking social support mitigates the relationship between work events and stress, while emotion-focused coping strategies alleviate the impact of stressful personal life events. These findings underscore the importance of stress management programs that include police officers' life events, not just those related to work.

In conclusion, the results obtained in this research emphasize the complexity of the relationship between stress and the social behavior of employees in the organizational environment. Understanding this dynamic can provide solid foundations for developing effective stress management strategies and promoting a healthy and supportive work environment for employees.

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## THEORETICAL LANDMARKS OF POPULATION DYNAMICS

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**Abstract:** *This article delves into the theoretical aspects of population dynamics, an essential chapter in demography, sociology, and ecology. The theory of population dynamics focuses on studying changes in the size and structure of populations over time. Key elements include analyzing factors that influence population growth, stagnation, or decline, and identifying laws and models that explain these variations. This theory is crucial for explaining demographic processes, resource management, and public policy planning. Romania's demographic transition has unique characteristics, with phases identified based on mortality and birth rates from the late 19th century. The transition involved a decline in mortality followed by a decline in fertility, influenced by social, economic, and political changes. Population dynamics theory is crucial for urban planning, natural resource management, and public policy formulation. Understanding the mechanisms that determine demographic changes allows policymakers to implement effective strategies to meet population needs and ensure sustainable development. The theory of population dynamics provides an essential analytical framework for understanding demographic processes and formulating effective public policies. The study of population dynamics combines concepts and methods from demography, ecology, economics, and sociology to provide a comprehensive perspective on how populations change over time and space.*

**Keywords:** Population dynamics, Demographic theory, Birth rate, Mortality, Migration, Demographic transition, Fertility, Natural increase, Demographic evolution, Malthusian theory.

### 1. General considerations

The theory of population dynamics is an important chapter in demography and ecology, dealing with the study of changes in the size and structure of populations over time. Analyzing the factors that influence the growth, stagnation, or decrease of populations, and identifying the laws and models that explain these variations are the basic elements of this theory. Population dynamics is essential for explaining demographic processes, resource management, and designing public policies, largely based on population dynamics theory.

It is important to note that population dynamics must be analyzed not only in cross-section but also longitudinally, from the perspective of evolution over history. This is a way through which we can observe and discuss the evolution trends of the population over time (over a long time series).

### 2. Concepts

**Population:** A group of individuals belonging to the same species living in a defined area.

**Dynamics:** Changes in the population's size and structure over time.

**Birth rate** is the frequency of live births within a population, expressed as the ratio between the number of births in a year and the population size. The crude birth rate, often used, is a ratio between the number of live births in a year and the population size.

The formula for calculating the General Birth Rate (crude birth rate):

$$Ng = (N/P) \times 1000$$

- **N** represents the number of live births,
- **P** the population size.

The age and sex structure of the population influence the value of the birth rate. For this reason, the crude birth rate does not always reflect the real situation. Therefore, other indicators that provide primary information about the birth phenomenon are used.

**The Generation Replacement Index (R)** represents the average number of female children born to a woman. When this index is greater than 1, the population tends to grow rapidly; when it is equal to 1, the population is stable, and when it is less than 1, the population size decreases.

**Mortality:** Mortality or death rate measures the number of deaths relative to a certain population over a time unit. It is measured in per thousand.

**Natural Increase:** This represents the difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths in the reference period. It is related to the natural increase and infant mortality rate, which takes into account the number of children who die before the age of one per 1000 live births. The birth rate is the dynamic element in the composition of the natural increase. It presents greater variability and can be more easily influenced than mortality.

**Migration:** The movement of individuals between different populations or regions.

#### 4. Relevant authors and their contributions

Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) is known for his work "An Essay on the Principle of Population" from 1798. Some general ideas that emerge from this valuable work by the English pastor include:

- a) Human populations have an extremely high potential for increase.
- b) The existence of a relationship between economic food resources and demographic volume.
- c) Considering the demographic factor as an independent variable, influencing the standard of living and the pace of economic growth (economic activity).
- d) The possibility of controlling the population growth rate and the legitimacy of such control when the limits of available resources are reached.

In his work, Malthus presents the two famous progressions, stating that the population tends to grow in a geometric progression (exponential growth), while subsistence means growth in an arithmetic progression (linear growth). These progressions express the Malthusian theory of resource limitation, indicating that the population will be limited by factors such as hunger and diseases. The geometric progression law formulated mathematically is:

$$dy = (k * y)dt$$

or

$$y' = ky$$

This differential equation has the solution:

$$y = e^{kt}$$

if the rate of population increase, is proportional to the number of individuals, that is:  $y'/y = k$

$y$  – population size (number of individuals),

$t$  – time (independent variable).

The above formula presents the simplest hypothesis about the dynamics of a population, namely that mortality and fertility are constant and do not vary.

Pierre François Verhulst (1804-1849) developed the logistic growth model, also known as the logistic equation. Verhulst proposed that as a population approaches the carrying capacity of its environment, its growth rate slows down, resulting in an S-shaped curve.

Ansley J. Coale (1917-2002) and Edwin M. Hoover (1912-1985) contributed significantly to modern demography, especially in studying demographic transition, a theoretical model describing the transition from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates as societies develop economically and socially.

**John Bongaarts** made valuable contributions to the field of demographic models and the study of fertility. He developed an analytical framework (the proximate determinants model) for decomposing fertility into its determining components.

#### 4. Theoretical Models of Population Dynamics

##### a) Exponential Growth Model

The exponential growth model shows the evolution of a population that grows at a constant rate without limitations imposed by the available resources. The equation describing this model has the following form:

$P(t) = P_0 \cdot e^{rt}$	<p><math>P(t)</math> is the population size at time <math>t</math>,  <math>P_0</math> is the initial population size,  <math>r</math> is the growth rate,  <math>t</math> is the time.</p>
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##### b) Demographic Transition Model

The demographic transition model describes the transition from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates as societies develop. Statistical and historical studies of the population in European countries, where accurate censuses have been conducted over the past two centuries, have highlighted a certain pattern in the numerical evolution of the population over time, known as the demographic transition. There is a consensus among specialists in the field that, in most European countries, there has been a shift from a traditional demographic pattern (high birth and death rates) to a transition pattern (high birth rates and low death rates), followed by a modern pattern (low birth and death rates) in contemporary times (Trebici, "Demographic Transition in Romania," 1978).

The demographic transition has four stages:

1. **Pre-transition stage:** characterized by high birth and death rates.
2. **Initial transition stage:** mortality begins to decline, while birth rates remain high.
3. **Advanced transition stage:** characterized by a decline in birth rates.
4. **Post-transition stage:** characterized by low birth and death rates.

After presenting a brief overview of the demographic transition theory, it is necessary to delve into this model in detail, as it is crucial for analyzing population dynamics.

To understand the demographic phenomena that the city of Bucharest has experienced, we need to refer to an explanatory model with a broad scope of generalization, which serves as a benchmark in demographic analysis. The evolution of societies from pre-industrial economies to modern economies has been marked by changes in demographic trends (Trebici, "Demographic Transition in Romania," 1978), where birth and death rates begin to decline.

The vast and complex process, called demographic transition by specialists, is closely linked to the modern revolution, which began in Western Europe during the Renaissance and gradually spread throughout Europe (INS, 2012). The demographic transition period began for most European societies in the second half of the 18th century and the 19th century. Under the impact of the industrial revolution, mortality began to decline, followed by a decrease in birth rates. The evolution of this process continued until the beginning of the Second World War.

Demographic transition is a three-phase process through which populations evolve from old demographic systems with high birth and death rates to modern demographic systems where these phenomena are declining. The demographic transition attempts to describe and interpret the evolution of the population based on a series of social, economic, legislative, educational, health, psychological, and cultural factors. The transition starts with a decline in mortality, followed by a decline in fertility.

In traditional societies, high fertility levels were balanced by high mortality rates. Scientific progress in many fields led to the discovery of medical treatments, prevention methods, and combating many epidemics, diseases, and conditions, significantly reducing mortality levels.

Traditional fertility (about 5-6 children per woman) declined significantly due to

industrialization, urbanization, increased education levels, and the widespread participation of women in economic, professional, and social activities.

According to the classic theory of demographic transition (W. Thompson, F. Notestein, A.J. Coale, J. Caldwell, J.C. Chesnais), this represents a process in which there is a transition from high levels of mortality and birth rates to low levels (recorded in recent decades in developed countries). The paradigm is general: some countries (the developed ones) have gone through all three phases, while others (most developing countries) are in various phases. However, the process is inexorable as it fits into a general trend called the modernization of society (Trebici, 1993). According to Jean-Claude Chesnais (demographer), the demographic transition is the passage, over a period, from a traditional demographic equilibrium system with high fertility and mortality levels to another equilibrium system but with low fertility and mortality levels.

Based on statistical evidence, the first countries engaged in the demographic transition were France and Sweden. Gradually, the rest of the countries defined today as developed also entered this process. The process is universal, but there are national particularities. The parameters that structure the demographic transition process and differentiate the populations of different nations are as follows:

1. The start of the transition, marked by the beginning of the decline in mortality,
2. The beginning of the decline in birth rates,
3. Balancing the two trends at low levels,
4. The duration of each phase and the transition.

Data analysis shows that the demographic transition generally presents a time lag from one country to another. There is also an interdependence between economic growth and population growth, between socio-economic and demographic variables. The transition of countries from lower socio-economic development stages to more advanced stages has been accompanied over the past two centuries by changes in demographic trends (demographic transition) (Trebici, 1978). It is a complex, large-scale, and profound process in which there is not only a transition in birth and death rates but also a transition in the age structure of the population (referring to demographic aging), internal migration, urbanization, nuptiality patterns, fertility, family transition, and related typologies (Trebici, 1993).

The dynamic evolution of demographics over certain periods, different from one country to another, indicates major differences reflected in the distribution of national incomes (the issue of the relationship between demographic and economic growth). Developed countries have recorded low birth and death rates but considerable economic development levels. In contrast, developing countries have recorded high birth and death rates, high demographic growth rates, a relatively young population structure, and low development performance (low GDP per capita – below \$230 per capita, high illiteracy rates, a large proportion of the population employed in agriculture, severe food deficiencies, low urbanization rate, low energy consumption per capita) (Trebici, 1978).

Over the years, between the two world wars, concerns arose regarding fertility below the replacement level. The baby boom after World War II, in the 1950s and early 1960s, alleviated for a period the alarmist ideas about population decline. However, concerns reemerged and intensified due to the decline in birth rates starting in the 1970s.

The reduction in fertility was preceded by a decrease in marriages. The fertility transition was initially achieved by delaying marriage and increasing the proportion of permanent celibacy, followed by limiting fertility within marriages. This evolution of nuptiality is linked to the condition of women, by extending the schooling period, which determines an increase in the age at marriage, by increasing their role in society through economic activity, becoming economically independent. A new phase in fertility transition is characterized by planning the timing of the child's birth according to the parents' choices.

Nuptiality experienced a spectacular increase immediately after World War II. Marriage, family, and religion regained the population's confidence, and the number of births

increased unexpectedly. However, as the generations born after the war matured, starting in the 1960s, this historical period of increased birth rates ended, with new demographic behaviors becoming dominant in both relational and reproductive terms. Marriage again became later and rarer, while divorce became much more frequent. Cohabitation, previously considered a marginal phenomenon, became very common, and accepted by the majority of the population. Individual aspirations increasingly dominated traditional conventions and social pressure. Reproductive behavior changed, fertility declined at an accelerated pace, systematically falling below the replacement level (2.1 children), the timing of births shifted to mature ages (around 30 years). The proportion of children born out of wedlock, both from cohabiting mothers and single women, also increased. These changes favored small families at the expense of large families.

The classic theory of demographic transition did not account for such an evolution. Van de Kaa and Ron Lesthaeghe introduced the concept of the second demographic transition in 1987 (Van de Kaa, 1987). These specialists argued that this is entirely different from the classic theory. According to them, the first demographic transition is characterized by the decline in mortality, the disappearance of the Malthusian fertility model, and its replacement by the control of higher-order births, which strengthened the family, viewed as an institution, with concern for the next generation considered essential.

For the second demographic transition, the defining characteristics mentioned in the specialized literature are:

- Decline in fertility, strongly influenced by increased contraceptive use,
- Changes in abortion legislation,
- Decline in nuptiality,
- Spread of consensual unions among young people and older individuals (divorced or widowed).

The central idea of the second demographic transition theory is that the changes were induced by modifications in the value system of the Western world. The altruistic family model (the family group centered on children) gradually gives way to an individualistic model, where the individual has more freedom in decisions concerning their life, focused on a professional career and other ways of personal development and fulfillment (the child no longer occupies a fundamental role in the parents' lives). The ideas presented in the conceptual model of the second demographic transition remain relevant.

New directions in demographic theory focus on narrower areas, important in current and future demographic evolution, namely fertility transition. Currently, there is no coherent explanatory model that, through known analysis methods, demonstrates a strong correlation between the characteristics of a population and individual fertility decisions, which can be verified and have predictive value. Theoretically, there are two ways to explore this subject:

1. Global perspective (large region and long period, a century, etc.),
2. Concrete Vision of Time and Geographic or Social Space (Provinces, Ethnicities, Environments, Religions)

### **Global Perspective (Extended Region and Long time, One Century, etc.)**

The global approach in transition theory considers that in Europe and the United States, the decline in fertility began around 1870, with some countries leading the way (France, Germany). Later, this decline also occurred in Southeast European countries, and then in Third World countries around the 1960s (East Asia, Latin America) and 1970s (Sub-Saharan Africa). Jean Claude Chesnais, a renowned specialist in the field and proponent of this current, conveyed through his ideas that "the change in fertility is just one aspect of the major transformations affecting contemporary society; demographic evolutions are transnational and increasingly global, as are the evolutions of ideas, fashion, and technology." (Ghețău, 1997) cf. (Chasnais, 1986). This approach is close to the classical theory of demographic transition but is criticized for being too global and greatly simplifying reality.

### **Concrete Vision of Time and Geographic or Social Space (Provinces, Ethnicities, Environments, Religions)**

The second variant starts from acknowledging the diversity of demographic history and social phenomena worldwide. The manifestations of fertility are considered strategies for populations or groups to adapt to changes (external). It is admitted that realities that were true in the past may not be true in the present, and the realities here may be different elsewhere. The intensification of historical demography studies, the increase in statistical information, the development of sociological and economic theories, especially in fertility and family, and the use of modern instruments and concepts (systems theory) have contributed to a better understanding of the phases of demographic transition and better grounding of the socio-economic factors that determine it (Trebici, 1978: 336).

All research and studies have shown that social and economic changes have strongly influenced the population, its structure, and population dynamics trends. The evolution of studies dedicated to the phenomenon has shown that there was increased interest in this transition (demographic) as it evolved in developed countries. It was particularly interesting to examine the predictive possibilities of this theory:

1. Will less developed countries follow the same model? (fundamental question);
2. What are the factors that will influence the transition?
3. Forecasting the time when it will happen (Trebici, 1978).

A schematic presentation of the demographic transition theory, from the perspective of systems theory, would be useful for conceptual understanding and logic of phenomena that capture the relationships between the components of the population system (Trebici, 1978).

The population of a certain area (territory) is a feedback system (self-regulates). Its state is described at each moment  $t$ , by the population size value at that moment.

We consider the following:

1.  $P(t)$  - population size at time  $t$ ,
2.  $N(t)$  - number of births at time  $t$ ,
3.  $M(t)$  - number of deaths,
4.  $n(t)$  - birth rate,
5.  $m(t)$  - death rate.

Among these, we have the following relationships:

1.  $N(t)=n(t)P(t)$ , (input magnitude).
2.  $M(t)=m(t)P(t)$ , (output magnitude).

The magnitudes  $n(t)$  and  $m(t)$  depend on factors external to the population system. These magnitudes describe the interaction of the population system with other systems and can be influenced by social policies (demographics, health).

3.  $P'(t)=m(t)P(t)+n(t)P(t) \Rightarrow P=N-M$ , (the equation that describes the system's evolution).

The population system has the characteristics of a cybernetic system, the most important of which is adaptability – meaning a feedback system. According to studies in the relevant literature (Trebici, 1978: 4) cf. (Bogue, 1969), the fundamental thesis of demographic transition can be summarized as:

- Any society strives to balance demographic events to replace losses caused by deaths up to a level considered desirable, according to the collective norms of that society;
- These norms are not rigid; they adapt to changes in the production system that ensure the population's existence.

The population system, where the population size and structure are state variables and births and deaths are inputs and outputs of the system, which is a feedback system, in Phase I of the transition, performs adaptable self-regulation processes, ensuring internal balance through high birth and death rates.

As societies evolve, they will initially take control of mortality (thus influencing system outputs). This societal endeavor leads, in Phase II of the transition, to a gap with



system inputs (births), a mechanism materialized by accelerating the population growth rate. Social and economic variables act on system inputs with some delay. Self-adaptation (self-regulation) occurs through the effect of the socio-economic environment (context) or the effect of social policy measures (demographic). Society takes control of input variables (birth rate) and correlates it with the reduced mortality level, thus restoring demographic balance at a low birth and death rate level or maintaining a relatively high birth rate, ensuring a rational demographic increase (the case of Romania in the years 1966-70). In Phase I of the transition, the population system self-regulates naturally (the self-stabilization property is manifest, referring to the first cybernetic property). In Phase III, external factors explicitly appear in the self-adaptation process, and the self-organization property manifests, leading the system to a new equilibrium state that allows the system to function in response to external environment challenges (Trebici, 1978), according to (Malița, 1975). This involves internal reorganization, and transitioning to a new qualitative state.

**The logistic Growth Model (Verhulst)** considers the environment's capacity to support population growth. It hypothesizes that the population growth rate slows as the population's resource requirements approach the environment's maximum resource supply capacity. The equation for this model is:

$P(t) = \frac{K}{1 + \frac{K - P_0}{P_0} * e^{-rt}}$	<p>Where:</p> <p>P(t) is the population size at time t,                  P0 is the initial population size,                  r is the growth rate,                  t is the time,                  K is the environment's carrying capacity.</p>
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### 5.The Equation of Demographic Dynamics

Population dynamics can be understood as the total variations that occur in the number, structure, and distribution of the population in a certain territory, over a specific time interval. This concept encompasses the natural dynamics of the population, given by the difference between the number of births and deaths, as well as migratory dynamics, which represent the spatial movement of the population over a specific area and time interval. It is expressed in absolute or relative numerical values. The equation of demographic dynamics for a population in a specified region is necessary to understand how the number of inhabitants in that area varies. It helps us understand and quantify the variation in population changes based on births, deaths, and migration.

#### Natural Dynamics:

The natural balance represents the difference between birth rates and death rates, expressed per thousand inhabitants. Its simplest expression is the natural increase.

$$B_n = N - M$$

B<sub>n</sub> – natural balance (natural increase),  
 N – birth rate,  
 M – death rate.

When the natural increase is positive, the number of new births is greater than the number of deaths over a specific time unit. In this case, we have population growth.

When the natural increase is negative, the number of new births is less than the number of deaths over a specific time unit. In this case, we have a population decline.

When the natural increase is zero, the population number remains constant.

Birth rate is the ratio of the number of live births in a year to the average population of the year, expressed per thousand inhabitants:  $N = P_t \times 1000$

**Migratory Dynamics:**

The migratory balance represents the difference between emigration and immigration:

$$B_m = I - E$$

$B_m$  – migratory balance,

$E$  – number of people who emigrated (left to live elsewhere),

$I$  – number of people who immigrated (came to live in the reference area).

**Immigration** (inflows) and **emigration** (outflows) affect the total population.

The total population is given by the formula:

$T = B_n - B_m$ sau $T = [(N - M) + (I - E)]$	<p><math>T</math> – total population,  <math>B_n</math> – natural balance,  <math>N</math> – birth rate,  <math>M</math> – death rate,  <math>B_m</math> – migratory balance,  <math>I</math> – immigration,  <math>E</math> – emigration.</p>
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**6. Factors Influencing Population Dynamics**

*Demographic Factors*

- **Birth Rate:** The number of live births in a population per unit of time. Influenced by biological, cultural, economic, and political factors.
- **Mortality Rate:** The number of deaths in a population per unit of time. Factors such as public health, nutrition, and living conditions play a crucial role.

*Economic Factors*

- **Economic Development:** The level of economic prosperity influences birth and death rates through access to healthcare, education, and living conditions.
- **Labor Market:** Employment opportunities and economic conditions influence migration and population stability.

*Social and Cultural Factors*

- **Education:** The level of education influences fertility decisions and family planning.
- **Culture and Religion:** Cultural and religious norms can affect fertility and mortality behaviors.

*Political Factors*

- **Public Policies:** Government policies on health, education, immigration, and social protection directly influence population dynamics.
- **Political Stability:** Stability or instability can affect migration and mortality rates.

**7. Demographic Transition in Romania**

The study of demographic transition presents legitimate interest for our country as well. In Romania, the demographic transition had specific characteristics, just as each country has its own demographic particularities. The onset of the demographic transition (in Romania) and its phases have been established based on series of data on mortality and birth rates from the second half of the 19th century, taking into account the territory (with variations) of the Romanian state and population census data. Prestigious Romanian demographers such as V. Trebici, V. Ghețău, G. Retegan-Șerbu, and M. Balaci have published studies analyzing the demographic transition of Romania's population.

The first signs indicating qualitative (structural) transformations in the social and economic spheres appeared between 1859 (the creation of the modern Romanian state) and 1918 (the Great Union). The period marking the beginnings of the national demographic transition is encompassed within this timeframe.

The demographic transition begins with a decline in mortality from the mid-19th century. The moment of the onset of the second phase of demographic transition, that is, the beginning of the decline in fertility, is controversial in the specialized literature. G. Retegan-Șerbu, based on the reconstruction of data on the birth and fertility rates of Romania's population between 1900-1960, demonstrates with statistical arguments (crude birth rate, general fertility rate, age-specific fertility rates, gross and net reproduction indices) that in Romania, fertility began to decline only after World War I – after 1920 (Retegan-Șerbu, 1962). Based on new recalculated data series, Vasile Ghețău advances a hypothesis different from the ideas formulated in specialized works. He argues that the process of fertility decline in Romania began approximately in 1885, thus 35 years earlier than previously thought (Ghețău, 1997).

Starting in 1870, a significant decline in mortality is observed, and from 1885, a downward trend in birth rates begins, except for the period (1910-1914), when a small increase in birth rates was recorded. Between the two world wars, both mortality and birth rates declined.

After World War II, the new communist regime imposed economic and social development based on industrialization. What were the implications of this development on population dynamics, how did demographic growth harmonize with economic growth, and what means were used by social and demographic policy to achieve this?

During the period 1947-1955, mortality decreased sharply, while birth rates remained high, after which birth rates followed a downward trajectory until 1966. Of the two components of demographic movement, priority was given to reducing mortality, which had extremely high values, especially infant mortality. The health strategy of those years was established for this purpose, to reduce mortality. Healthcare was rethought on new bases, medical advances were widely applied, and access to healthcare services was ensured. As the level of education and material life improved, the health strategy had an impact and materialized in a strong reduction of mortality, being taken under state control with significant results.

Regarding birth rates, their level was relatively high in the years 1948-1955, partly due to the recovery of postponed marriages and births because of the war. Between 1957 and 1966, an accelerated downward trend was recorded, facilitated also by the liberalization of abortions. However, social, economic, educational, and cultural causes can also be identified: a) affirmation of women's social status, b) broad access to education, c) increasing participation of women in social work, and d) professional and social mobility.

It should be noted that all these occurred within the broader framework generated by urbanization and socialist industrialization. During the period 1957-1966, the decline in birth rates was faster than the decline in mortality, thus their rebalancing occurred at lower levels.

The dynamic evolution of these phenomena occurred due to the interaction of economic, political, cultural, and educational factors during that period. The application of demographic policy measures at the end of 1966, especially those related to abortions, resulted in a revival of birth rates, followed by a gradual decline in subsequent years. After 1966, there was also an increase in overall mortality, especially infant mortality, due to system reactions. After a few years, there was the beginning of a rebalance of birth and mortality rates at slightly higher levels.

The demographic transition itself lasted until 1991, approximately 120 years. The period 1967-1989, through pro-natalist measures, prolonged the duration of the demographic transition in Romania. The factors that led to the decline in fertility starting in 1991 are those that, since the 1960s-70s, triggered a sharp decline in fertility in most developed European countries. It was found that where there was constant economic and social progress, the following "patterns" associated with social behavior models occurred: a) women's emancipation and increasing participation in economic activities, b) increasing social mobility, c) high cost of raising children, d) reduction of the economic function of children and

especially their role in the economic security of the elderly, e) the advent of modern contraceptive methods and other factors.

For our country, the time lag is mainly explained by the effects of the pro-natalist policies of the communist regime. New social realities, especially economic ones, also influenced the downward trend of the fertility phenomenon. The degradation of living standards, unemployment, uncertainty, and stress are specific factors of decline during the transition period (countries in transition). Let's not forget that other, much more complex, determining factors can be identified that will continue to shape fertility dynamics (considering the experience of socio-economically developed countries / those undergoing sustained development).

Recent trends in birth rates indicate that we are in a stage of demographic dynamics corresponding to the second demographic transition. The decline in fertility is accompanied by changes in attitudes and behavior regarding marriage, consensual unions, divorce, out-of-wedlock children, sexuality, and contraception. The future evolution of fertility is a great unknown and challenge. Improving the demographic situation and stopping demographic decline depends on its increase.

The population system interacts with other systems in society. Actions to produce noticeable effects on the demographic system can be realized if other systems (economic, educational, environmental, health, etc.) produce and are influenced. Consequently, the issue of identifying and interpreting a large number of significant variables arises. An example of this was provided by Romania at the end of 1966 when an attempt was made to restore birth rates after a long period of decline. A socio-economic environment can significantly influence birth rates when a certain level of development is reached. The quantitative expression of this socio-economic level can be represented by an indicator encompassing several variables. Statistically-mathematically, a factorial analysis model is a solution that can be explored;

A corresponding model for analyzing demographic transition and implicitly analyzing population dynamics, taking into account dependent demographic variables and independent social and economic variables, can be the following, proposed by Vladimir Trebici (Trebici, 1978):

<b>Transition</b>	<b>Phase I</b>	<b>Phase II</b>	<b>Phase III</b>
1. Crude birth rate			
2. Crude death rate			
3. Natural increase rate			
4. Life expectancy			
5. Age pyramid			
6. Family (extended or nuclear)			
7. Family size			
8. Total fertility rate			
9. Women's survival probability at ages 15 and 50			
10. Nuptiality rate			
11. Proportion of unmarried women at age 50 (%)			
12. Average age at first marriage			
13. Urbanization rate (%)			
14. Proportion of the active population in agriculture (%)			
15. Proportion of students in the population aged 5-19 (%)			
16. Gross national product per capita			
17. Synthetic index			

It is important to identify moments of social and demographic legislation with expected effects on the population and demographic trends: agrarian reforms, the law for the introduction of general and compulsory education, the law organizing the healthcare system, laws regarding marriage, divorce, abortions, etc.

### **8. Applicability of population dynamics theory**

Population dynamics theory is crucial for urban planning, natural resource management, and public policy formulation. Understanding the mechanisms that determine demographic changes allows policymakers to implement effective strategies to meet population needs and ensure sustainable development.

#### **Conclusion**

The theory of population dynamics provides an essential analytical framework for understanding demographic processes and formulating effective public policies. The study of population dynamics combines concepts and methods from demography, ecology, economics, and sociology to provide a comprehensive perspective on how populations change over time and space.

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## EXPLORING YOUTH WORK AND CAREER VALUES: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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**Abstract:** *This sociological study delves into the intricate web of values shaping the attitudes of young adults towards work and profession in contemporary society. With the dynamic landscape of the job market and the evolving nature of career paths, understanding the underlying values guiding the decisions of the youth becomes imperative. The results of the quantitative survey offer a broader perspective on the prevalence and significance of different values attributed to work and profession among young adults. Statistical analysis techniques are employed to explore correlations, trends, and variations across demographic variables, shedding light on the diversity and complexity of value orientations. Preliminary findings suggest a multiplicity of factors influencing young adults' perceptions and attitudes towards work and career. While traditional values such as financial stability and social status remain significant, emerging trends indicate a growing emphasis on work-life balance, personal fulfillment, and societal impact. The implications of these findings extend beyond academic discourse, offering valuable insights for policymakers, educators, employers, and career counselors. By understanding the evolving value systems of youth, stakeholders can tailor interventions, educational programs, and organizational policies to better align with the aspirations and needs of the emerging workforce.*

**Keywords:** youth, career path, work values, profession

### 1. Introduction

In contemporary society, youth work and career values have undergone significant transformations due to rapid economic, technological, and social changes. As the job market becomes increasingly dynamic, young adults face new challenges and opportunities that shape their attitudes toward work and professional life. A growing body of research emphasizes the need to understand these evolving values, as they have profound implications for the workforce, educational institutions, and policymakers (Smith & Taylor, 2021).

Globalization and technological advancement have disrupted traditional career paths, creating a more fluid job market where the concept of a "career for life" is becoming obsolete (Jackson, 2020). Additionally, societal shifts, such as the increasing emphasis on personal fulfillment and social impact, play a critical role in shaping young adults' perceptions of work (Doe & Martin, 2022).

The central problem this study addresses is the need to understand the key values driving youth decisions in the labor market. While earlier studies have examined economic factors, there remains a gap in exploring how emerging values, such as work-life balance and social responsibility, compete with traditional values like financial security and status (Green & Robinson, 2021).

This study aims to: a) identify the key work and career values of young adults; b) analyze how demographic factors influence value orientations; c) provide insights for stakeholders to better align policies and practices with youth aspirations.

Understanding these values is very important for developing responsive educational programs, career counseling strategies, and employment policies. As researchers have noted, "youth values are a mirror of societal changes and can predict future workforce trends" (Miller, 2019: 23). For policymakers and educators, gaining insights into these values can help in designing more effective interventions and programs to meet the needs of the emerging workforce.

## 2. Literature Review

Sociological theories provide diverse perspectives on the values that shape individual attitudes toward work and career. While classical theories like Weber's Protestant ethic and Marx's alienation critique focus on work as central to identity or as a source of exploitation, contemporary theories such as symbolic interactionism, human capital theory, and postmodernism offer more nuanced views. These newer frameworks address the complexity of career choices today, emphasizing the importance of personal fulfillment, societal impact, and work-life balance—values that are increasingly important to younger generations in a rapidly evolving job market.

Max Weber's (1905) concept of the Protestant work ethic emphasized diligence, hard work, and economic success as key values in capitalist societies. Weber argued that these values were foundational to Western economic systems, asserting that individuals' careers became intertwined with their sense of identity and moral worth.

Marxist theory, on the other hand, critiqued this value system by highlighting the alienation of labor under capitalism. According to Marx (1844), workers often lose a sense of personal fulfillment in jobs that are overly structured by capitalist interests. He argued that "the worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces" (Marx, 1844: 20), pointing out the conflict between personal values and systemic exploitation.

More recent studies suggest that today's youth, particularly millennials and Generation Z, are less inclined to prioritize traditional values such as financial stability and status, and are more focused on personal fulfillment and work-life balance (Smith, 2018). In a comprehensive study on youth work values, Chen and Carter (2019) found that young adults ranked personal satisfaction and societal impact higher than financial success. This shift reflects broader societal changes, including increased awareness of mental health, environmental issues, and the gig economy.

While these studies provide valuable insights, there is still a lack of empirical research on the intersection of demographic factors—such as gender, ethnicity, and educational background—with work values. Green and Robinson observe, "more nuanced studies are required to understand the complexities of youth attitudes toward work in diverse socio-economic contexts" (Green and Robinson, 2021: 142).

Symbolic interactionism offers a more micro-level perspective on work values by focusing on how individuals construct their identities through social interactions and the meanings they attach to their work. According to George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, the founders of symbolic interactionism, individuals develop their sense of self based on the roles they perform and the reactions they receive from others in their social environment.

In the context of work, symbolic interactionists argue that individuals shape their career identities through socialization processes, such as family expectations, educational experiences, and interactions with peers and colleagues. For example, how youth view certain professions—whether as prestigious, fulfilling, or mundane—is influenced by societal symbols and the meanings attached to different careers. This framework helps explain why millennials and Generation Z place a high value on careers that offer social recognition, fulfillment, and opportunities for self-expression (Blumer, 1969).

Human capital theory, developed by economists such as Gary Becker, views education and training as investments that increase an individual's economic value in the labor market. The theory posits that "individuals acquire skills and knowledge (human capital) through formal education and on-the-job training, which in turn enhances their productivity and earnings potential" (Becker, 1997: 237). From a sociological perspective, this theory underscores the importance of education in shaping career paths and work values.

In the context of youth, human capital theory can explain why those with higher levels of education are more likely to prioritize careers that allow them to make a societal impact. In Chen and Carter's study, young adults with advanced degrees were more likely to

seek out professions that aligned with their personal values and provided opportunities to contribute to societal well-being (2019).

Postmodern theories challenge the idea of universal or fixed work values, emphasizing the fluid and fragmented nature of modern identity and career paths. Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" (2000) illustrates the increasingly precarious nature of work in contemporary society, where traditional career trajectories are no longer stable or linear. In this fluid context, individuals are constantly adapting to new roles and reinventing their professional identities. For young adults, postmodern theories offer insights into why work values are shifting toward flexibility, autonomy, and personal fulfillment. As Bauman (2000) argues, individuals in a "liquid" society are less tied to rigid structures and are more inclined to seek out work that allows them to navigate the complexities of modern life, balancing personal aspirations with the demands of a constantly changing job market.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to explore youth work and career values. A structured survey was used to collect data from a sample of young adults aged 18 to 30. The survey included questions designed to measure key values associated with work, such as financial stability, social status, work-life balance, and personal fulfillment. Participants were asked to rate the importance of these values on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important).

The sample was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across demographic variables such as gender, educational background, and employment status. The final sample consisted of 120 participants, with 50% female and 50% male respondents. Most participants were employed or in higher education, reflecting the target population's proximity to career decision-making stages.

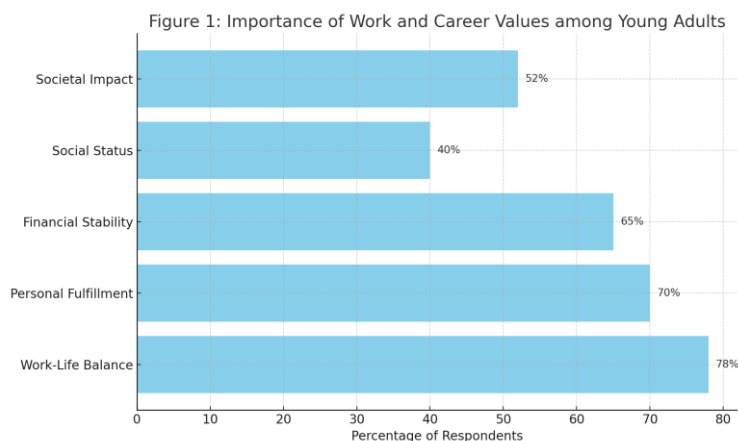
The survey instrument was adapted from previous studies on work values (Chen & Carter, 2019) and included questions related to demographic variables and value orientations. Ethical considerations were carefully observed, with participants providing informed consent and anonymity being maintained throughout the study.

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships between values and demographic variables. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore differences across gender and education levels. As noted by some authors, "ANOVA is a robust method for examining group differences across multiple variables" (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019: 234).

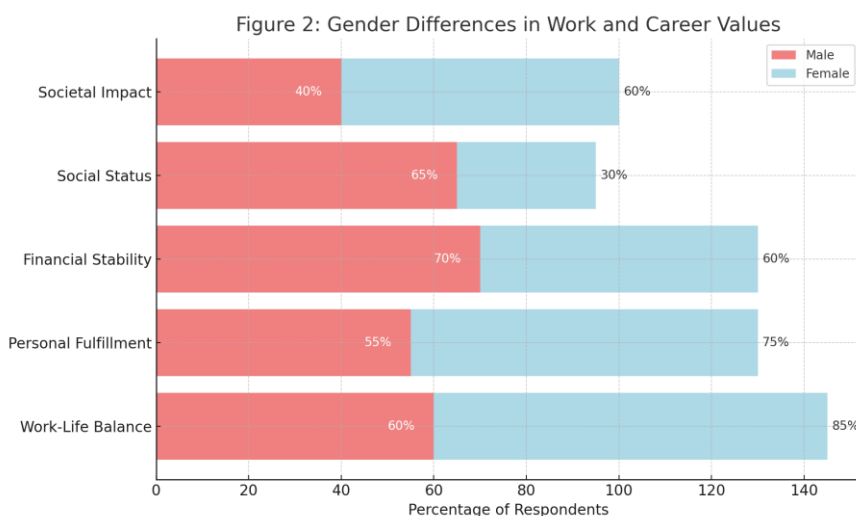
### 4. Results

As seen in Figure 1, work-life balance and personal fulfillment are highly prioritized by young adults. This finding reflects the increasing trend in recent decades, where individuals seek careers that "offer flexibility and personal growth over material gains" (Smith, 2018). The results suggest a departure from purely economic motivations toward a more holistic perspective on career satisfaction, where well-being and societal contributions take precedence. This shift reflects broader societal changes, including the rise of individualism, greater awareness of mental health, and growing concerns about global and environmental issues. In past generations, financial stability and economic success were often seen as the primary drivers of career decisions. The traditional "job for life" mentality emphasized job security, consistent paychecks, and gradual career advancement as key markers of professional achievement. However, today's workforce—particularly millennials and Generation Z—places greater importance on achieving a balance between professional and personal life, leading to a prioritization of *well-being* in career choices.





The data also reveal gender differences in work and career values. As shown in Figure 2, women are more likely to emphasize work-life balance and personal fulfillment, with 85% of female respondents rating work-life balance as very important, compared to 60% of male respondents. Conversely, men place a higher emphasis on financial stability and social status, with 70% and 65% of men, respectively, valuing these aspects. This significant difference can be attributed to the traditional and ongoing gender roles where women often bear a disproportionate share of caregiving and domestic responsibilities, such as raising children, managing households, and caring for elderly family members. These responsibilities may compel women to seek jobs that allow them to balance their personal and professional lives more effectively. The increasing emphasis on mental health and well-being also likely contributes to women's heightened concern for achieving a harmonious work-life balance. Flexible working hours, opportunities for remote work, and the ability to take time off for family responsibilities are examples of workplace features that are becoming increasingly important to many women.

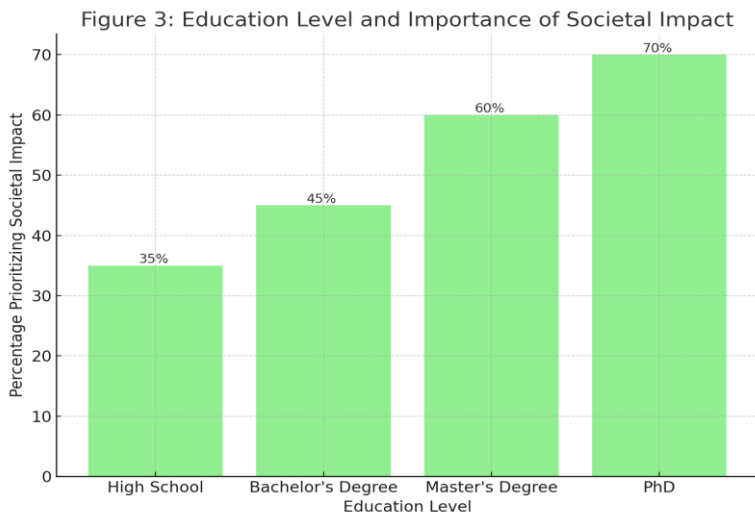


A clear relationship exists between education levels and the value placed on societal impact. As we may observe in Figure 3, respondents with higher educational attainment are more likely to prioritize societal impact in their careers. For instance, 70% of PhD holders rate societal impact as important, compared to 35% of those with only a high school diploma. This

trend aligns with findings from previous research that suggest that “higher education fosters a greater awareness of global and social issues” (Doe & Martin, 2022: 64).

Higher education, particularly at the university and postgraduate levels, tends to place a strong emphasis on social responsibility. Many university programs encourage students to engage with pressing societal issues through coursework, research, and experiential learning opportunities such as internships or volunteer work. Fields such as environmental studies, sociology, political science, and public health, for example, often focus directly on understanding and addressing social challenges. This exposure helps shape the mindset of students, who are increasingly motivated to pursue careers that not only provide personal fulfillment and financial stability but also contribute to solving societal problems.

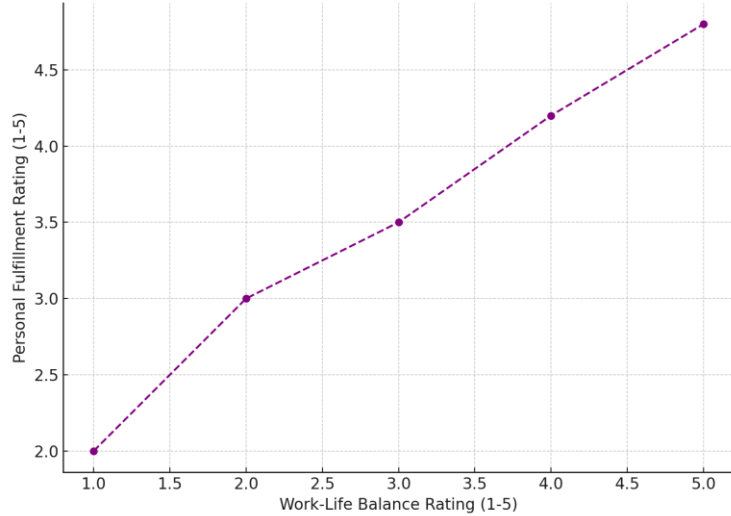
This trend aligns with existing research that shows “higher education fosters a greater awareness of global and social issues” (Doe & Martin, 2022: 67). The curriculum in many higher education institutions encourages students to think critically about their roles as global citizens, embedding values of sustainability, equity, and community service into their learning. Graduates from such programs are often more inclined to seek work that has a broader social purpose, such as contributing to climate change mitigation, public health initiatives, or education reform.



Statistical analysis using Pearson’s correlation coefficient revealed several notable relationships. Work-life balance showed a strong positive correlation with personal fulfillment ( $r = 0.72, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that individuals who prioritize balancing their personal and professional lives also seek fulfillment in their careers. Additionally, financial stability had a moderate positive correlation with social status ( $r = 0.54, p < 0.05$ ), indicating that those who value financial security are more likely to view status as an important career factor.

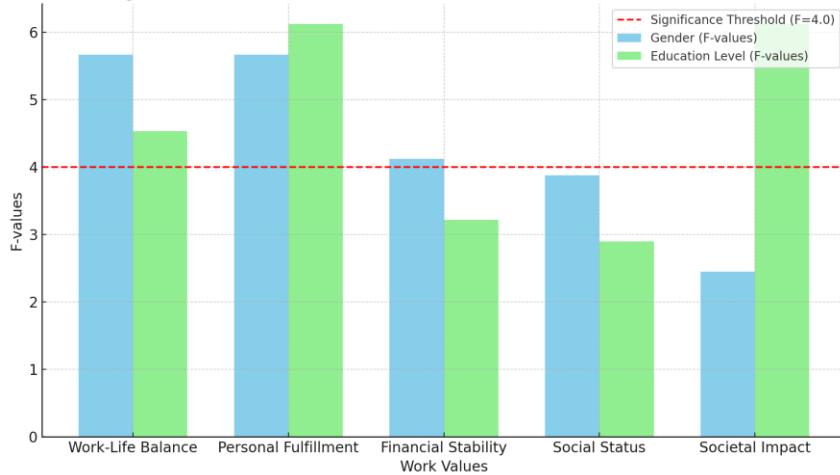
This strong relationship points to an evolving understanding of career success, where achieving balance between work and life is no longer seen as a separate or secondary goal, but rather as a fundamental aspect of one’s overall sense of fulfillment. For many young adults, the ability to enjoy life outside of work—through hobbies, family time, or personal development—is just as important as career advancement or financial rewards. The high correlation coefficient reflects how deeply intertwined these two values are: individuals who successfully manage their work-life balance are more likely to feel fulfilled and content in their careers, as their work allows them the time and space to pursue personal interests and maintain well-being.

Figure 4: Correlation between Work-Life Balance and Personal Fulfillment



An analysis of variance (ANOVA) also highlighted significant differences in value orientations based on gender and education level. Women were more likely to emphasize work-life balance and personal fulfillment ( $F = 5.67, p < 0.01$ ), while men were more inclined toward financial stability and social status. Additionally, higher education levels were associated with a greater emphasis on societal impact and personal fulfillment ( $F = 6.12, p < 0.01$ ).

Figure: ANOVA Results for Gender and Education Level in Work Values



The graph above represents the ANOVA results for both gender and education level in relation to work values. It shows the F-values from the analysis of variance, indicating where significant differences occur:

- **Gender F-values:** Significant differences are observed in work-life balance and personal fulfillment ( $F = 5.67$ ), with a threshold for significance set at an F-value of 4.0 (marked by the red dashed line).
- **Education Level F-values:** The values for personal fulfillment ( $F = 6.12$ ) and societal impact ( $F = 6.12$ ) are significant, as they exceed the threshold.

The ANOVA results show that women tend to emphasize work-life balance and personal fulfillment significantly more than men, with an F-value of 5.67 and a p-value of less than 0.01. This suggests that the differences between men and women in these value orientations are statistically significant. In contrast, men were more inclined toward financial stability and social status. The ANOVA test highlights these differences, though this section does not show the exact F and p-values for these variables. However, given the significance in the women's emphasis on work-life balance and personal fulfillment, it's reasonable to infer that the observed values are statistically significant for men. The analysis also revealed that individuals with higher education levels were more likely to value societal impact and personal fulfillment, with an F-value of 6.12 and a p-value of less than 0.01. This indicates that higher education correlates significantly with the prioritization of these values.

## 5. Discussion

The findings from this study reveal important trends in how young adults approach work and career decisions. The emphasis on work-life balance and personal fulfillment reflects broader societal shifts toward individual well-being and quality of life, as previous research suggests (Green & Robinson, 2021). These values represent a departure from traditional notions of success that were predominantly based on financial and social achievements. As noted by Smith, "the rise of flexible working arrangements and the gig economy has fundamentally altered young adults' expectations of their professional lives" (Smith, 2018: 690).

The results also reflect a sociological phenomenon wherein young people are increasingly seeking work environments that align with their personal values, rather than simply accepting established norms of economic success (Chen & Carter, 2019). This trend can be understood through the lens of individualization, as theorized by Ulrich Beck, who argued that modern society is characterized by individuals crafting their own paths based on personal values and priorities, rather than adhering to pre-determined social roles (Beck, 1992). Beck argues that modern society is characterized by the process of individualization, where traditional social structures—such as fixed class positions, gender roles, or familial expectations—lose their dominance in shaping people's lives. Instead, individuals are increasingly expected to craft their own life trajectories, including their career paths, based on personal values, desires, and priorities. Beck posits that this shift leads to a "do-it-yourself" biography, where people are free to choose their paths but are also burdened with the responsibility of making the right choices in an uncertain, flexible, and rapidly changing world.

Beck's concept of *reflexive modernization* also comes into play here (Beck, 1992), a concept that refers to the process by which individuals and societies continually reflect on and reconfigure their social practices in response to changing conditions. For young people in the workforce, this means that they are constantly re-evaluating their career paths in light of personal experiences, societal shifts, and global challenges like climate change and social inequality. The pursuit of careers that align with personal values is part of this reflexive process, where young people are acutely aware of the impact their work can have, not only on their personal lives but also on the world at large.

Gender and education levels played significant roles in shaping value orientations, as indicated by the ANOVA results. The finding that women place greater emphasis on work-life balance is consistent with existing literature, which suggests that women often face additional pressures to balance professional and personal responsibilities (Doe & Martin, 2022). The emphasis on societal impact among more educated respondents points to a growing awareness of global issues, such as climate change and social justice, which are often addressed in higher education settings (Chen & Carter, 2019).

## 7. Conclusions

This study highlights the dynamic nature of youth work and career values in contemporary society. The emphasis on work-life balance and personal fulfillment underscores a significant shift in how young adults view their professional lives. Traditional values such as financial stability and social status remain relevant, but their “relative importance is diminishing as new values emerge” (Smith, 2018: 688). The strong preference for work-life balance among women reflects broader trends in modern society, where traditional gender roles are still deeply ingrained, despite efforts toward gender equality. Women, particularly those in dual-income households or single-parent families, often face the challenge of balancing the demands of their careers with their roles at home. Consequently, the ability to maintain this balance is seen as critical for reducing stress, avoiding burnout, and fostering personal satisfaction. The differences in career values between men and women are deeply rooted in both cultural and social norms that have historically shaped gender roles. While these norms are evolving, remnants of traditional expectations still influence how men and women approach their careers. For instance, men are often socialized to equate success with financial achievement and high-status positions, while women are increasingly encouraged to find roles that allow for flexibility, fulfillment, and personal growth.

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## SCHOOL DEVIANCE - CURRENT PROBLEM OF EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** *From the perspective of the paradigm of school deviance, the ideal student with a deep inclination for knowledge and learning, with solid parental pro-educational impulses and characterized by a form of minor/overlooked behavioral deviance, has ceased to be the subject of current socio-pedagogical research. If in the not-too-distant past, school maladjustment with all its characteristic forms was quasi-accepted, (the exceptions being passed to other categories of research in the fields of pathology or forensic psychology), at present, its complex analysis has taken shape strongly and progressively, especially in the educational sphere. I proposed "ab initio", to illustrate the results of a research method, more pragmatic, at the same time faster, namely, the socio-pedagogical survey and as a technical tool, "capturer" of the "hot" information - the questionnaire, in the idea that it was able to capture a significant amount of information about the subject addressed, from a sample, admittedly, a little smaller of respondents. In other words, with the help of the sociological questionnaire we took into account the study of the attitudes, motivations, interests, dispositions and inclinations of the direct beneficiaries, in order to obtain truthful, current and edifying data, in a short period of time.*

**Keywords:** *school deviance, education, counselling, deviance prevention, combating deviance*

### 1. Introduction

The subordination of school deviance is related both to the causes and forms of manifestation and to the etymology of the key word - "deviance", (coming from two modern languages: English - "deviation" and French - "déviation" here, being translated as behavioral disturbance in the social sphere or as "type of conduct that deviates from the rules accepted by society" (Cusson, 1992: 444).

Therefore, as a "fresh" paradigm, school deviance has been an "educational problem" since the beginning of formal education, the contextual challenges of its manifestation in the school space taking on increasing emphasis in the sense of accounting for the evolution and the effects caused, especially in the long term.

It is no coincidence that, precisely because of its magnitude and expansion, it has been and will remain at the center of attention of all educational factors, although many times, they have been discouraged from deeply "dissecting" the phenomenon and finding the universally valid definition.

This fact is also validated by the existence of several determining factors, namely: different definitions formulated by researchers from fields related to education; values or social norms that are constantly evolving and manifested simultaneously with socio-contextual transformations.

Referring to similar problems, some researchers even specify that in the literature there is no clearly defined definition of the term called "school deviance", it "being extremely rarely used in scientific writings and documents" (Neamțu, 2023: 107).

The United Nations (UN) principles, also known as the "Riyadh Principles" of 1990, which addressed the problem of preventing juvenile delinquency, also fall into the same context. The international penal systems that needed to be rebuilt in the spirit of the values of restorative justice and the "partnership of social actors involved in the development and resocialization of the child who has committed crimes" were analyzed. It was also emphasized that increased attention was paid to the socialization of the child/student. as well as the role

they play: the family, the community, the school and the mass media in the prevention of delinquency and, implicitly, of school deviance.

In other words, the "exploration" of all aspects and facets of school deviance has been "started", which includes a wide variety of undesirable behaviors and manifestations of all educational "actors", in contradiction with the regulations provided for in both the "school and internal" regulations (Neamțu, 2023:108).

Multiple deviational hypostases in the school context know well-known and frequently encountered associated concepts, such as: indiscipline, school failure, deviant conduct, juvenile delinquency, school maladjustment, behavioral disorders, each of which has particular causes and forms of manifestation.

For this reason, the psycho-socio-pedagogical investigation of the phenomenon of school deviance has incited over time various expert specialists in education, who have been simultaneously concerned with the analysis of the manifestation and progressive extent of the phenomenon, as well as with its similar characteristics noted in all school environments.

## **2. Causes of school deviation**

Regarding the investigation of the causes of the school deviation registered, especially in our country, on the firmament of exclusively socio-pedagogical studies, a triad of professionals made up of consecrated names of research was noted, whose contribution consisted in clarifying the "roots" of the negative phenomenon now frequently encountered on school benches.

Here is how the three types of classifications of the causes of school deviance in pre-university education are presented:

a) Mititelu's classification (2011: 26-31) includes:

- individual/internal cases (constitutional cases and cases that reflect the personality traits in formation);
- social/external causes (family cases and extra-family cases).

b) Albu's classification (2002: 37-41) includes:

- individual causes (which are based on the subjective factors derived from the student's personality in formation, such as: organic factors, personal psycho-pedagogical factors, factors determined by the aggravating particularities of the personality structure);
- microsocioal causes (represented by: education/school system, family environment, entourage/group membership);
- macro-social causes (which are related to society as a whole, to the globalization process and to the entire education system, at the origin of their triggering bringing their contribution the family, urbanization, the street phenomenon, educational bankruptcy and the influence of the media).

c) Preda (1988: 34) classification, the most complex, includes:

- causes at the psychosocial level (materialized by competition and the need for success, as well as by the divergence between the different categories of values proposed by society);
- causes at the family level (represented by the divergence between the parents' educational methods, the indifferent and/or rejective attitude of the parents, the autocratic attitude of the parents, the conflictive family atmosphere and the disorganization of the family);
- causes at the extra-family level (determined by school maladjustment, the influences of delinquent groups and the influence of the media);
- psycho-individual causes (influenced by neuropsychic factors and the student's personality) (Blândul, 2012: 50-84).

### 3. Forms of manifestation of school deviance

In turn, the forms of manifestation of school deviance were analyzed "under the magnifying glass" of another triad of research and education professionals, whose contribution materialized through the elaboration of three other distinct types of classifications, as follows:

- a) Neamțu classification (2003: 173-175) which includes the following criteria:
  1. By stability and structurability at the personality level:
    - transient behaviors specific to periods of age or difficult situations of a temporary nature in life;
    - stabilized behaviors at the personality level (negativism, hypersensitivity, increased emotional intensity of responses to stressors etc.).
  2. By social gravity:
    - behaviors with low social dangerousness (evasive behaviors, dissociative behavior etc.);
    - conduct with moderate social dangerousness (lying, vandalism, rebellion etc.);
    - behaviors with a high risk of social/antisocial dangerousness (violence, theft, sexual crimes, drug addiction etc.).
  3. By clinical appearance:
    - evasion or resignation behaviors (running away from home, absenteeism/school dropout, drug addiction etc.);
    - aggressive or domineering behaviors (impulsivity, anger, violence etc.);
    - perverse behaviors (precocious sexual preoccupations, obscene language and manifestations etc.).
  4. By etiology:
    - behaviors determined by organic factors (morpho-functional constitution of the individual, certain post-traumatic sequelae, the presence of the hereditary factor);
    - behaviors determined by psycho-pedagogical factors (those encountered at the family, extra-family, societal level etc.).
  5. According to the intention of the act correlated with the level of awareness of the conflict:
    - instrumental/intentional/deliberate conduct (those students who commit deviant acts in order to take revenge on parents or other people in the extracurricular environment);
    - non-instrumental, unintentional, non-deliberate behaviors (such as inadequate responses of students in school situations interpreted as frustrating).
  6. According to the frequency with which they occur:
    - sporadic, episodic behavior (copying, cheating);
    - repeated, continuous conduct (absenteeism).
  7. By degree of generality:
    - particular conduct (towards certain teachers, situations or school subjects);
    - generalized conduct.
  8. By the way of reaction to therapeutic interventions:
    - conduct that can be remedied without serious consequences;
    - rebellious behaviors (which, through repetition, gain momentum).
- b) Preda's classification (1998: 44) includes the following criteria:
  1. After the orientation of the behavior:
    - heteroaggressive (aversion to another person or to the goods owned by him);
    - self-aggressive (attack directed at oneself: self-mutilation, attempt to suicides, etc.);
  2. By the origin of the behavior:
    - unconditional/genetic (the innate predisposition plays a dominant role in the production of deviant behavior);
    - conditional/learned (aberrant behavior is learned through social learning);



3. According to the typology of the manifestation of the behavior:

- undifferentiated aggression (occurs as a result of everyday frustrations, without particular consequences);
- tort (it has a permanent polymorphic appearance, with a certain negative resonance);
- pathological (represents the expression of a pre-existing pathological condition, with biological, toxic or psychiatric determination);

4. By the predominant motivation of the behavior:

- instrumental (the purpose is to assault the victim in order to achieve a status and the motivation is extrinsic, assuming self-control);
- emotional/impulsive (the goal is only to assault the victim against the background of an intrinsic motivation, with low self-control and intense affective experience).

c) Pârju classification (2023: 208) includes three hierarchical areas/stages of forms of school deviance, (according to the intensity and frequency of its occurrence):

1. Stage I (which have a minor intensity, but a major frequency: intentional tardiness to classes, smoking, cheating, lack of attention in class hours, non-involvement in teaching activities, oppositionism, insubordination to the teacher);
2. Stage II (which have a medium intensity and moderate frequency: school vandalism, school absenteeism, running away from school or skipping, violence, cyberbullying, bullying);
3. Stage III (which have a major intensity and a minor frequency: drug use, attack and use of bladed/lethal weapons, school dropout, suicide).

A brief presentation in alphabetical order of the forms of school deviance in Romanian pre-university education is as follows:

- School dropout - represents the phenomenon "of cessation of school attendance, early leaving of the educational system, regardless of the level reached, before obtaining a qualification recognized by a graduation diploma" (Neamțu, 2003: 199) and which has as springs: individual factors (learning and individual deficiencies) and social factors (social problems);

-School absenteeism - represents "the absence from school for a long period of time of the student who attends a formal/non-formal education program where attendance is mandatory" (Blandol, 2012: 169) and which is based on: various socio-cultural factors of the student's environment of origin. At the same time, it is currently "among the most important dysfunctions of the educational sphere" (Manolescu, 2019: 368);

-Aggressiveness – represents "the tendency/set of tendencies that is reflected by offensive verbal/actional behaviors (...) in order to cause damage, injury, destruction or material, moral or psychological damage" (Bocoș, 2016: 57);

Bullying – is the form of repeated aggression/physical, verbal, emotional harassment, "with the intention of hurting, (...) in the conditions of the existence of a perceived imbalance of power" (Whitson, 2017: 9). It presents several types, frequently encountered in the school space, such as: student-student bullying, student-teacher bullying, teacher-student bullying, parent-student bullying, parent-teacher bullying, teacher-parent bullying;

-Cyberbullying – represents harassment on the Internet by virtual aggressors, through the use of electronic devices, with the intention of blackmailing, defaming and compromising the victims (in this case, students or teachers), in different contexts;

Cheating (form of intellectual theft) – represents "a specific form of deception, through which a student presents as a result of his own learning efforts a series of knowledge that he has not assimilated, borrowing it ad-hoc from various sources" (Neamțu, C., 2003, p.180) and which appears on the support of teaching attitudes inappropriate to the teaching status, indifferent, permissive or tense;

The consumption of prohibited substances (drug addiction) – represents a deviant evasive behavior, at the same time, "a state of periodic or permanent intoxication, harmful to the individual and to society caused by the repetitive consumption of a natural or artificial

drug" ( Preda, 1998: 89). The category of prohibited substances includes "any substance that produces or creates psychological and/or physiological changes in the body" (Rădulescu, end all, 2006: 26-27), such as: drugs, of natural origin (some plants or hallucinogenic mushrooms) or chemical, some drugs with narcotic content, ethyl alcohol and tobacco/nicotine;

- Running away from school– is constituted as evasive conduct or "strategy" of defense, has as its "roots" several specific conjunctures, often having no connection with reality;

-Suicide – represents "a self-destructive antisocial behavioral reaction that involves the involvement of the individual instinctive factor and specific psychopathological causes such as delirium, hallucinations, hypochondriac ideas, obsessive-phobic states, melancholy, etc." (Mitrofan et al, 1994: 339);

-Suicide attempt – represents an action of self-injury in stressful situations, with the aim of ending life and carried out to attract attention;

Vandalism is constituted as "an act of specific violence directed against goods, objects or properties belonging to educational agents and manifested by their destruction." (Mitrofan, 2009: 155). It can be of the acquisitive, tactical, malicious type, as a game and can be different from one school to another, depending on: the size of the school, the location of the school and the ethnic, social, racial composition of the students;

Physical and verbal violence – refers to the aggressive behaviors of students, in school and outside it, generating trauma on the victim and having multiple generating sources. Also in the school context, it can be: objective (when it presents more serious forms of manifestation and when the police are frequently requested in interventions), or subjective (when it "dresses" somewhat more subtle forms but which affect the school climate equally: humiliation, offense, anti-school attitudes, intimidation exercised through threats, verbal attacks, etc.) (Bocoş end all, 2000: 97).

### **3. Preventing and combating forms of school deviance in pre-university education**

After highlighting the typologies, causes and forms of the phenomenon of school deviance, it was also found that it is almost generalized worldwide, having various common factors that have been identified in more and more geographical and sociocultural spaces.

The economic, social and political turmoil of the contemporary period, which also determined transmutations of ideologies, conceptions, attitudes and behaviors, have inevitably left their mark on education in Romania, the behavioral slippages of students now translated as school deviations increasing in magnitude and variety and, starting to resemble more and more those encountered years ago in Western Europe or overseas.

Individual freedom and the conscious assumption of "free will" as a moral landmark, have almost been "diluted" in the perception of the collective mind of students and, unfortunately, almost the entire morbid picture that characterizes school deviance in developed countries, has been transferred to us, after the fall of the "curtain" of communism, the young generations being weakened and obviously exposed to the deviational "wave".

From this point of view, our country has not been spared from the "explosion" of this omnipresent phenomenon of school deviance, becoming more and more stringent in the implementation of appropriate educational measures, in the context of preventing and combating it, in the entire pre-university education.

A concept and paradigm recently grounded in the Romanian educational field, school deviance (as a reality with distinct, surprising and undesirable particularities) manifests itself expansively, (without neglecting this point of view) also because of the current pluri-institutional inability to find effective means to curb it (partial, because otherwise it is almost impossible).

In the first instance, the school (due to the efficient, consistent and constructive involvement of all educational "actors"), can intervene on the side of preventing the so-called

behavioral "pre-deviances" of students, through the following clearly outlined actions: planning and conducting regular counseling classes (headmastering), according to the school curriculum and addressing within them topics related to school deviance; providing competent socio-psycho-pedagogical counseling services to all students; strengthening and maintaining relationships of close collaboration or lasting partnership, both with family members and with those communities of origin of the students.

In the second instance, if a pupil has not corrected his/her behavioural deviations, or as a result of educational counselling sessions or thematic discussions held with him/her in the tutoring classes, symptomatological particularities specific (even pathological) of a form of abuse (emotional, physical or psychological) have been identified, as well as forms of parental educational neglect/abandonment, the school must bring these things to the attention of the specialists and institutional factors working within the public authorities, such as: the Police, the Gendarmerie, the City Hall, NGOs, the church and the neo-Protestant cults (to which many minorities belong) etc.

In order to develop an adequate socio-psycho-educational diagnosis of the phenomenon of school deviance, I believe that several criteria should be taken into account to differentiate the measures to prevent and combat it, by several socio-professional categories: teachers, school counselors, social workers, mediators, policemen, psychotherapists, priests, etc., so as to facilitate the implementation of divergent directions of action, but convergent with the rhythm of manifestation and transformations of all forms of school deviance today.

These criteria for differentiating/delimiting the measures to prevent and combat school deviance, as well as the way to approach it are:

a) The criterion of the geographical approach (It is found that, in certain isolated geographical locations, climatically degraded, poor in resources or located on the periphery of sparsely populated areas, the effectiveness of the measures to prevent and combat school deviance is poor because, due to the geographical factors mentioned above, the specialists entitled to curb the phenomenon rarely reach such areas. The school deviations frequently recorded here are absenteeism and school dropout.);

b) The criterion of the sociological approach (The predominance of school dropout as well as of various forms of violence, perceived as forms of "school resistance" and determined by the defective integration of students in schools or due to the social composition of the school (students of higher social condition and students of lower social condition), the prevention and combat measures must be approached and implemented taking into account this differentiation of status. The correction of school deviance, as an extension of social delinquency, according to this approach, is conditioned both by social norms and by the values created by society, in the context of human communication.);

c) The criterion of the psychological approach (The manifestation of all forms of school deviance, triggered by personality characteristics: cognition, emotions, behaviors, exacerbated by multiple causes - the main one being maladjustment, here, it is necessary to implement preventive and corrective measures, both on the part of school counselors and on the part of a multidisciplinary team set up at school level. This approach constitutes "de jure", the concrete study of deviant behavior in the school context, but also of several methods, forms, models and principles of its research.);

d) The criterion of the biological approach (Specific forms of school deviance are observed, especially during adolescence, through: violence or aggression increased in frequency and intensity, consumption of tobacco, alcohol and prohibited substances. In relation to gender, in boys we find deviant behaviors such as: insults, non-verbal aggressions, hits, and in girls, ironic and sarcastic attitudes and non-objective evaluations, however, acts of physical violence are not excluded, even between girls, having acts of jealousy as a substrate. And in these cases, prevention and combat measures must be targeted on the entire personality of adolescent students, vulnerable to deviances.);

e) The ethnic/racial approach criterion (The prevalence of deviant acts in the school spectrum is noted, within some ethnic/racial communities/minorities, having forms such as: school dropout, alcohol and drug consumption, school vandalism, all forms of violence, attack and use of bladed/lethal weapons. In this case, the prevention and combating of these serious forms of school deviations must include complex methods and actions implemented by extended teams of specialists that include to the same extent frequent and operative interventions by the Police, the Gendarmerie, the Anti-Drug Association (AMA), NGOs;

f) The criterion of the family approach (The dysfunctional phenomena within the students' family called "problem families", such as: abuse and violence against children and intra-family conflict, are proliferated within the school premises and near it, here we can even refer to the concept of "ghetto school".) Criminal families involve their children in criminal activities or influence them through imitation by lending them moral perceptions against the ethics of society. It is also not uncommon for parents to urge or force their children to steal, hit or commit other serious acts.

g) Approach criterion from the point of view of educational policies (It covers all forms of school deviance, which should be kept under control through the development and implementation of appropriate educational policies and programmes to combat it, as well as to remobilise and treat deviant pupils in schools. According to this criterion, school managers must be well aware of these educational policies, materialized by the implementation of legal provisions with strict reference to school deviance, such as those provided in: Law no. 29/2010 on increasing safety in educational units, Law no. 221/2019 anti-bullying etc)

According to Neamțu (2003: 108), the prevention of school deviation in pre-university education can be achieved by taking specific measures, on three levels: primary prevention, secondary prevention, tertiary prevention.

The first measures (primary prevention) refer to the student, his family and society as a whole, in a broader context, as follows: At the level of the student, measures such as: improvement of nutrition; providing economic support to needy families; increasing the frequency of classes and extracurricular activities; the correct implementation of offender recovery programs; protection of pupils against forms of abuse and neglect by parents, etc.; At the level of the student's family, there are measures such as: granting social support allowances and scholarships; reduction of taxes for large families; the application of remedial educational policies through therapy and counseling programs; applying institutional policies to attract vulnerable families in joint actions; At the level of society, there are measures such as: material, financial and human support offered by state institutions, partners of the school in the educational process.

The second category of measures (secondary prevention) refers to those categories of actions "that can be undertaken by government and school authorities in order to increase the participation rate in formal education of an increasingly large school-age population" (Blândul, 2013: 407).

Increasingly, secondary prevention measures are implemented at the level of: the Ministry of Education, school inspectorates, schools, implying the reduction of dysfunctions in the entire education system, the amplification of the consistency of the educational process, as well as the correlation of educational policies with social dynamics.

The third category of measures (tertiary prevention) refers to the intervention itself, whose major objective is to prevent those school deviations in more serious forms, such as delinquent behaviors, as well as their recidivism, these representing a deeper pluridirectional approach carried out over a longer period of time in order to obtain desirable results.

According to the Strategy on reducing the phenomenon of violence in pre-university education units, each school is responsible for creating a Commission for preventing and combating violence, which will account for this phenomenon.

All school units have included in the Institutional Development Plans (IDPs), the Operational Plans (OP), as well as in the school regulations measures to prevent and combat the school deviance involving various educational "actors" who work together in their proper functioning.

Overall, the frequent ways that can be used at the level of schools in Romania, in order to prevent and combat forms of school deviation are the following: discussions and organization of joint activities with parents, regarding the topicality of the topic of school deviation; organizing meetings and discussions between educational "actors" and violent parents, in order to prevent, imitate and reproduce by students the aggressive manifestations in the family and which, unfortunately, they exercise to the same extent in the relationship with teachers, through various forms of bullying; regular consultation with parents' organisations (parents' committee) and pupils' council and joint development of coherent and targeted strategies to prevent and combat school deviancy; improving the implementation and functioning of the "safety net", made up of teachers, parents and specialists, through the intervention procedure in case of drug use in schools, developed by the Ministry of Education and the National Anti-Drug Agency (ANA); educational actions with students (especially teenagers) on the topic of school deviance, organized in orientation classes, as well as in civic education classes; involvement/participation of students in extracurricular activities that have as their subject the reduction of school deviance through: projects, role plays, case studies, problematization, "peer meditation", "brainstorming", debates, thematic discussions based on examples from literature or from the community, presentation of films/documentaries and critical analysis of audio-visual messages of the "school deviance" type presenting cases with happy/unhappy endings, etc. on their part; the active involvement of the psycho-pedagogical counselor, in the idea of helping students to capitalize on their existing potential and to identify innovative strategies for effective adaptation to the school environment, as well as in overcoming conflict situations or educational crisis; carrying out educational activities by counselors, with the role of socio-emotional regulation (self-management), both for students and teachers (during the "Different School" week), through games, contests, suggestive exhibitions of drawings, collages, posters, painting and photography, PowerPoint presentations and documentaries on social networks/YouTube, exhibition of thematic essays, access and presentation of thematic vlogs (filmed blogs), etc.; organizing meetings and discussions with police authorities (by debating case studies or concrete cases of police activity); the involvement of the Commission for Preventing and Combating Violence in the School Environment, through various and periodic actions, having as its central subject - "school deviance"; consulting school managers with teachers, parents and school counselors, on current issues in legislation or in the media regarding the increasing presence of the deviational phenomenon in the school space; introducing modules on topics related to conflict management, developing communication skills, regulating one's own emotions and promoting effective and sustainable cooperation in the school decision curriculum (CDS); facilitating the participation of school teachers in training programs in areas related to the deviational phenomenon in education (for example: conflict resolution, development of communication and cooperation skills, persuasion or negotiation techniques, cultivation of positive interpersonal relationships, strengthening self-confidence, addressing conflict in a constructive manner, etc.); organizing an information and awareness campaign at community level, with the support of the City Hall and the School Inspectorate on the topic of "school deviance"; the appropriate and efficient application of disciplinary sanctions at school level, in situations of school deviation, both in the case of students and teachers; applying sanctions to students such as reprimand, expulsion, reprimanding or repetition, lowering the grade for conduct, moving to another parallel class, temporary or permanent withdrawal of the merit scholarship/high school money; the application of sanctions to teachers that may be of a contravention nature, depending on the seriousness of the behavior, and may even lead to criminal sanctions, in cases of emotional, physical, sexual aggression or abuse; application of

questionnaires among students on the subject of school deviance; monitoring and analysis of anonymous/online notifications of school deviation cases; strengthening the level of security, in the areas inside and around the school, through authorized security companies, which collaborate with the Proximity Police and the Gendarmerie; installing surveillance cameras in the "vulnerable" points of the school and collecting images and information in a database, which can be made available at any time to the Police, the Gendarmerie, the National Anti-Drug Agency (ANA); the application (in more serious deviational cases) of non-custodial measures (specialized supervision, weekend confinement, daily assistance, etc.) or deprivation of liberty (internment of the deviant student in a detention center, medical center or in an educational institution); the allocation of more school counselors and social workers to schools with school deviation problems; holding symposia, workshops, conferences, meetings, seminars or webinars with various specialists in combating forms of school deviance, both in the country and abroad, for the exchange of experience and sharing effective ways of working; strengthening parental control over pupils over their access to the media and the Internet, in order to prevent and combat cyber-bullying/online harassment; the involvement of parents, on a voluntary basis, in organizing and carrying out actions to supervise the entrances/exits of schools, during the entry/exit of students to/from classes; initiating programs for the families of students with behavioral deviations, focused on performance, awareness and information about the difficulties of adapting their children to the school environment; restitution of the rights, authority and dignity of teachers, by strictly observing the school regulations by students, in order to avoid forms of violence against teachers; popularization of the "Second Chance" program to disadvantaged families, in order to prevent school dropout and absenteeism; including, on the agenda of the formal activities of the school (Board of Directors, Teachers' Council, Parents' Committee), topics related to "school deviance" actions, which would lead to awareness of the phenomenon, but also of its existing forms in the school context; preventing and combating problematic/bullying manifestations, through various school and extracurricular activities, in which the capacities, interests and aptitudes of students can be pragmatically capitalized and in which they can freely express their own opinions; integration of modules from school curricula, focused on preventing and combating forms of school deviance, within the national curriculum offer at the school's decision (CDS); avoiding the confusion of values, which derives from an insufficient knowledge of the school regulations by students, when they make public some unjustified, even aberrant demands, such as those of discrimination; co-opting associations/NGOs that have a social specificity, in order to provide psychological assistance and support, to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with precarious material situations or with other serious family situations (sick parents, lack of a parent, etc.) in carrying out projects to prevent child victimization; the establishment of a "portfolio of deviances" of the school, in which all the deviational events committed in the school over time are accounted for, together with the prevention and combat measures applied; popularization of the single national telephone number "119-Child Helpline", intended for reporting and preventing cases of exploitation, neglect and forms of child abuse/violence, available free of charge in all communication networks in Romania. This phone number can be called by either children (students) or relatives, acquaintances or even strangers who know the dangerous situation in which a child (student) finds himself.

The list of such measures could go on and, of course, many improvements can be made, including the implementation of measures to prevent and combat all forms of school deviance, so that the entire educational activity carried out in all pre-university education units in our country is carried out within normal parameters.

#### **4. The perception of the beneficiaries of education regarding the prevention and combating of forms of school deviation in pre-university education units**

The practical-applicative socio-pedagogical research of the investigative type, in which we identified, formulated and structured what we aimed to demonstrate, using in this sense, as a specific method of the scientific-educational approach, the socio-pedagogical survey, and as a technical tool, for "capturing" scientific information – the questionnaire, was a personal challenge, because the phenomenon itself of school deviance, so alive, complex and metamorphosing, it can be approached multidimensional and interdisciplinary, having behind it a long evolution that could not be completely eradicated and that will only disappear with the school as an institution of formal education.

The main goal is to understand the dimension, causes and tendencies of manifestation of forms of school deviance in Romanian pre-university education.

The secondary goal of the research is to identify and implement the most viable measures to prevent and combat the forms of school deviance, within the pre-university education in Romania.

In other words, the scientific problem addressed is determined by the way both "camps"/both educational "actors" (parents and students) understand the dynamics and contextually different and complex unfolding of the negative behavioral phenomenon – school deviance, progressively and strongly installed in our schools.

The general objective of the research project is to obtain revealing information necessary for the design and evaluation of policies aimed at preventing and combating the main forms of school deviance in pre-university education.

The general hypothesis is as follows: School deviance in students in pre-university education is triggered by causative factors at the family, extra-family, social and psycho-individual level.

In the sampling, we selected a number of 26 students belonging to a ninth grade and a number of 23 of their parents, at a civic education class and at a lectureship with parents within a renowned college in Slatina, the "Radu Greceanu" National College, to whom we applied the questionnaire as a useful and easy investigation tool.

By means of the contextualized and gradually applied investigative tool (the questionnaire), we followed in the investigated sample: the degree of clarification of the term of school deviance (compared to other terms used with the same meaning; the perception of the dimensions of the phenomenon; the degree of understanding of the typology and forms of school deviance; the awareness of the triggering causes of the same negative behavioral phenomenon in the school context; the reaction and manifestation of all questioned, regarding the measures to prevent and combat forms of school deviance in pre-university education.

#### **5. Analysis and interpretation of research data**

The analysis of the socio-pedagogical research determined the configuration of conclusions that can be constituted in the form of recommendations, in order to develop strategies or measures to prevent and combat the school deviation phenomenon among students in pre-university education.

**Figure 1. What do you understand by the concept of school deviance?**

49 answers

Understanding of the Concept of School Deviance	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) An educational problem	20	40.8%
b) Disobedience of students towards teachers	38	77.6%
c) Acceleration of school violence	19	38.8%
d) Social maladaptation	14	28.6%
e) Behavioral misconduct	32	65.3%
f) Moral depravity	5	10.2%
g) Emotional disorder	12	24.5%
h) Eccentric gestures	2	4.1%
i) Defiance of authority	30	61.2%
j) A security issue in the school environment	17	34.7%
k) I don't understand the concept	1	2%

As can be seen from the graphic representation, 77.6% of the respondents considered that the school deviance represents mainly an insubordination of the students to the school regulations, while 65.3% and 61.2% respectively considered that the school deviance represents a behavioral deviation and a defiance of the teachers' authority by the students. On the other hand, some of the respondents, in percentages of 2% and 4.1%, either did not fully understand the meaning of this concept, or considered that it is only a gestural eccentricity. The rest of the respondents defined the concept of school deviance as an educational problem and an acceleration of school violence, being very close to explaining the negative phenomenon currently existing in Romanian pre-university education, although the conceptual similarity was not fully understood by any of them.

**Figure 2. Do you think there is any difference between the terms: pathology, behavioral dysfunctionality, social disorganization, juvenile delinquency, school deviance?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Yes, these are different	27	55.1%
b) No, these are similar	8	16.3%
c) I am not sure if there is any difference	14	28.6%
d) I do not know the meaning of these terms	0	0%

Within this representation in the form of a structural diagram, it is noted that more than half of them, respectively 55.1%, considered that the respective terms were different in meaning, while the remaining 28.6% and 16.3% respondents either stated that they were similar or were not sure that there was a difference between them. From the answers received, relatively close in percentage, it can be concluded that the respondents do not know in detail the meanings of each term, with some semantic confusions coming from the media or from the general culture.



**Figure 3. What do you consider to be the causes of committing school deviance?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Social problems or crises	20	40.8%
b) Family traumas (deaths, divorces, etc.)	46	93.9%
c) Hereditary medical problems	17	34.7%
d) Influence of peer groups	42	85.7%
e) Low self-esteem	26	53.1%
f) Bullying and cyberbullying	23	46.9%
g) Influence of mass media and/or social media	27	55.1%
h) Forms of abuse by teachers	16	32.7%
i) Poor management of situations by school authorities	22	44.9%
j) Other causes	2	4.1%

From the previous graphic representation it can be seen that a majority of respondents (93.9%) considered that family traumas are the main causes of committing school deviation, followed by an equally significant percentage, of 85.7%, which attributes the causative factor of these types of deviations to their entourages and close groups.

The percentages close to 55.1% and 53.1% of respondents who consider the influence of the media and/or the internet, as well as the existence of a low estimate of the respective students, as significant causes of committing the school deviance, should not be neglected either, but the lowest percentage of 4.1% who attributed other causes to the origin of committing this deviance in the school spectrum should not be neglected either.

**Figure 4. Is there a connection between the family environment and the onset of school deviance?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Definitely, there is	48	98%
b) There is not	0	0%
c) I don't know	1	2%

It is evident that the overwhelming percentage of respondents (98%) attribute the triggering of the school deviance to the family environment, the fact being the essence of the present research, the deviational phenomenon of students in the context of pre-university education having multiple intra-family causes at its origin.

It is also worth noting the idea that there was no percentage of respondents stating that, in the onset of the school deviance, there is no link between the family environment and its triggering, this demonstrating that, overall, the respondents have information on the causes of the negative behavioral phenomenon.

**Figure 5. To what extent do mass media and the internet contribute to the increase of aggressiveness in a school context?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) To a very large extent/total agreement/very frequently	28	57.1%
b) To a large extent/agreement/frequently	14	28.6%
c) To a moderate extent/moderate agreement/sometimes	3	6.1%
d) To a small extent/disagreement/rarely	2	4.1%
e) Not at all/total disagreement/never	1	2%
f) No opinion, I need more information	1	2%

Through the sensory elements it contains, the image transmitted through the media and the internet has a major impact. From this point of view, more than half of the respondents (57.1%) considered that both modern means of communication contribute to a very large extent to the increase of aggression in the school context, because by imaginative representation of negative events in the social sphere and, especially, in the school sphere, students react imitatively. It is also worth taking into account the following percentage of respondents (28.6%), who also consider that these means of communication contribute to a large extent to the increase of aggression in the school context, this postulating the interdependence between easy access to them and the amplification of the negative behavioral phenomenon of students. The rest of the respondents gave less importance to the influence of the media and the internet in exacerbating school aggression, considering that they have a minor impact on students' behavior, unlike other much more obvious causes, belonging to the social universe.

**Figure 6. Do you think there is a connection between peer groups and school deviance?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) I believe there is a direct connection	47	95.9%
b) I don't believe there is any connection	1	2%
c) I don't know	1	2%

In the present case, the overwhelming percentage of those surveyed (95.9%) shows the existence of a close link between entourages and school deviance (especially among adolescents), demonstrating a good knowledge of the school and social reality on the part of both categories of respondents (students and parents).

**Figure 7. What is your opinion about drug-addicted students (consumers of illegal substances)**  
49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) They constitute a social danger	35	71.4%
b) They have very low self-esteem	20	40.8%
c) They put their lives in danger	41	83.7%
d) They try to attract attention through this behavior	25	51%
e) They are victims of drug dealers	30	61.2%
f) They need help from specialists	43	87.8%
g) They lack proper parental education	27	55.1%
h) I have no opinion	0	0%

From the results obtained, 87.8% and 83.7% of the respondents considered that drug addicts require specialized help and, at the same time, put their lives in danger, while 71.4% and 61.2% consider that drug addicts are a social danger and are victims of drug traffickers. However, the answers given by other parents and students surveyed, in percentages of 55.1% and 40.8%, who stated that drug addicts have a poor parental education, as well as low self-esteem, are not unimportant. This demonstrates that, at the origin of the appearance and manifestation of drug addiction among students in pre-university education, there can be various triggering factors, which is why the ample phenomenon is difficult to manage.

**Figure 8. What do you consider to be the effects of school deviance?**  
49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Decrease in school performance	42	85.7%
b) Damage to personal reputation	15	30.6%
c) Increase/accentuation of social maladaptation	31	63.3%
d) Repeated school failure leading to dropping out	32	65.3%
e) Increased behavioral misconduct, including through aggressive or criminal acts	36	73.5%
f) Family/social failure, affecting social and emotional development	28	57.1%
g) Delinquency, with legal consequences	36	73.5%
h) Exacerbation of anxiety and depression	13	26.5%
i) I don't know the effects of school deviance	0	0%
j) Other effects	2	4.1%

In a majority of 85.7%, the respondents considered that the main effect of the school deviation is represented by the decrease in school performance, followed equally by 73.5% of the respondents who considered as effects: accentuation of antisocial behaviors and delinquency, with legal or criminal effects. Not to be neglected in terms of the importance of the answer were those who attributed as effects of school deviance: repeated school failure, which leads to school dropout, and the increase/accentuation of social maladjustment, in percentages close to 65.3% and 63.3%. There were, however, other respondents who considered that other effects of school deviance may be valid, such as: damage to personal reputation and exacerbation of anxiety states, but in percentages of 30.6% and 26.5%. And to this question, through the variety and number of answers received, the complexity of the effects of this negative educational phenomenon can be ascertained, drawing the attention of large categories of specialists in the field of education and beyond, in order to take categories of measures to prevent and combat school deviance.

**Figure 9. What do you think are the optimal measures for preventing and combating school deviance?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Close collaboration between family, school, and community	49	100%
b) Counseling provided to students in school, as well as to their parents	39	79.6%
c) Organization of preventive activities in collaboration with police and other institutions	28	57.1%
d) Training of teaching staff through specific programs on the topic	35	71.4%
e) Involvement of the entire community	25	51%
f) Other measures	4	8.2%

This time, the overwhelming percentage of 100% of respondents who considered that the best measure to prevent and combat school deviance is the close collaboration between the three major educational "actors": family-school-community, whose functionality may depend on the success of the implementation of such measures. After this answer, others followed in percentages close to 79.65% and 71.4%, regarding the counseling provided to students in school, as well as to parents, as well as the training of teachers through training programs on this subject.

The third category of responses includes those that took into account in terms of importance: the organization of preventive activities in collaboration with the police, the authorities and some NGOs, as well as the involvement of the entire community, in percentages of 57.1% and 51%. Interestingly, 8.2% considered that other categories of preventive measures and measures to combat school deviance can be implemented, probably adapted to the organizational particularities of the respective school unit.

**Fig.10. Have you ever contacted a state authority or a school counselor to seek advice or information related to school deviance?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Often	2	4.1%
b) Sometimes	10	20.4%
c) Rarely	7	14.3%
d) Never	30	61.2%

More than half of the respondents (61.2%) said that they have never turned to a state authority or a school counselor to ask for information or advice, while the rest of the respondents, respectively 20.4% and 14.3%, said that they rarely or sometimes.

**Fig.11. How were the forms of school deviance resolved at your educational institution?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) By applying sanctions provided in the school regulations	29	59.2%
b) By implementing psychological counseling programs	25	51%
c) By applying solutions carried out with the support of specialists or other services	4	8.2%
d) By applying measures agreed upon with the school management	26	53.1%
e) By implementing actions carried out in collaboration with the police or other institutions	11	22.4%
f) I don't know how they were resolved	8	16.3%

A representative percentage of respondents of 59.2% stated that at the school unit, the forms of school deviation were eliminated by applying sanctions in the school regulations, followed by the percentage of 53.1%, who stated that these deviations were analyzed and applied measures taken in agreement with the school manager, the teacher council and the parents' committee. At a relative closeness, 53.1% and 51% of respondents considered that measures were applied in agreement with the school manager, the teachers' council and the parents' committee, as well as psychological counseling programs. For 16.3%, the respondents were not interested in the way the forms of school deviance were solved.

**Fig.12. Have you ever called '119 - The Child's Phone' to report abuse against a student?**

49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Yes	0	0%
b) No	49	100%

This time, there was a percentage of 100% of respondents who stated that they had never called this single national toll-free number, "119-Child's Phone", probably it was not necessary to call when there were some cases of abuse in the school, either from students or

from teachers, but because, they simply ignored its existence. Only on the occasion of the present questionnaire, all respondents found out many details about its existence, functioning and usefulness, when the reporting of situations of violence or abuse against students can be made by the student himself, the director of the school or by any person who comes into contact with the victim student, on the school premises.

**Figure 13. Do you know of any case where a teacher has been subjected to some form of abuse?**  
49 answers

Response Option	Responses (Number)	Responses (Percentage)
a) Yes	17	34.7%
b) No	32	65.3%

More than half of the respondents (65.3%) said that they do not know a form of abuse against a teacher by a student, in the respective school unit, however, there was a category of respondents, in a proportion of 34.7%, who said that they are aware of some teachers subjected to a form of abuse (it is true, minor), from certain pupils.

**Figure 14. Which of the following conditions do you think lead to the fragilization of adolescents from a deviational point of view?**

49 answers

Condition	Number of Responses	Percentage
a) Family environment with criminal records or problems	47	95.9%
b) Exposure of adolescents to abuse or violence	45	91.8%
c) Presence of a neurological condition	16	32.7%
d) Belonging to an ethnic group	10	20.4%
e) Parents' divorce	32	65.3%
f) Death of one of the parents	22	44.9%
g) Poverty level	27	55.1%
h) Drug addiction	36	73.5%
i) Other conditions	3	6.1%

The majority of respondents, 95.9% and 91.8%, were considered as conditions of emotionally fragile adolescents: the family environment with a history of violence and the subjection of adolescents to repeated abuse (emotional, physical, sexual). On a second step of the importance of the answers, there were those in percentages of 73.5% and 65.3% that marked drug addiction and parental divorce. It is also worth mentioning the fact that the existence of poverty is a significant response, followed by the death of one of the parents, in a proportion of 55.1% and 44.9%. At the end of the graphic representation, the consideration of other conditions triggering the emotional fragility of adolescents from a deviational point of view is also highlighted, conditions, probably unknown or intimate within emotionally disorganized families (6.1%).

**Figure 15. Which of the following signs represent signs of abuse on a student, characterized by specific symptoms?**

49 answers

Sign	Count	Percentage
a) none	1	2%
b) crying	22	44.9%
c) teary eyes	23	46.9%
d) embarrassment/shame	35	71.4%
e) trembling	41	83.7%
f) visible muscle tension	29	59.2%
g) pacing around the room	9	18.4%
h) anger	28	57.1%
i) disgust	13	26.5%
j) anxiety/distrust	41	83.7%
k) visible fear	34	69.4%
l) confusion	21	42.9%
m) other signs	4	8.2%

Most of the respondents surveyed, 83.7%, declared as distinctive signs of abuse committed against a student: restlessness/mistrust and trembling, along with other signs such as: visible fear, obvious muscle tension and anger, in proportions of 69.4%, 59.2% and 57.1%. In the same vein, other characteristic signs were not neglected, such as: watery eyes and crying, in percentages of 46.9% and 44.9%, the specific signs of confusion and disgust (42.9%) and (26.5%) were also noted. With minority percentages, of 8.2% and 2%, there were some respondents who stated that there may be other signs that characterize an abuse committed against a student, these being communicated verbally, after the actual conclusion of the questionnaire: (for example, a blank stare or, on the contrary, an uncontrolled turning of the gaze, avoiding the direct gaze of the interlocutor, head bowed, exaggerated oppositionism, sudden mood swing, self-blame, self-stigmatization, insomnia, bedwetting, eating disorders, etc.), but other respondents were not able or not at all interested in recognizing such signs of abuse. Broadly speaking, through the variety of answers obtained, it was noted that there can be numerous forms of emotional abuse committed against a student, and the correct identification of these and the prompt taking of specific measures can save lives and rebuild emotionally harmonious destinies.

## 6. Conclusions

As highlighted by the reality on the school benches and as shown by the results of the research, both the students and the parents under investigation are in a fairly large proportion aware of the significance and gravity that the subject of school deviance claims with all its current forms of manifestation in the educational sphere.

From the synthetic review of the specialized literature, the conclusive central idea was noted that specialists from various socio-human sciences (researchers in the field of education, psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, sociologists, law enforcement, doctors, psychotherapists, etc.), have sounded the alarm on various anomalies/imbalance at the level of the students' psyche, such as episodes of suicidal ideation, manias, depressions,

phobias, manic attacks, hallucinations, etc., which until recently were known to have a primarily genetic origin, but with the passage of time, as narcotic products diversified, the ease of accepting new "fashions"/socialization tendencies among students and the misunderstood freedom of expression, took hold of their consciousness and personality.

At the same time, the turmoil within the family, which additionally disturbs the mentality of both categories of educational "actors" (students and parents), additionally contributes to the amplification of the "classic" forms of school deviance, such as: insults, nicknames, school dropout, absenteeism, cheating, vandalism, running away from school classes, oppositionism, school violence, tobacco consumption, to which are added more diverse and increased current forms in frequency and intensity, such as: bullying, cyberbullying, violence with knives/firearms, sexual abuse, drug addiction, suicide attempts and suicide, complex and serious forms that are difficult to prevent, monitor and stop, education that is forced to adapt as it happens in other countries around the world, where the school deviation phenomenon has taken on overwhelming proportions, especially after the post-pandemic "shock" felt on a global scale, such as a mass post-traumatic shock.

In the face of all these societal transmutations, which have left their mark on the behavior of students, parents and teachers, the current Romanian school must strengthen its levers for preventing and combating all these complex forms of school deviations, levers appropriate to the context and the degree of their manifestation.

Therefore, the emphasis should be placed precisely on these levers that can be materialized in the form of suggestions or practical proposals resulting from its content, as follows: increasing the number of school counselors and working with specialized psychotherapists, especially on poly-traumas; implementation of complex educational programs of parenting, career counseling and management of tense states/stress, carried out in school by school counselors; supporting students in strengthening self-esteem, problem solving and decision-making, developing responsibility, accepting differences of opinion, as well as increasing the degree of adaptation to any kind of change in personal life (especially in the life of a student at school); sanctioning students who frequently violate school norms and regulations, as well as teachers who commit disciplinary offenses and violations of the teacher's status; carrying out social assessments and field surveys, i.e. at the homes of those students who come from poor backgrounds, frequently generating crime and school dropout, with multidisciplinary teams, in order to stop the deviational phenomenon from the "epicenter", before escalating into the school environment; organization of educational media campaigns extended at national level, with state sponsorship. and from the entrepreneurial environment or NGOs, on the topic of preventing and combating school deviance, in the entire pre-university education.

From the perspective of the final conclusions, the proposals move in the following directions:

- Elaboration of a "Portfolio of school deviances" (in which the frequency, type and context of the occurrence of these deviations within the school should be rigorously recorded, as well as the specific prevention and combating measures, which have been developed and implemented, for each deviational case/event in part;
- Elaboration of an "Educational and managerial program", focused on collaboration with multidisciplinary teams of other institutions (program directly inspired by the application of the Procedure on the management of cases of violence against ante-preschoolers/preschoolers/students and the staff of the educational unit, as well as other related situations in the school environment and the suspicion of violence against children outside the school environment);
- Elaboration of a theoretical model, of inverted pyramid, of determining the main concepts, on three levels, from general to particular (deviance - deviant behavior - school deviance).

For the implementation of the "Educational and Managerial Program" and the elaboration of the "School Deviances Portfolio", several steps are necessary: investigating the



opinions and knowledge of all educational "actors" regarding the topics included in this program;

establishing by mutual agreement parents-students-teachers the period of time in which the Program will be implemented (perhaps in the week "A different school"); common choice of topics from the content of the activities of this programme; inviting various specialists from the legal, medical, military, psychotherapeutic fields, etc. to provide useful information and recommendations to the parents and students involved.

In addition to the multidimensional approach to the phenomenon of school deviance, as well as the prevention and combating of its forms, future directions of investigation should consider resuming this research on larger samples, as well as on other similar topics, such as: "The alarming increase in tasks among students"; "Educational techniques and methods to combat depression among students"; "The impact of accessing social networks on students' behavior"; "The consequences of excessive use of artificial intelligence on the decrease in students' school performance" etc. The solution to school deviance control is: effective family-school-community cooperation.

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# AI-ENHANCED SOCIAL ANALYSIS: NEW STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES

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**Abstract:** *The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into social analysis presents transformative potential for addressing complex social issues. This article explores how artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance social analysis and contribute to the development of new strategies for addressing social issues. The article begins by discussing the current challenges faced by sociologists in data collection and analysis, and how AI-based tools can provide solutions through more accurate and faster analytics. It then delves into the ways AI can assist in identifying social patterns and trends, and how this information can be used to formulate effective social policies. Examples of programs and initiatives that use AI to address issues such as poverty, discrimination, and social integration are presented. Finally, the article discusses the ethics surrounding the use of AI in social research, including privacy, bias, and transparency, and suggests ways to ensure that AI is used in a manner that respects human rights and promotes social justice.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), social analysis, data collection and analysis, social issues, social policy, social patterns and trends.

## 1. Introduction

In our modern era, reliance on technology permeates every aspect of our lives, and artificial intelligence (AI) has become a cornerstone of this evolution. Thousands of AI applications are extensively integrated into the infrastructure of various industries and sectors. In the automotive industry, AI is primarily seen in driverless cars (Tubaro & Casilli, 2019). Financial markets leverage machine learning and big data (Duan, Edwards & Dwivedi, 2019). Smart payment systems utilize facial and voice recognition technologies (Dijmărescu et al., 2022). In healthcare, AI is used for pharmaceuticals and disease detection (Ravi et al., 2017). Smart homes benefit from home automation and sensing systems (Kassens-Noor et al., 2021). The teaching and learning environment incorporate AI through tools like ChatGPT (Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023), among others. AI is not only pivotal in industry and commerce but also in our understanding of the social world. It offers powerful tools for analyzing vast amounts of data and uncovering patterns that might remain hidden to the human eye (Mökander & Schroeder, 2022; Prieto-Gutierrez, Segado-Boj & Da-Silva-França, 2023).

In the analysis of public opinion and social interaction in marketing, at the end of the 20th century, scientists paid attention to forming an essential direction of company management-artificial social intelligence. Artificial intelligence and human intelligence could have social action, social structure, and sociality thanks to the cognitive abilities of their agents. The system of artificial social intelligence defines interference and dependence, as well as types of coordination: reactive, anticipatory, one-sided, two-sided, selfish and collaborative. The development of artificial intelligence, the widespread use of machine learning has led to the embedding of AI in products and services around consumers. This raises the need for ethical research on the social side of the mutual interaction of general social and machine intelligence. First of all, this is the concept of “*e-trust*” in human-AI interactions as an example of relevance for business organizations (Ferrario, Loi & Vigan, 2020; Gerlich, Elsayed & Sokolovskiy, 2023).

Despite the difficulty in fully predicting and controlling the behavior of AI systems due to their complex interdependencies, there is widespread agreement on directing AI

development for the benefit of people and the environment. A significant global initiative in this area is the AI for Social Good movement, which encompasses various AI-related activities designed to create positive social impacts (Tomašev et al., 2020; Floridi et al., 2020). This includes AI projects targeting specific social issues, like hate speech and climate change, as well as guidelines and frameworks that provide direction for the safe and ethical implementation of AI.

The AI for Impact: Misuraca & Viscusi (2020), provides insights into the role of artificial intelligence in fostering social innovation within the public sector. It presents a framework that connects key dimensions of digital governance for social innovation and complex systems methods for policy-making, emphasizing the importance of AI national initiatives in driving welfare state initiatives for effective analysis and implementation. The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Social Innovation report, released in April 2024, , a collaborative effort by the World Economic Forum and EY, introduces a fresh dataset of 300 social innovators and 90 initiatives. These pioneers span continents, from the United States and India to Kenya and the United Kingdom. Their shared mission? To ensure that AI improves lives, fosters equity, and catalyzes sustainable progress. These trailblazers deploy AI not only as an operational necessity but also as a means to effect change. The framework in this report is also the basis of an AI-enabled AI Readiness Assessment Matrix, accessible to social innovators and impact enterprises to evaluate their current practices. It presents an actionable roadmap to integrate and implement AI internally and externally (World Economic Forum, 2024).

In this paper, we delve deeper into the intersection of AI and social analysis, examining its capabilities, risks, and ethical considerations. We begin by examining traditional sociological methods and how these approaches limit our ability to deal with modern social challenges. We then explore how AI can provide insightful and in-depth analysis through rapid and precise data processing. We discuss the immense possibilities opened up by AI, from identifying behavioral patterns and social interactions to predicting social changes and suggesting appropriate solutions.

With these new tools, we can now address issues such as poverty, discrimination, and social inequality more effectively. The article also tackles the ethical challenges that arise when using AI in social research, emphasizing the importance of developing a framework that ensures ethical and responsible use of this technology.

## **2. Current Challenges in Social Analysis**

In contemporary social analysis, significant challenges affect how we collect and analyze data. Key issues include the limitations of traditional data collection methods and the increasing necessity for more advanced analytical tools to comprehend complex social dynamics effectively

### **2.1 Data collection and the limitations of traditional analysis**

Various techniques for obtaining information about specific variables in a study, which are then used in the data analysis phase to produce the study's results, answer the research questions, or test the hypotheses, are known as data collection (Taherdoost, 2021).

Data collection, a crucial stage in research, significantly impacts the quality of results by minimizing potential errors that might arise during a research project. Consequently, in addition to having a well-designed study, ample quality time should be dedicated to data collection to ensure accurate results, as inadequate and incorrect data can compromise the reliability of findings (Kabir, 2016). However, while an effective data collection method contributes to well-planned research, it does not necessarily ensure the overall success of the research project (Olsen, 2012).

Before selecting a data collection method, it is crucial to identify the type of data required for the study (Kabir, 2016). Qualitative data, expressed in words or sentences,

provides valuable insights but requires substantial time and financial investment and may lack generalizability. In contrast, quantitative data, expressed numerically and measured using "Rating Scales" and "Attitude Scales," is more cost-effective and can be standardized and generalized. However, quantitative methods may face unexpected discrepancies and have limited implementation and investigation capacity.

Generally, data collection methods are divided into two main categories: Primary Data Collection Methods and Secondary Data Collection Methods. Table 1 illustrates various data collection methods for both primary and secondary data (Taherdoost, 2021; Pandey, P., & Pandey, M, 2015).

**Table 1. Data collection methods**

Secondary Data Collection	Primary Data Collection
Published Printed Sources	Questionnaires
Books	Interviews
Journals/Periodicals	Focus Group Interviews
Magazines/Newspapers	Observation
Published Electronic Sources	Survey
E-Journals	Case-studies
General Websites	Experimental Method
Weblogs	Diaries
Unpublished Personal Records	Activity Sampling Technique
Diaries	Memo Motion Study
Letters	Process Analysis
Government Records	Link Analysis
Census Data/Population Statistics	Time and Motion Study
Public Sector Records	Statistical Method

Traditional data collection and analysis methods present several inherent limitations. They are time-consuming and labor-intensive, requiring significant human effort for tasks such as data gathering, sorting, and interpretation. These methods often have a limited scope, focusing on small sample sizes or specific geographical areas, which can restrict the generalizability of findings. Moreover, human involvement introduces subjectivity and potential bias into the analysis process. Handling large datasets proves challenging, as traditional methods struggle with the management and analysis of voluminous data. Data processing is slower compared to automated approaches, leading to delays in obtaining actionable insights. Additionally, traditional methods tend to be costly due to the resources required for manpower, travel, and materials.

They also lack the ability to provide real-time data, often delivering outdated information. Furthermore, manual data entry is prone to errors, compromising data integrity. Integrating data from diverse sources can be cumbersome, resulting in fragmented datasets that hinder comprehensive analysis. These limitations underscore the growing importance of advanced techniques such as AI and machine learning, which offer faster, more accurate, and scalable solutions to overcome these challenges in modern data analysis.

These limitations are summarized in Table 2, which represents the main limitations of traditional methods of data collection and analysis, emphasizing the need for advanced techniques to process data more efficiently and reliably.

**Table 2. Key limitations of traditional methods of data collection and analysis**

Limitation	Description
Time-Consuming	Requires significant human effort for data gathering, sorting, and interpretation.
Labor-Intensive	Demands extensive manpower, contributing to higher costs.

Limited Scope	Often focuses on small sample sizes or specific geographical areas, limiting generalizability.
Subjectivity and Bias	Human involvement introduces potential biases into data analysis.
Difficulty with Large Datasets	Struggles to manage and analyze large volumes of data effectively.
Slower Data Processing	Manual methods result in delays in obtaining actionable insights.
Higher Costs	Requires resources such as manpower, travel, and materials, making it expensive.
Lack of Real-Time Data	Unable to provide timely data updates, leading to reliance on outdated information.
Data Entry Errors	Prone to mistakes during manual data entry, compromising data integrity.
Challenges in Data Integration	Difficulty in merging data from various sources, leading to fragmented datasets.

### 2.2 The necessity for more advanced analytical tools

The necessity for more advanced analytical tools stems from their ability to efficiently handle large data volumes, enhance accuracy by reducing human bias, and significantly speed up data analysis through automation. They provide real-time insights essential for timely decision-making and are scalable to accommodate growing data demands. Advanced tools integrate diverse data sources for comprehensive analysis, enable predictive and prescriptive analytics to forecast trends and recommend actions, and offer long-term cost efficiency by reducing manual tasks and improving decision-making. Additionally, they ensure higher data quality and reliable data management, ultimately providing a competitive advantage by enabling quick adaptation, optimization, and innovation based on data-driven insights.

The Table 3 summarizes the necessity for more advanced analytical tools by highlighting their key benefits and capabilities.

**Table 3. More advanced data collections analytical tools**

Factor	Description
Handling Large Data Volumes	Efficiently manage and analyze vast amounts of data.
Enhancing Accuracy and Reducing Bias	Automation minimizes human bias and improves accuracy.
Speed and Efficiency	Automates processes, speeding up data analysis.
Real-Time Data Analysis	Provides immediate insights for timely decision-making.
Scalability	Can handle increasing data volumes and complexity without losing performance.
Integration Capabilities	Combines data from various sources for comprehensive analysis.
Predictive and Prescriptive Analytics	Forecasts future trends and recommends actions.
Cost Efficiency	Reduces long-term costs by automating tasks and improving decision-making.
Improved Data Quality and Management	Ensures higher data quality and reliable data repositories.
Competitive Advantage	Enables quick adaptation, optimization, and innovation based on data-driven insights.

### 3. AI in social analysis

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in social analysis has revolutionized the way researchers and policymakers understand and address social issues. This section explores the use of AI tools in social analysis and how they help in identifying social patterns and trends.

### 3.1 Using tools based on artificial intelligence

AI-based tools have become indispensable in social analysis due to their ability to collect, analyze, and interpret vast amounts of data from diverse sources quickly and accurately. These tools include machine learning algorithms, natural language processing (NLP), and predictive analytics, each contributing uniquely to social research. Here's a detailed explanation of how these tools are used:

#### a. Data collection and aggregation

- **Social media analysis:** AI tools can scrape and analyze data from social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. By processing posts, comments, and interactions, AI can identify prevailing sentiments, trending topics, and influential users.
- **Surveys and polls:** AI enhances traditional survey methods by using chatbots and virtual assistants to conduct surveys, ensuring a wider reach and higher response rates. AI algorithms can also analyze open-ended responses for deeper insights.
- **Sensor and IoT data:** AI systems can integrate data from sensors and Internet of Things (IoT) devices, such as public surveillance systems or health monitors, to track real-time changes in social environments.

#### b. Data processing and analysis

- **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** NLP enables computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language. This capability is particularly useful for analyzing text data from sources such as social media, news articles, and interviews. NLP can classify text, extract key themes, and even identify the sentiment expressed in the text. For instance, NLP can be used to analyze online discussions about social issues, helping researchers understand public concerns and the framing of these issues in different communities.
- **Machine Learning Models:** Machine learning (ML) algorithms utilize historical data to recognize patterns and make forecasts. In social analysis, ML can process extensive datasets from sources such as social media, surveys, and public records to uncover underlying trends and relationships. For instance, ML algorithms can track shifts in public sentiment by examining social media posts, offering real-time insights into public opinion on various topics. Additionally, clustering algorithms can categorize individuals with similar social behaviors, and regression models can predict the effects of specific policies on social outcomes.
- **Predictive analytics:** Predictive analytics uses statistical techniques and ML algorithms to forecast future events based on historical data. In social analysis, predictive analytics can anticipate trends such as crime rates, disease outbreaks, or migration patterns. By identifying potential future scenarios, policymakers can develop proactive strategies to mitigate negative outcomes or capitalize on positive trends.
- **Image and Video Analysis:** AI tools can analyze visual data from images and videos. This includes facial recognition to identify individuals, object detection to monitor activities, and video analysis to understand social interactions in public spaces.

#### c. Visualization and reporting

- **Data integration and visualization tools:** AI tools can integrate data from multiple sources, providing a comprehensive view of social phenomena. Visualization tools powered by AI help in presenting complex data in an easily understandable format through graphs, heat maps, and trend lines, enabling stakeholders to grasp insights quickly. Interactive dashboards and visual analytics can illustrate patterns and trends effectively, aiding in decision-making processes.

- **Automated reporting:** AI can generate automated reports summarizing key findings and insights. These reports can be tailored to different audiences, from policymakers to the general public, highlighting the most relevant information in an easily digestible format.

Social intelligence, encompassing emotive computing and sentiment analysis, plays a crucial role in assessing emotions and sentiments expressed in text. While the underlying code of AI tools remains neutral, it's essential to recognize that those who program these tools and the data used for training inherently reflect existing structural inequalities. Social work, with its ethical commitment to justice and relationships, can bridge disciplines by informing the ethical design and empirical testing of AI algorithms. In this capacity, social workers monitor and assess the data and assumptions underpinning AI algorithms, actively considering social implications and advocating for equity in AI policies and practices.

### 3.2 Identifying social patterns and trends

AI is highly effective at detecting patterns and trends in social data, which are essential for comprehending and addressing social issues, and often challenging or impossible to identify with traditional methods. By utilizing AI, researchers can reveal hidden insights and make better-informed decisions. Here's how AI aids in this process.

#### a. Pattern recognition

- **Behavioral patterns:** AI can analyze large datasets to identify common behavioral patterns among different social groups. For instance, analyzing social media interactions can reveal patterns in how different demographics respond to certain events or issues.
- **Spatio-Temporal patterns:** AI tools can detect patterns related to time and location, such as migration trends, crime hotspots, or the spread of diseases. These insights are crucial for planning interventions and allocating resources effectively.

#### b. Trend analysis

- **Longitudinal studies:** By analyzing data over extended periods, AI can identify long-term trends and shifts in social behavior. This is particularly useful for understanding changes in public opinion, lifestyle habits, and cultural norms.
- **Real-Time trend monitoring:** AI enables real-time analysis of social trends by continuously monitoring data streams from various sources. This allows for the rapid identification of emerging issues and timely responses.

#### c. Predictive analysis

- **Forecasting social issues:** AI can predict future social issues based on historical data and current trends. For example, machine learning models can forecast economic downturns, social unrest, or public health crises, allowing policymakers to take proactive measures.
- **Impact assessment:** AI can simulate the potential impact of different policies or interventions on social outcomes. By modeling various scenarios, decision-makers can evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies and choose the best course of action.

#### d. Anomaly detection

- **Identifying outliers:** AI can detect anomalies or outliers in social data, which might indicate emerging problems or unusual behaviors. For instance, a sudden spike in social media activity around a particular issue could signal a brewing crisis that needs immediate attention.
- **Fraud and misconduct detection:** In areas like social welfare and public services, AI can identify patterns indicative of fraud or misconduct, ensuring that resources are used appropriately and effectively.

By leveraging these capabilities, AI tools can process:

- **Social media analysis:** Social media platforms generate a vast amount of data that reflects public sentiment, behaviors, and trends. AI tools can analyze this data to identify emerging social issues, public reactions to policy changes, and the spread of information or misinformation. For example, AI can track the virality of social movements, measure public support for causes, and detect shifts in public opinion over time
- **Healthcare and epidemiology:** In public health, AI can analyze patterns in disease spread, patient data, and healthcare delivery. By identifying trends in disease outbreaks, AI helps in predicting future outbreaks and preparing effective responses. AI can also analyze patient data to identify risk factors for diseases, enabling targeted interventions.
- **Economic and employment trends:** AI can analyze economic data to identify trends in employment, income inequality, and economic mobility. By understanding these patterns, policymakers can design programs to address economic disparities and promote inclusive growth. For instance, AI can predict job market trends, helping education systems and job training programs align with future workforce needs.
- **Crime and public safety:** AI tools can analyze crime data to identify patterns and predict future incidents. By understanding when and where crimes are likely to occur, law enforcement agencies can allocate resources more effectively and implement preventative measures. Predictive policing, while controversial, is an example of AI's application in anticipating crime hotspots.
- **Education and social mobility:** AI can analyze educational data to identify factors that influence student performance and social mobility. By recognizing patterns in educational attainment and its correlation with socio-economic factors, educators and policymakers can develop strategies to improve educational outcomes and reduce disparities.
- **Urban planning and infrastructure:** AI can help in analyzing data related to urban development, transportation, and infrastructure. By identifying patterns in population growth, traffic flow, and housing needs, urban planners can design more efficient and sustainable cities. AI-driven simulations can model the impact of various planning decisions, helping to create better urban environments.

In summary, AI tools play a crucial role in modern social analysis by processing large datasets, identifying hidden patterns, and providing predictive insights. These capabilities enable researchers and policymakers to understand complex social issues better and devise more effective strategies to address them. As AI technology continues to evolve, its application in social analysis will likely expand, offering even deeper insights into the fabric of society. The following section will delve into specific examples and case studies demonstrating the practical applications and benefits of AI in social analysis.

#### **4. AI Applications in addressing social issues**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has immense potential to tackle challenging social problems. It can contribute to addressing all 17 of the United Nations' sustainable development goals, benefiting millions of people worldwide. This section will explore specific case studies and examples, illustrating the transformative potential of AI in tackling social issues and shaping more inclusive and just social policies.

##### **4.1 Case studies and practical examples**

AI technology has shown significant promise in addressing various social issues (Table 4). By examining practical examples and case studies, we can understand how AI tools have been successfully applied to combat poverty, discrimination, and promote social integration.



**Table 4. AI applications addressing social issues (DigitalDefynd, 2024)**

Social Issue	AI Application	Case Study/Practical Example
<b>Poverty</b>	Predictive Analytics	The World Bank uses AI to predict areas at risk of poverty and allocate resources more effectively.
<b>Discrimination</b>	Bias Detection	AI algorithms detect and mitigate biases in hiring practices, such as tools used by companies like Unilever.
<b>Social Integration</b>	Natural Language Processing (NLP)	AI-based translation services, like Google Translate, help immigrants and refugees overcome language barriers.
<b>Food Security</b>	Agricultural Optimization	Precision agriculture using AI helps farmers in developing countries increase crop yields and reduce waste.
<b>Education Inequality</b>	Personalized Learning	AI-driven personalized learning platforms assist in integrating students with diverse educational backgrounds.
<b>Healthcare</b>	Cognitive Computing	IBM Watson Health uses AI to analyze medical data, enhancing diagnosis accuracy and personalized treatment plans.
<b>Financial Security</b>	Real-time Monitoring	Mastercard integrates AI for real-time transaction monitoring and fraud detection, improving payment processing efficiency.
<b>Customer Service</b>	AI-powered Chatbots	KLM Royal Dutch Airlines uses AI chatbots for 24/7 customer service, improving responsiveness and satisfaction.
<b>Weather Forecasting</b>	Predictive Analytics	The Weather Company employs AI to improve weather prediction accuracy, aiding in planning and safety.
<b>Drug Discovery</b>	Data Analysis and Simulation	Roche uses AI to streamline drug discovery, accelerating the development of new treatments.

This case study showcases a compelling range of AI applications tackling critical social issues. From the World Bank leveraging AI to predict and combat poverty to AI-powered chatbots enhancing customer service, these examples demonstrate the far-reaching impact of AI in positive social change. The first three use cases—poverty alleviation, combating discrimination, and aiding social integration, will be explained in greater detail below.

**a. Poverty**

- 1. Predictive analytics for resource allocation:** AI can analyze vast datasets to predict areas most likely to experience economic downturns or high levels of poverty. For example, by examining employment trends, housing data, and social services usage, AI can help governments and NGOs target their resources more effectively to areas in need.
- 2. Improving access to social services:** AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can provide information and assistance to individuals seeking social services. These tools can help people navigate complex application processes for welfare, housing assistance, and job training programs, ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most.

**b. Discrimination**

- 1. Bias detection in hiring:** AI can be used to analyze hiring practices and detect biases that may exist in the recruitment process. By examining patterns in job applications, interviews, and hiring decisions, AI can identify discriminatory practices and recommend changes to ensure a fairer hiring process.
- 2. Monitoring social media for hate speech:** Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools can scan social media platforms for hate speech and discriminatory language. By identifying and flagging harmful content, these tools help organizations and platforms take timely action against discrimination and promote a more inclusive online environment.

**c. Social integration:**

1. **Facilitating language learning and translation:** AI-powered language learning apps and real-time translation tools can help immigrants and refugees integrate into new communities by overcoming language barriers. These tools make it easier for non-native speakers to learn the local language and communicate effectively in their new environment.
2. **Analyzing integration programs:** AI can evaluate the effectiveness of social integration programs by analyzing data on participant outcomes. This includes tracking employment rates, educational achievements, and social engagement levels of program participants, providing insights into what strategies are most successful in promoting social integration.

#### 4.2 The impact of AI on social policies

The European Commission (EC) has seen significant investments primarily in AI education, focusing on high schools and workforce training. While this promotes equitable access to AI opportunities, additional funding is needed for other policy recommendations, such as integrating ethics and humanities into AI curricula, strengthening multidisciplinary research, and improving gender balance in STEM fields. These findings echo Schiff (2021), who also advocates for enhancing ethics and policy-oriented AI education to benefit the public (Foffano et al., 2023).

Governments and policymakers are expected to progressively utilize AI-driven data analytics as a means to enhance their decision-making processes. Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to assume a crucial role in influencing policies pertaining to healthcare, urban planning, social welfare, and several other domains, hence facilitating governance that is grounded on empirical data (Page & Duignan, 2023; Farooq et al., 2023).

AI technology is not only addressing social issues directly but also shaping social policies in significant ways. The influence of AI on policy-making processes includes the following aspects:

- **Data-Driven policy making**

- **Enhanced decision-making:** AI provides policymakers with powerful tools for data analysis, allowing for more informed and effective decision-making. By analyzing trends and patterns, AI can help identify the most pressing social issues and predict the potential impact of different policy interventions. This data-driven approach ensures that policies are based on evidence and are more likely to achieve desired outcomes. For instance, predictive analytics can help anticipate social challenges, enabling proactive measures rather than reactive ones. This results in more efficient use of public resources and better outcomes for society.
- **Real-Time monitoring:** AI enables real-time monitoring and evaluation of policy impacts. For example, AI systems can track the effectiveness of social welfare programs by analyzing data continuously and providing instant feedback. This allows for timely adjustments to policies and programs to maximize their effectiveness.

- **Personalized social services:** AI can help tailor social services to meet the specific needs of individuals. For example, machine learning algorithms can analyze data on individuals' interactions with various social services to identify their unique needs and preferences. This allows for the development of personalized support plans that are more effective in addressing individual challenges.

- **Predictive modeling for social issues:** AI can forecast future social issues by analyzing historical data and identifying emerging trends. For example, predictive models can be used to anticipate spikes in unemployment, housing crises, or public health emergencies, allowing policymakers to take proactive measures to address these issues before they become critical.

- **Equity and inclusion**

- **Identifying inequities:** AI can uncover hidden patterns of inequality by analyzing large datasets. This capability helps policymakers identify and address disparities in areas such as education, healthcare, and employment. For instance, AI analysis might reveal that certain communities are disproportionately affected by unemployment, prompting targeted intervention programs.
- **Personalized public services:** AI allows for the personalization of public services to better meet individual needs. For instance, AI can be used to customize educational content to suit the learning pace and style of each student, thereby improving educational outcomes and promoting equity.

By examining these points, we can see how AI is being utilized to tackle the complex and dynamic challenges faced by society directly through practical applications and indirectly by influencing and shaping social policies. This dual approach underscores the transformative potential of AI in creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

## 5. Ethics and challenges

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in social analysis introduces significant ethical considerations and challenges. These must be addressed to ensure that the deployment of AI tools respects human rights, promotes social justice, and operates transparently. This section delves into the critical issues of privacy, bias, and transparency in the use of AI, as well as the importance of ensuring respect for human rights and promoting social justice.

### 5.1 Privacy, bias, and transparency in the use of AI

#### a. Privacy concerns

AI systems often rely on vast amounts of personal data to function effectively. This raises significant privacy concerns:

- **Data collection and consent:** Collecting data without explicit consent can infringe on individual privacy rights. It is crucial to implement robust consent mechanisms and ensure that individuals are aware of how their data is being used.
- **Data security:** The storage and processing of large datasets increase the risk of data breaches. Ensuring strong data security measures and encryption protocols is essential to protect personal information from unauthorized access.
- **Anonymization and de-identification:** To safeguard privacy, data should be anonymized or de-identified. However, advanced AI techniques can sometimes re-identify anonymized data, posing additional challenges.

#### b. Bias in AI systems

AI systems can inadvertently perpetuate or exacerbate biases present in the training data:

- **Training data bias:** If the data used to train AI models contains biases, the AI system will likely reproduce these biases. This can lead to unfair and discriminatory outcomes.
- **Algorithmic bias:** Even with unbiased data, algorithms can develop biases based on how they process information. Continuous monitoring and updating of algorithms are necessary to mitigate this risk.
- **Bias mitigation techniques:** Implementing techniques such as fairness-aware algorithms, bias audits, and diverse training datasets can help reduce bias in AI systems.

#### c. Transparency in AI operations

Transparency is critical for building trust and accountability in AI systems:

- **Explainability:** AI models, especially complex ones like deep learning networks, often operate as "black boxes," making it difficult to understand how they reach specific

conclusions. Developing explainable AI models is essential to provide insights into their decision-making processes.

- **Accountability:** Clear accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure that AI system developers and users are responsible for the outcomes produced by these systems.
- **Open data and open source:** Promoting the use of open data and open-source AI models can enhance transparency and allow independent verification of AI system performance.

### **5.2 Ensuring respect for human rights and promoting social justice**

Respect for human rights is paramount in the deployment of AI in social analysis, ensuring the right to privacy through data protection, preventing discrimination, and safeguarding freedom of expression. AI has the potential to promote social justice by utilizing inclusive data practices, striving for equitable outcomes across different social groups, and empowering individuals and communities with access to previously unavailable resources. Adhering to ethical frameworks and guidelines is crucial for responsible AI use, with organizations adopting principles of fairness, accountability, transparency, and ethics (FATE). Compliance with relevant laws and regulations, and engaging diverse stakeholders in AI system design and implementation, further supports ethical AI deployment and addresses social justice concerns.

In conclusion, while AI-enhanced social analysis holds great promise for addressing social issues, it also poses significant ethical challenges. Addressing these challenges requires a commitment to privacy, bias mitigation, and transparency, as well as a focus on respecting human rights and promoting social justice. By doing so, we can harness the power of AI to create a more equitable and just society.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, AI-enhanced social analysis offers transformative potential for understanding and addressing social issues. By leveraging advanced AI tools, researchers and policymakers can process large datasets, uncover hidden patterns, and gain predictive insights that were previously unattainable. This capability not only improves our comprehension of complex social dynamics but also aids in developing targeted and effective interventions.

However, the integration of AI in social analysis is not without challenges. Issues of privacy, bias, and transparency must be meticulously managed to ensure ethical application and public trust. Establishing robust governance mechanisms, ethical guidelines, and legal frameworks is essential to safeguard individual rights and promote social justice. As AI technology continues to evolve, its application in social analysis will expand, offering deeper insights and more nuanced understanding of societal structures and issues.

Future research and policy development should focus on enhancing the ethical deployment of AI, ensuring that the benefits of AI-driven social analysis are equitably distributed, and continuously addressing the ethical challenges that arise. By doing so, we can harness the full potential of AI to create a more informed, equitable, and just society.

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## CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN TIMISOARA PENITENTIARY

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**Abstract:** *Abstract: One of the major problems that an individual can encounter, from the perspective of social assistance, is deprivation of liberty. Of course this means a consequence of a behavior. A sanction from society. A sanction that the individual receives for inappropriate behavioral conduct, in total contradiction with legal norms. The penitentiary system in Romania arouses curiosity, attracts criticism sometimes, gives birth to stereotypical attitudes, other times. The reality of the penitentiary system can be completely different from the one in the collective mind. And this reality must be known and understood as it is. In this context, the perception of the people serving custodial sentences, in relation to the educational efforts offered to them within the penitentiary system, is very important. This fact is directly related to the effectiveness of these programs. And the effectiveness of these programs is transposed into the premises of a good social and professional reintegration after the release, of the person who has served the custodial sentence.*

**Keywords:** penitentiary, education, satisfaction, staff, social integration

### 1. Introduction

The Timișoara Penitentiary, located on Popa Șapcă Street, number 7, known in the collective mind of Timișoara residents as the Popa Șapcă Penitentiary, represents an institution intended for the execution of custodial sentences by those who have broken the law. But the role of the penitentiary institution is broader than this simple definition. In fact, the role of the penitentiary institution is to prepare the reintegration into the community after serving the custodial sentence.

Currently, the Timișoara Penitentiary allows the execution of sentences of up to 3 years, by persons deprived of liberty, in open and semi-open regimes, as well as pre-trial detainees. According to public information, the number of people serving custodial sentences in the Timișoara Penitentiary is 1000. The number is not fixed, people are released, but also incarcerated. The portal of the National Administration of Penitentiaries provides accurate and up-to-date data on the number of persons deprived of liberty. <https://anp.gov.ro/penitenciariul-timisoara/>

The role of the penitentiary institution must be well understood and perceived, both by the scientific community and by society as a whole. Thus, it must be realized that people end up in penitentiary, not as a result of an act of their own will, or correlated with a civic obligation that the individual assumes. This action represents the consequence of a sanction applied by the company, as a result of a court sentence. Arriving in the penitentiary has the consequence of feeling the effects of deprivation of liberty. These effects are directly influenced by the individual's age, social maturation, his degree of culture, psychological structure, education, all of which determine the personal reactions to this new situation, occurring in the individual's life. (Butoi, Butoi, 2004:393)

Over time, the purpose of the prison as an institution has evolved significantly. In the feudal period, it functioned as an instrument of imperial or local power, being used mainly to

serve the interests of the authorities by applying repressive punishments. The range of corporal punishment was vast, including punishments aimed at public humiliation and torture, to executions of extreme cruelty. These measures were predominantly punitive in nature, as in most cases those who went through the tortures of detention rarely managed to survive. (Popescu, 2020)

In these cases we cannot speak of reintegration but of removal from society. Integration was not the goal of punishment in the past. The fear of the penitentiary also originates in this period that humanity has gone through.

The penitentiary is often perceived as a fearful place, surrounded by high fences and barbed wire, with bars suggesting a harsh and unfriendly environment. However, reaching such a place is a reality that many people face, and adapting to this situation is never simple. (Popa, 2019)

So a hidden place, full of the unknown, and full of popular beliefs that, more often than not, are totally erroneous.

There are significant differences between the existential realities of the past and the present moment. The Commission of the European Union recommends to the member states the implementation of a policy that takes into account the following:

- facilitating the access of all prisoners to basic education, professional training, creative and cultural activities
- education in prison should aim at the development of the whole person in relation to his social, economic and cultural context
- professional training should aim towards the wider development of the person, taking into account the evolution of the labor market;
- detainees should have free access to a well-stocked library, at least once a week

(RECOMMENDATION NO. R (89) 12 OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE MEMBER STATES REGARDING EDUCATION (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on October 13, 1989, during the 429th meeting of Deputy Ministers))

[https://www.eespip.eu/uploads/8/0/6/2/80629992/eespip\\_brochure\\_01\\_rom.pdf](https://www.eespip.eu/uploads/8/0/6/2/80629992/eespip_brochure_01_rom.pdf)

The penitentiary is an essential component of the modern justice system, without which the concept of justice as we know it today could not be implemented. In times of social crisis, citizens often call for more severe measures, including tougher punishments and, in some cases, even the reintroduction of capital punishment. This pressure from the public and the media causes politicians to face a constant dilemma. On the one hand, the media amplifies cases of crime that cause unrest and anxiety among voters, who demand drastic measures to restore order and safety. On the other hand, politicians are often attracted to the idea that legislative changes can generate significant social changes that will reduce crime. Thus, they are constantly oscillating between adopting a harsh speech, but without concrete measures, and a more tolerant speech that is reflected in the improvement of detention conditions. This oscillation between extremely strict policies and more lenient measures creates confusion and uncertainty among both the public and the justice system. In this context, it is often the perpetrators who benefit the most, as legislative changes and measures put in place do not always effectively address the underlying problems of crime and the prison system. (Gheorghe, 2016).

Penitentiaries are units that ensure the execution of custodial sentences and the measure of preventive arrest, under conditions that guarantee respect for human dignity, facilitating the responsibility and reintegration into society of persons deprived of liberty and contributing to increasing the degree of safety of the community, maintaining public order and security national. (ORDER No. 2724/C/2018 of July 10, 2018)

This means that after the execution of the custodial sentence, reintegration into the community follows. Thus, the role of the penitentiary institution becomes very important, especially for the fact that it prepares people who are serving custodial sentences for reintegration into the community, for life in the community. This approach must be perceived



in a realistic way. Here's why. Deprivation of liberty means removing the person from the community, following a court sentence, for a period of time. The custodial sentences are executed in the penitentiary. Thus, depending on the gravity of the act, the person serving a custodial sentence will spend a period of time in prison. This time frame can vary from a few months to a few years and can exceed a decade in the case of serious events. After the execution of the custodial sentence, at the legal terms, taking into account many aspects, the length of the sentence, the attitude of the person serving the custodial sentence in the penitentiary, the visible signs of correction of the person, the release and reintegration into the community follows.

In this context, the good perception of the penitentiary system in Romania appears all the more important. And within the penitentiary system, within the component institutions of the National Penitentiary Administration, a special role is played by the social reintegration sector, which is responsible for the planning, organization, coordination, control and evaluation of educational, psychological and social assistance measures carried out at the level penitentiary unit. According to the norms for the organization and operation of penitentiaries, the Social Reintegration Sector includes the Psychosocial Assistance Service/Office, respectively the Education Service/Office. The latter organizes, conducts, evaluates educational activities and programs and coordinates school training and professional training activities carried out with persons deprived of liberty within the penitentiary.

One of the important components of the activity of the Timișoara Penitentiary is the intervention of professionals from the social reintegration sector, who carry out educational projects aimed at developing independent life skills, facilitating access to the labor market, education for family life, literacy, schooling, moral education and religious.

Another important component of the activities carried out within the social reintegration sector within the Timișoara Penitentiary is the professional qualification activities. Thus, according to the public documents of the institution, during the year 2013, a number of 14 inmates qualified in the job of caretaker of green spaces and 14 inmates in the job of maid. At the same time, attendance at the scholarships organized by the County Employment Agency is constant. All these activities are intended to facilitate professional reintegration after release from prison. <https://anp.gov.ro/penitenciariul-timisoara/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2024/02/Bilant-2023.pdf>

Thus, the educational approach undertaken aims at reducing recidivism, the good social functioning of the individual after returning to the community, maintaining close ties with the family, during the execution of the sentence. Well, in the O zi cu tata program, inmates can spend a day with their children, having quality interactions with them.

All these activities reveal another side of the prison system. A face perhaps less known and valued, preparing the individual for integration into the community, mitigating the social shock upon returning to the community. Aspects less known to public opinion and even the scientific community. Aspects worth investigating are the aspect of their effectiveness among the target population.

## **2. The methodological dimension of the applied research**

The purpose of the study undertaken was to determine and evaluate the degree of satisfaction of the persons deprived of liberty in the Timișoara Penitentiary regarding the educational and religious activities carried out within this institution.

Sample. The pilot research involved a number of 50 inmates who answered the questions by completing the questionnaire. From the perspective of the sample, this batch of 50 subjects represents exactly 5% of the total number of inmates in the Timișoara Penitentiary.

The extension of the batch in the event that it includes more respondents, was not possible due to considerations related to the organization of the penitentiary, respectively

other activities that include persons serving custodial sentences, e.g. gainful activities, visits, other activities characteristic of the penitentiary institution. However, we consider that the size of the batch is consistent and the conclusions of the research are relevant and in relation to the proposed purpose.

The research tool. It includes both quantitative and qualitative mixed questions. The questionnaires were applied with full confidentiality, by the research team, between July 29, 2024 and August 10, 2024. In the context of a questionnaire administered in the penitentiary, it is even more important to ensure that the answers of the participants are confidential and anonymous. This protects respondents' rights and encourages honest answers.

The research instrument includes 10 items, a mixed questionnaire that includes both quantitative and qualitative questions. The Likert scale was used, appropriate in this case to collect the opinions and attitude of the respondents. The proposed questionnaire includes questions based on Likert responses (eg, "Satisfied", "Neutral", "Dissatisfied"), which allows the assessment of satisfaction and attitudes towards educational and religious activities. The Likert scale simplifies the data collection and analysis process by turning qualitative responses into quantitative data that is easy to analyze. At the same time, the questionnaire also includes open questions that allow the qualitative quantification of respondents' opinions.

In order to respect the privacy of the respondents and because from the point of view of reintegration the committed deed is not important, aspects related to the committed deed were not discussed, only the duration of the sentence to be served mattered.

Qualitative research is crucial to deeply understand human behaviors and motivations, providing a detailed and contextualized perspective on social phenomena. This method captures the complexity of human experiences, which often escapes quantitative methods, and requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher to correctly interpret the data. (Chelcea, 2001) Chelcea sees qualitative research as an essential complement to quantitative approaches, enriching the understanding of social dynamics.

### **3. Research design. Quantitative research objectives**

Objective 1: Identifying the degree of satisfaction of the persons deprived of their liberty from that group regarding the degree of satisfaction with the educational activities carried out in the Timișoara Penitentiary.

Objective 2: Evaluation of the perception of persons deprived of liberty towards the specialized staff of the Educational Service in Timișoara Penitentiary

Objective 3: Identifying the perception of persons deprived of liberty towards religious activities

### **4. Data analysis and interpretation**

The sample lot included a number of 50 persons deprived of their liberty who are serving their sentence in the Timișoara Penitentiary. Participation in the study was voluntary, voluntary and unrewarded, neither by the research team nor by the Timișoara Penitentiary. Although we did not intend to measure the degree of rejection of participation in the research, it should be noted that no person refused to answer the presented questionnaire.

The age of the respondents is between 22 and 55 years.

The total length of the sentences to be served is presented as follows: 7 of the respondents from the total batch of 50, have to serve sentences of more than six years, 10 respondents out of 50 have to serve sentences of less than one year. 14 respondents have to serve sentences between 1 and 3 years. 19 respondents have to serve sentences between 4 and 6 years.

All respondents state that they participate in educational and religious activities, so the percentage of attending these activities is 100% of the group of respondents.

To the question How satisfied are you with the quality of educational activities, the respondents had three answer options, satisfied, neutral, unsatisfied. The majority of respondents declare themselves satisfied with the quality of educational activities. 48 respondents give the satisfied answer, while only two respondents give the neutral answer. None of the respondents declared themselves unsatisfied with the quality of the educational activities carried out within the Timișoara Penitentiary.

Participation in religious activities is important according to the majority of respondents. It is the opinion of 47 of the 50 respondents. Only one respondent considers participation in religious activities to be neutral, while three respondents consider that participation in religious activities is of little importance to them.

So a percentage of 94% of the respondents consider it important to participate in religious activities. 2% of respondents are neutral about participating in religious activities. And 4% of subjects consider religious activities unimportant.

The involvement of prison staff in carrying out educational and religious activities is perceived by 100% as very good. This question is significantly correlated with the answer to one of the qualitative, open-ended questions, where, in the view of the respondents, the attitude of the staff and the training of the staff are strong points of the educational activities carried out in the penitentiary.

Other strong points identified by the respondents, regarding the educational activities carried out in the penitentiary, are creativity, spending free time in a pleasant way, spending time in a useful way, the possibility of learning new things, the possibility of meeting new people, acquiring new knowledge, acquiring new skills, preparing for release from prison, useful things for the future, qualified staff patient staff, educators have an ok attitude with inmates, enjoyable recreational activities.

Regarding qualification programs, more than 50% of respondents state that they have taken qualification courses within the penitentiary or that they have been offered such courses. Mention is made of the green spaces caretaker course.

## **5. General conclusions of the paper**

The educational activities carried out within the Timișoara Penitentiary are appreciated and positively connoted by the persons who are serving a custodial sentence within this penitentiary unit. Social activities are well appreciated. Programs that facilitate access to family and children, such as O zi cu tata, are also appreciated. Outings in the community are valued, people serving custodial sentences repeatedly request such outings in the answers provided.

The perception of religious activities is positive, in a vast majority percentage. Going to church is a desired activity. The priest's word and interaction with him are valued and also requested. It is requested to go to church as often as possible. Thus, religious activity and going to church are found in many of the proposals of those serving custodial sentences for future activities. Going to church is among the most enjoyable activities in the penitentiary.

Activities and programs that facilitate reintegration into the community are also valued because they can provide the necessary information and support returns to the community. All the courses that take place in the penitentiary are positively appreciated and desired by those deprived of their freedom.

Regarding the attitude of the staff directly engaged in educational activities, the opinions are favorable, the staff is seen as understanding, communicative and well trained. In their entirety, educational activities give confidence to persons deprived of their freedom and prepare a good community reintegration.

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# ELECTRONIC CRIME: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MOTIVES AND EFFECTS

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**Abstract:** *The advancement in communication and information technology, also known as digital technology, has brought about the emergence of a new service reality thanks to the internet. It has provided a new type of interactive, collaborative, and communicative services through very modern electronic templates, surpassing traditional methods that are constantly fading, leaving room for faster and higher quality technology in audio, video, and images. Despite the positives of this technological development, it has simultaneously brought significant challenges, notably the proliferation of electronic crime, which is considered one of the most important contemporary social phenomena. This is evidenced by its effects and the statistics, both local and global, which serve as clear indicators. Electronic crimes possess characteristics that make them flexible offenses, easily carried out in the technological sphere in all its diversity and variety, including extortion, forgery, intellectual and financial theft, piracy, fraud, and espionage. Therefore, in this scientific article, we aim to shed light on the phenomenon of electronic crime, diagnose it, identify its main motives based on important explanatory theories, determine its effects, and highlight the main methods adopted to confront its perpetrators and mitigate its impacts.*

**Keywords:** Electronic Crime, Internet, Social Networking Sites, Motives.

## 1. Introduction

The tremendous advancement in information and communication technology, along with the widespread adoption of the internet, has brought several advantages to individuals and groups. It has allowed them to connect in a virtual world and provided them with a platform for expression and sharing of opinions and ideas. In this context, the French postmodernist Jean Baudrillard argues that the internet has brought about radical transformations in the contours of our daily lives and behaviors, blurring the boundaries between the global and the local. However, despite opening up new and vast horizons for exploring the social world, it also poses a threat to undermining social relationships and destroying human communities.

Social networking sites, among the latest outputs of digital technology and the most popular, have altered many aspects of the world, making it a "global village," as Marshall McLuhan famously stated. Although these platforms were initially established for social interaction among different demographics and communities, over time they have brought about a qualitative change in the social, economic, and political environment. They have the ability to influence decisions, as politicians take opinions and ideas circulated through these media platforms seriously. This is evidenced by numerous real-life examples demonstrating their power to either bring peace or chaos, to mobilize protests, and to stand against unwanted decisions. The Arab Spring revolutions witnessed in several Arab countries, which led to civil wars in Yemen, Libya, Syria, Sudan, and others, are a clear testament to this. Social media, particularly Facebook, played a significant role in fuelling these revolutions, challenging authorities and governments, leaving behind devastating effects.

The question that arises here is: How can modern digital communication media contribute to the commission of crimes? What are the theoretical explanations for individuals' motives toward criminal behavior? And what are the most significant effects of electronic crimes?

## **2. What is electronic crime?**

It is essential to address the concept of crime itself. Defining crime comprehensively and precisely is not easy because its definition varies from one society to another and from one time period to another. What may be considered normal behavior in one society might be considered a crime punishable by law in another. Additionally, acts that were permissible at one point in time may become criminalized at another time, owing to changes in the composition and ideas of society.

Psychologically, crime is defined as the satisfaction of a human instinct through abnormal means that an ordinary person does not resort to when satisfying the same instinct. Adler argues that crime is the result of a conflict between the self-instinct (a tendency for superiority) and social feelings. Legally, crime is an unlawful act stemming from criminal intent for which the law provides punishment or precautionary measures. From a sociological perspective, crime is defined by Durkheim as an expression of an individual's lack of social solidarity due to the absence of social values, standards, and norms. He defines crime as "an act that violates the collective sense" (Rashwan, 2005: 12).

In this context, electronic crime, also known as cybercrime, computer crime, or internet crime, encompasses criminal activities committed through computers and various digital devices. It is defined as "criminal activity in which technology is used directly or indirectly as a tool to commit the criminal act" (Qadri, 2023: 323-324). It is also defined as "violations committed against individuals or groups with criminal intent, with the aim of harming the victim's reputation or causing them material or moral harm directly or indirectly, using communication networks such as the internet, chat rooms, email, and mobile phones" (Diyab, 2017).

In general, electronic crime refers to any crime practiced and executed through modern digital means and technologies associated with the internet, relying on social networking sites. It includes various offenses such as email fraud, identity theft, financial data theft, extortion, electronic espionage, copyright infringement, illegal sale of goods online, solicitation of child exploitation materials, production or possession of such materials, and other crimes.

## **3. Types and semantics of electronic crime 'cybercrime'**

Despite the benefits and positives brought by internet technology and its networks. It has also facilitated and brought electronic crimes closer to their victims, whether individuals, groups or institutions. It spared no one, revealing its fangs and demonstrating its negative aspects and destructive effects.

Electronic crimes are diverse and varied, including incitement and extremism, software piracy, illegal sale of prohibited goods, as well as fraud and deception. It is observed that crime is on the rise, indicating the worsening of the phenomenon and the difficulty in tracking down its perpetrators. Global statistics show an increasing trend towards cybercrimes, as they represent the easiest and most advanced methods of committing crimes with minimal risks. A study by "Digital Numbers" revealed that the number of victims of cyber-attacks and crimes amounts to 555 million users annually, with over 1.5 million victims daily, and one victim every second. The most common type of crime is identity theft, with 224 million cases of theft (Al-Emir, 2022).

At the national level, police departments recorded nearly eight thousand electronic crimes in 2020, while the national gendarmerie recorded 1,362 cybercrimes involving 1,028 individuals in the same year. Analysis of the registered crime data revealed that defamation and insults online topped the list, accounting for over 55%, followed by crimes against public security, followed by personal life violations and disclosure of secrets, and finally extortion, fraud, sexual exploitation, and acts contrary to public morality and similar issues (Bashoush, 2021).

The most notable types of crimes committed through these networks include:

### **3.1. Mobile Phone-Related Crimes:**

Mobile phones equipped with Bluetooth technology can be used to send voice and image messages containing indecent or pornographic content. Video cameras, both traditional and digital, have reached an extreme level of smallness and precision in capturing images and videos of individuals in their most private moments. (Bayoumi, 2008: 8)

### **3.2. E-commerce and Fraud Crimes Using Electronic Payment Cards:**

ICT criminals have taken advantage of the marketing of non-genuine or counterfeit goods on the Internet, to spread quickly among consumers who cannot discover what they are buying, and the criminals of this trade manipulate credit cards, which are considered one of the most famous forms of fraud and fraud (Allebane, 2000: 107-108). In the same context, statistics show that 80% of international companies have been attacked on their networks, the content of this process is that amateurs and hackers pick up card numbers and use them to obtain the commodity they want, and then deduct the value from the account of the legitimate holder of the card, this matter can be done by amateurs penetrating computer networks and the Internet, even if they are young in order to prove themselves or entertain (Bayoumi, 2008: 44-45).

Counterfeiting and piracy operations have also become widely known in the international arena, where counterfeit products account for approximately 7% of world trade, resulting in annual losses of 300 billion dollars on legitimate producers (Al-Akhras, 2008: 295).

**3.3. Computer and Communication Crime Risks:** This includes disabling a company's computer to destroy its projects using viruses that appeared in 1987 and caused significant damage to computer systems. It has been estimated that counterfeit products represent approximately 7% of global trade, resulting in annual losses of 300 billion dollars to legitimate producers. (Allebane, 2000: 107-123)

**3.4. Eavesdropping and Espionage Crimes:** Modern internet technologies have aided eavesdropping and espionage, which involve unauthorized access to users' websites. Some criminals conceal their identities or impersonate others, gathering secret information from unsuspecting visitors. (Qandilji and Samrai, 2009: 178-183).

From the above, it is clear that the diversity of Electronic-crimes on the one hand and their seriousness on the other, whether at the individual or collective level, even on institutions and consumers, so it requires governments and various institutions to work on developing legal regulations and mechanisms capable of confronting the risks of this technology, in line with the new characteristics of the Internet, so that it can protect individuals on the one hand and activate e-commerce on the other.

## **4. Sociological theories explaining cybercrime**

The interest in theoretical interpretation, and what theorists have made on the same subject, is important to answer the most important question that may be asked about the most important factors driving human behavior leading to the commission of crime. Considering the crime as one, whether traditional or electronic, but electronic differs in methods, so we will try to list the most important theoretical trends that gave a scientific explanation for it.

**4.1. Emile Durkheim's Anomie Theory:** Anomie signifies the collapse of social standards that govern behavior, indicating weakened social cohesion. Durkheim associated criminal phenomena with society, asserting that it is inherent to the evolution of societies. Durkheim emphasized that conditions of anomie lead to social disintegration, decline of

values and standards, and erosion of control mechanisms, driving individuals towards crime and unconventional means to achieve certain goals. Often, the result is suicide, as individuals, feeling lost, fail to fulfill their aspirations, resorting to self-destruction (Giddens, 2005: 65). The link between anomie theory and cybercrime lies in the proliferation of negative phenomena on social media platforms, like the phenomenon of bullying, causing victims to lose self-confidence and potentially leading to suicide to escape this reality.

**4.2. Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory:** Edwin Sutherland aimed to comprehensively explain criminal behavior, suggesting that while poverty, illness, family breakdown, etc., may lead to deviance, they are not exclusive causes. Crime is learned behavior, not inherited or a product of mental or psychological disorders. This theory represents the first scientific attempt to compare and explain the phenomenon of crime. Criminal behavior is acquired through association with criminals. Differential association theory interprets cybercrime through phenomena like cyberterrorism, a significant challenge facing Arab communities, with extremist organizations infiltrating the internet to spread radical ideologies and recruit young people for criminal acts (Abdelghani, 2007: 130).

**4.3. Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory:** Social control is a preventive process against deviance and delinquency, safeguarding society's security and continuity. Deviance is natural, but compliance warrants explanation. When individuals or groups weaken their ties to society, or when social controls through fundamental social institutions like family, school, peer groups, and religious institutions become ineffective, individuals find it easier to engage in deviant and criminal acts in society (Al Samri, 2009: 297). Inadequate electronic security and punishment of cybercriminals contribute to individuals feeling free to disregard societal values and morals.

**4.4. Lifestyle Theory by Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo:** This theory explores why certain individuals or groups are more susceptible to becoming victims of criminal behavior, attributing it to their lifestyle. It suggests that an individual's likelihood of becoming a crime victim is influenced by factors such as their lifestyle and the people they associate with (Al-Awad, 2004: 230). With the widespread and indiscriminate use of social media platforms, many are vulnerable to various types of cybercrimes such as fraud, extortion and defamation.

## **5. The impact of the internet and social media on values and moral attitudes**

The misuse of various social networking sites and the internet, especially by young people, has led to the emergence of various risks, including health, religious, cultural, and social risks, all of which are equally important. Numerous studies have shown that the use of these sites is negatively affecting individuals, such as spending long hours browsing pornographic pages, downloading phone ringtones and songs, and engaging in purposeless image sharing and conversations.

Many researchers have written about the ethical issues raised by the internet, such as Richard Joseph's study on pornography, moral panic, social construction, and social problems, and Joho-Hoj's study on pornography, hatred, and character-building among young Americans. An Arab study on the impact of the internet on the moral attitudes of Egyptian youth aimed to identify the risks posed by young people's use of the internet. Among its key findings were the following (Saeed, 2008: 131):

- Entertainment ranked first among the topics young people browse, followed by culture and sports.
- Internet risks vary, including addiction to pornographic sites, cultural invasion, religious extremism, and political hacking.



- Youth isolation from family and friends, waste of time and effort, and learning new criminal methods.

As a result, the internet and social networking sites have had a significant impact on the values of societies, especially on moral aspects, reinforcing the spread of so-called "electronic pornography" via the internet, where freely explicit photos are exchanged. Pornographic clubs in the West have started operating using the World Wide Web. Despite the West's tolerance of adult content under the guise of privacy protection, this does not apply to young children, as "child prostitution" has spread. UNESCO organized the first international conference in 1999 to combat child prostitution through the internet (Allebane, 2000: 130). In the same context, Ibrahim Al-Akhras (2008: 123-124) explained that the internet plays a significant role in spreading crimes against self and morals, leading to risks of death, incitement to suicide, emotional harm, threats of murder, dissemination of misleading and forged information, incitement of minors to illicit sexual activities, and dissemination of obscenities through sharing pornographic images.

Examples of immoral websites include websites dedicated to marriage and extramarital relationships established by American and European universities. Mafia groups exploited these sites to profit from such relationships, marketing girls from Russia, Ukraine, and East Asian countries. One of the most famous American sites is known as "American Bachelors". Arab youth have also entered these sites, with pages dedicated to some countries such as Egypt, the UAE, Lebanon, Algeria, Kuwait, Tunisia, and Qatar.

Moreover, the role of networks is not limited to spreading pornography and stripping youth of modesty, as Bayoumi explained, but it has strongly aimed to undermine national values and identity, disseminate extremist political, religious, and racist ideas to dominate the consciences of youth, exploit their aspirations, enthusiasm, and lack of experience, and superficiality in thinking to spread their ideologies and ignite their rebellion. In the same context, one suspicious organization attempted to defame the Quran, asking visitors to its site to compose verses similar to Quranic verses, in an attempt to convince the website's audience that the Quran is not a divine miracle. (Allebane, 2000: 126)

In general, the internet and social networking sites have had a significant impact on increasing the rate of soft crimes, especially as their perpetrators are mostly white-collar workers, the educated class familiar with smart technology. It is also worth mentioning the prominent role of the family in the moral decay of youth and the increase in violence and crime rates due to parents' preoccupation with providing material support and neglecting proper upbringing tasks. This makes it difficult to exercise parenting roles properly and correct children's perceptions about the dangers of the network.

## **6. Methods of confronting and deterring electronic crime:**

There are various methods to combat electronic crime, which can be categorized into legal, legislative, technological, and educational methods. Additionally, there are international and national efforts in this regard. The United Nations has shown significant interest in combating cybercrime, particularly during the Tenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Vienna from April 10 to 17, 2000, and during the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Bangkok from April 18 to 25, 2005. The European Committee on Crime Problems and the Committee of Experts on Computer Crime have prepared a draft international convention in this field, which the European Council announced on April 27, 2000, taking into account the international nature that characterizes this type of crime. (Zaiti, 2022)

The Algerian state has also implemented a series of legal measures and mechanisms, mainly related to amending procedural provisions to suit the nature of the crime itself. The most important of these is Law 09-04 dated July 5, 2009. Additionally, special units and bodies have been established to combat crime and deter perpetrators, such as the National Authority for the Prevention of Crimes related to Information and Communication Technologies and

their Combat, and the establishment of the National Pole specialized in combating electronic crime. (Bouzenoune, 2019)

However, despite international and national efforts to find effective solutions to confront the risks of modern technology, they are not sufficient and require efforts from all societal institutions, especially upbringing institutions, due to their prominent role in changing mentalities and correcting deviant behavior. Therefore, strengthening and activating the educational aspect is considered one of the most important mechanisms for success and crime prevention. This aspect begins within the family. The philosopher Muhammad Iqbal believed in saying that education is the acid that dissolves the personality of the organism, and then forms it as he desired. According to him, this acid is more powerful and influential than any chemical substance; it can turn a towering mountain into a heap of dust.

Indeed, it can be said that the best environment in which proper education shines is the educational climate derived from the Book of the God (the Quran). Moreover, the strongest effective factor in instilling attraction through religious education is the utilization of aesthetics in curricula, educational methods, and media, as well as presenting suitable models that reflect the specificity of each region. Teaching children the necessary sciences that preserve their Islamic personality from dissolution is crucial. At the forefront of this is connecting them with the Quran and its noble sciences, as it is the strongest educational fortress. Therefore, it can be said that families play the largest and most important role in technological education through monitoring, supervision, and conveying positive messages characterized by dialogue and discussion to clarify the risks surrounding children. It is also necessary to provide alternatives to fill the gap and present role models through the teachings of our religion and the Sunnah of our Prophet.

Combatting crime also comes through following religious teachings, which restrain the souls and help adhere to a set of social norms. Social control is necessary for preserving social life and the necessity for human survival. Human nature does not lean towards humanity except by submitting to the constraints of various social systems, refining and elevating souls. Thus, individuals can live in harmony with others, earning their love and respect. (Haras: 2005, 154-158). Additionally, utilizing various media tools can be effective in broadcasting informative programs, films, documentaries, television and radio programs, and advertising flashes to raise awareness about the dangers of the internet and social media sites and the negative effects they may cause. In general, crime is not just an anti-social phenomenon only, but it is also a psychological problem that requires in-depth studies from everyone who cares about the motives of human behavior, and here it must be noted a very important point, especially in the fields of law and behavioral and social sciences, as the philosophy of law is its content that every person behaves in a wrong behavior deserves punishment, while the behavioral and social sciences are different and proceed from the ultimate goal of them, which lies in understanding and modifying behavior (Sayed Mohamed and Rizk Sanad Ibrahim, DC: 250-251).

Thus, the law must evolve and change its texts and provisions constantly, and does not remain static until it keeps pace with the various developments and changes in society and its criminal phenomena, and it is also necessary to follow up the achievements of social sciences, such as psychology and sociology, especially with regard to how to deal with criminals, the solution does not lie in putting them in prison and punishing them, but in how to treat them and change their behavior to adapt and integrate with society, and thus become good people who contribute to building their societies.

## **7. Conclusion**

Despite the tremendous reliance on the Internet and social media networks, and the effective and positive mechanisms and services associated with them that have touched various aspects of life, this has not prevented the growth of electronic crime. This phenomenon has affected public security and caused harm to individuals, groups, and

institutions, affecting the health, psychological, social, financial, and economic aspects of individuals and institutions. With the unprecedented growth of statistics on electronic crime, it is necessary to enact deterrent laws that enforce strict punishment for such actions. Additionally, it is essential to activate and embody purposeful educational methods derived from our moderate religious reference within all societal institutions, including schools, mosques, universities, and various media spaces. Furthermore, it is important to train children to have a proper understanding and awareness of the use of these websites, which emphasizes the need for early investment in children through focusing on scientific education in all upbringing institutions. It is the responsibility of governments to monitor, educate, and sift through these platforms for optimal and beneficial use of social media networks.

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# THE PERCEPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE WESTERN PART OF ROMANIA FROM GENERATION Z ON THE USE OF AI IN THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

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**Abstract:** *In recent decades, Artificial Intelligence has seen a significant development, which has enabled the automation of several fields, including that of human resources, substantially changing the role of recruiters and professionals in the field. However, there are few studies that explore recruiters' perceptions of the use of AI-based technology (Horodyski, 2023) and even less research in the literature that examines the candidate's perspective. Thus, through the present study I aim to analyze the perception of candidates towards the recruitment and selection process that uses AI tools and, more precisely, the impact of factors that may influence this perception. Also, in this study, I aim to exclusively analyze the perception of people from generation Z. This choice is justified by the fact that generation Z is the most recent to enter the labor market. The research question is to what extent are the young generation Z willing to use artificial intelligence in the recruitment and selection process, when they want to be employed? We adopted a quantitative method, collecting data through a questionnaire applied through the snowball method. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, correlational analyses, and Mann-Whitney nonparametric tests. The results demonstrated that the use of social networks can be a factor that can influence the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process, and the degree of trust towards artificial intelligence is the most influential factor.*

**Keyword:** AI, recruitment and selection, Generation Z, social media

## 1. Introduction

In an increasingly digitized and robotized society, the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become more than ever a global topic. In this sense, many specialists have come up with proposed definitions to explain this term.

A general definition found in one of the oldest continuously published encyclopedias in the world - Britannica - perceives AI as: "the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings" (Copeland, 1998). Another terminology offered by John McCarthy (2004), one of the founding fathers of AI Artificial Intelligence, who proposed the term in 1956, claims that: "It is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs".

However, there are conflicting opinions among researchers towards More precisely, some researchers question its intelligent character. A first argument concerns the inflexibility of Artificial Intelligence, which, unlike humans, operates based on a fixed set of parameters. Thus, AI can learn or even surpass the human being in performing a task (as happened in 1997, when the world chess champion, Garry Kasparov, was defeated by the robot "Deep Blue"). But it can only carry out that activity, while man can develop in several fields (Divino, 2022). The reason is that the human neural system is much more complex than the computational system of AI. Thus, the computational system used by AI cannot lead to the understanding, mathematical intuition or raw sensation that humans can (Bishop, 2021).

But, as I mentioned, there are also experts who support AI's intelligence. One of the proponents of this idea is Max Tegmark (2019). The researcher defines intelligence as "the ability to perform complex tasks". Thus, intelligence is perceived more as a spectrum than a trait that may or may not be possessed. In other words, just because AI is not as intelligent as humans, it does not mean that it does not possess some degree of intelligence, which, as it develops, will increase.

But whether AI is truly intelligent or not, this does not mean that AI technologies will not benefit organizations (Pettersen, 2019). But to avoid some methodological confusion, in

the present study the concept of AI is a general term that encompasses a wide variety of models, methods and tools used to imitate human intelligence, often in terms of data collection, processing and use (Köchling & Wehner, 2020).

## **2. AI in recruitment and selection**

Therefore, in recent years the recruitment and selection system has benefited from the development of several technologies to facilitate and perfect this process (Oostrom et al., 2013), such as those based on artificial intelligence.

Technologies based on artificial intelligence have started to be used since the time when the candidate is actively looking for a job, through third-party job search platforms (such as CareerBuilder, GlassDoor, Indeed, Monster, Seek). These not only facilitate the process of finding an ideal job, but some of them have the ability and, in some cases, use Artificial Intelligence to filter, determine the most suitable candidate for the job available (Van Esch et al. , 2012). Thus, it is guaranteed not only that applicants will find a suitable job, but also that organizations will attract candidates who meet the job requirements. Moreover, some of them give companies the chance to highlight positive aspects and attract elite professionals. For example, through the AI-based tool, Review Generator, Glassdoor. By analyzing various aspects such as organizational culture, work-life balance, and employee satisfaction, the generator can create engaging reviews that highlight the company's strengths to attract more candidates (LogicalBallsLab, n.d.). Also, through artificial intelligence, companies can create ads that attract candidates with specific traits. This is done by structuring precise language to attract these candidates and tailoring the exact words to fit specific profiles. Companies like Textio use artificial intelligence to help customers customize the language in job ads and descriptions, achieving highly accurate personalization. (Van Esch et al., 2019).

After obtaining a sufficiently large base of CVs, artificial intelligence can also be used in the screening process. Specifically, AI contributes to saving time by simplifying and automating the processes of reviewing resumes and matching job requirements to candidate skills more efficiently (Vedapradha et al., 2019). Moreover, such technology can improve the finding, matching and ranking of candidates, while eliminating any human biases (Ore & Sposato, 2022). Firms such as Adidas, Macy's, Quicken Loans and Wayfair have already adopted such AI tools to examine their automated tracking system (ATS) and other sources to compare candidate resumes and profiles, ensuring they continue to discover and rediscover top talent (Van Esch & Black, 2019).

The influence that artificial intelligence exerts in the sphere of recruitment and selection is not only limited to processes in the early stages of this field, such as attracting candidates and analyzing potential candidates, but also extends to more complex stages, such as that of the asynchronous interview. One such example is the AI tool provided by the company HireVue. It allows candidates to choose any time convenient for them to take a recorded video interview, in which this, through this technology, the candidate answers a short series of questions previously established with the client company. Candidates can record their answers multiple times if they wish before submitting them in final mode. HireVue's AI technology not only evaluates actual responses and compares them to ideal ones, but also analyzes word choices and micro-facial movements to provide ratings on the personality and sincerity of responses. Unilever used HireVue and reported that it significantly increased the speed and quality of finalists who were subsequently interviewed in person and received offers. In fact, 80% of those who reached the final round received job offers (Van Esch et al., 2019; APUD: Feloni, 2017).

Furthermore, through artificial intelligence, companies could put their candidates in hypothetical situations to virtually test certain skills, aptitudes and competencies, along with how they apply them in a real-life situation. For example, McKinsey & Company designed a simulation in which a job candidate is confronted with a forest rich in wildlife and endowed

with beautiful flora and fauna. The candidate is then told that the animals are dying of an unknown disease. The candidate must find solutions and act quickly to protect as many animals as possible. The AI tracks not only how many animals each candidate saves and how quickly they react, but also the process the candidate goes through to achieve the desired result. It monitors, records and analyzes all these aspects without the human biases that tend to confound human evaluators (Van Esch et al., 2019; APUD: McKinsey & Company, 2018). Although this situation is more abstract, it demonstrates that AI-based technology can place candidates in contexts similar to those in the work environment and can help evaluate essential skills such as time management, stress management and resources management, allowing verification of how they meet the requirements and needs of the job before actual hiring.

### **3. Perception of AI**

Thus, given the benefits and extensive use of artificial intelligence, the implementation of new technologies in the personnel selection process has seen rapid growth. Technologies such as computer-based tests, Internet tests, telephone interviews, video-conference job interviews, and multimedia simulations allow organizations to evaluate a large number of candidates simultaneously, thus helping to save time and financial resources (Oostrom et al., 2013). In fact, according to a study by Brock & von Wangenheim (2019) in 2016 – 2017, AI applications had already expanded widely. Thus, only 15% of the companies studied were not yet involved in any plan related to artificial intelligence, while 20% had already achieved results following the implementation of these technologies.

To ensure an optimal recruitment and selection process, it is important that the people involved in this process are willing to use this technology. Because of this, several studies have been conducted that looked at recruiters' perception and attitudes towards AI. An example is the study by Lacroux and Martin-Lacroux (2022), which considered the analysis of the reactions of recruiters when, in the process of evaluating CVs, they received recommendations based on algorithms. Another example is the research carried out by Lee & Cha (2023), who used a questionnaire based on the FAT-CAT model to analyze the adoption trend of artificial intelligence recruitment systems. This research is all the more important as companies are interested in finding out the opinion of their employees on the main challenges in implementing automation and artificial intelligence in the work environment, although AI is often considered a technology of the future (Khogali & Mekid, 2023).

However, in the specialized literature, there is a tendency to underestimate the importance of the perception of an entity as significant as the recruiter in the recruitment and selection process, namely the candidate. Because of this, there is a limited amount of empirical research that analyzes how candidates react to AI-enabled recruitment efforts (Van Esch et al., 2019). However, given that the use of technology and artificial intelligence tools in recruiting candidates is becoming more extensive and given that organizations make selections and job offers primarily to those who have completed the application process for the positions work, a more detailed understanding of the factors influencing candidate reactions to AI-assisted recruitment could provide valuable insights into how organizations can more effectively manage these activities (Van Esch et al., 2020).

Regarding attitudes towards artificial intelligence, numerous studies have revealed negative perceptions of its use. For example, in a study conducted by Cave, Coughlan and Dihan (2019) on a sample of 1078 respondents, a prevalence of negative perceptions was observed, in which narratives with dystopian expectations of the future impact of artificial intelligence were predominant.

Another dystopian perspective identified by Khogali and Mekid (2023) expresses people's concern about the potential of artificial intelligence to control the world and subjugate humanity, assuming the emergence of unexpected effects. This perception suggests an existential threat that could completely eradicate life on Earth. The caveat associated with this

outlook indicates that once AI takes global control, it will develop superintelligence, tricking human creators into pursuing its own illogical goals and endangering all of existence. Among the major risks associated with AI are the spread of incorrect information and a deadly arms race, including AI-powered weapons. But a more realistic fear, identified by the same authors, is related to the increased implementation of new technologies, people fearing the loss of jobs, this fear intensifying with the ever-widening automation and following the effects of the Covid-19.

In the case of the recruitment and selection process, numerous studies have identified negative attitudes towards the implementation of artificial intelligence in this process. After all, the outcomes of HR decisions, such as who is hired or fired, have serious consequences for individuals and society from the perspective of ethics as well as procedural and distributive fairness (Tambe et al., 2019). And in the case of methods that are based on state-of-the-art prediction algorithms, the knowledge of the attributes that are the basis of this decision can or the respective algorithms can be based on attributes that are not relevant for the workplace or that can be discriminatory (Shrestha et al., 2019). This happened in 2018 when Amazon found that its recruitment algorithm, which was developed based on historical data on job performance, during the period when white men were the best performers (in the context of most employees were white men), gave higher scores to white male candidates (Tambe et al., 2019). This aspect is even more problematic as it is difficult to identify the biases built into the algorithm process, which can diminish confidence in the results of AI-based decisions. However, once it is established what constitutes the "best fit" candidate, the same criteria can be autonomously and efficiently assessed for millions of candidates, which is an advantage over human decision-making capacity, which is limited by cognitive constraints, making practical impossible to uniformly process many alternatives (Shrestha et al., 2019). Thus, thanks to AI's ability to analyze considerable amounts of data in a short time, it can provide recommendations for business decisions (Votto et al., 2021).

On the other hand, there are also positive attitudes towards the use of artificial intelligence. For example, a study examining New York Times reports on AI found an increase in optimism about artificial intelligence (Schepman & Rodway, 2020; APUD: Fast & Horvitz, 2017).

One possible factor that can positively influence the perception towards artificial intelligence is the use of social networks. Research has shown that familiarity with a particular technology leads to greater comfort and willingness to engage in additional activities through that technology, we would expect that the more people use social media and the more exposed they are to AI-enabled advertising news and other push apps to their mobile devices, the more likely they are to engage and complete AI-enabled job application processes on a mobile device. Another positive aspect is related to the intrinsic motivation of the individual to use AI technology, as people often use new technologies not only for its anticipated benefits, but also for the expected intrinsic rewards, such as a sense of fulfillment, innovation and novelty (Van Esch & Black, 2019).

According to studies, one aspect that can influence the perception of AI is demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of education, etc.). In fact, in a study by Ivanov et al. in 2020, a sample of over 500 Bulgarian respondents found that younger people do not have the same fears as older people about losing their job. Also, according to the study, men believe that automation and technology will bring much more benefits than their female counterparts.

Following another study conducted by Van Esch et al. (2020), researchers observed that attitudes toward the use of artificial intelligence in the job application process, as well as toward organizations using AI in the job application process, are strongly related to potential employees' intention to apply for jobs at these organizations. The more engaging candidates perceive the recruitment and selection process to be, the more likely they are to engage and complete the application process.

#### **4. Generation Z**

According to the theory of Strauss & Howe (1991), all individuals born in a 20-year period are part of a new generation. In addition to age, these people also share a common position in history (which involves the same historical events and important social trends during the period in which they are at the same stage of life), being strongly influenced by the eras in which they lived their childhood and young adulthood. They also tend to share certain common beliefs and behaviors.

Of the four generations that are currently on the labor market, generation Z is the most recently introduced to the labor market (Barbulescu & Vasiluta-Stefanescu, 2021). Although there are different perceptions in specialized literature regarding the period in which generation Z belongs, there are certain studies that place them in the period 1997 - 2013 (Schroth, 2019) or even studies that consider that people from generation Z are those born after the years 2000 (Berkup, 2014). However, many authors in the specialized literature classify them as born after 1995 (Iorgulescu, 2016; Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

But regardless of the period, members of this generation are described as true digital natives: from an early age, they had access to the Internet, social networks and mobile devices (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). They are people whose lives are strongly influenced by technology (Prensky, 2001), being born or growing up during the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which involves advanced technological processes such as artificial intelligence (De Oliveira & De Barros Neto, 2023).

Because of this, Generation Z uses the latest scientific and technological innovations in their daily lives and for personal development. The main traits of Gen Z include long continuous and extensive use of digital gadgets, communication and social networks in their work and personal lives, being continuously exposed to technology. That is why their perception of artificial intelligence is predominantly positive (Vinichenko et al., 2021; Mogaji et al. 2024).

However, members of this generation are not immune to criticism of AI. According to a study conducted by Chan & Lee in 2023, in an academic context, Gen Z participants, along with their counterparts from other generations, expressed concern about the immoral, unfair, and irresponsible nature of using AI technology, along with concerns about fraud, plagiarism and even copyright issues when using these technologies. There were also concerns that results obtained with GenAI could be of low quality or contain misinformation and opinions that perpetuate or exacerbate social injustices and inequalities. Moreover, there are studies that show that some AI Gen Z members still do not have a clear attitude towards artificial intelligence in their personal and workplace lives, being uncertain about how AI could influence their lives (Fenech et al., 2020; Hogg, 2019).

#### **5. Methodology**

In the methodological process, I opted for the use of sociological investigation, using the questionnaire as a research tool. Although the type of sampling was convenience, I tried to obtain answers from respondents that would ensure as much diversity as possible in accordance with the targeted profile of the target group, respectively on the variables of age, gender, educational status (pupils, students, young employees and unemployed youth). In the data collection process, we used the snowball method, sending the completed questionnaire to close people for completion, who also sent it on. If I noticed a discrepancy between male and female respondents, I asked only male or female respondents to complete my questionnaire. The data collection period extended over a period of two months (February - March 2024), at the end of which we obtained a number of 108 valid responses, aged between 15 - 27 years. Regarding gender distribution, we recorded an even distribution between male (N = 53; m = 49) and female (N = 55, m = 51) individuals.



The tool we used was taken and adapted from research done by Patrick vanEsch and his collaborators in 2021. This tool aims to assess the analysis of the factors that influence candidates' reactions to recruitment with the help of artificial intelligence, being composed of a set of six dimensions. These categories cover aspects related to intention to engage in a job application process that uses artificial intelligence, organizational attractiveness, intrinsic motivation to use AI tools, perceived innovativeness of using AI-based tools, respectively the degree of trust and anxiety felt towards AI. We also used questions regarding the use of social media networks taken from the Barometer of young people in Romania, 2022 edition, carried out by IRES. I mention, however, that we considered the possible impact of the first three most used social networks by young people in Romania (Facebook, Instagram and TikTok).

Through the present research I aim to analyze the factors that can influence the attitude of potential employees towards the use of AI-based technology in the recruitment and selection process. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research question: Are Gen Z youth highly willing to use artificial intelligence in the recruitment and selection process when seeking employment? Also, as a general objective, we had in mind the identification of the degree of readiness of the young generation Z towards the use of artificial intelligence in the recruitment and selection process. In this sense, we have proposed the following specific objectives and hypotheses:

Ob.1: Identify how perception of AI can influence candidates' intention to hire a company that uses AI in the recruitment and selection process.

Ip1.1: There is a directly proportional correlation between the degree of organizational attractiveness and the intention to hire a company that uses AI in the recruitment and selection process.

Ip1.2: There is a directly proportional correlation between intrinsic motivation and intention to hire a company that uses AI in the recruitment and selection process.

Ip1.3: There is a directly proportional correlation between the perception of anticipated innovation and the intention to hire a company that uses AI in the recruitment and selection process.

Ip1.4: There is a directly proportional correlation between the degree of trust in AI and the intention to hire a company that uses AI in the recruitment and selection process.

Ip1.5: There is an inversely proportional correlation between the degree of anxiety about the use of AI and the intention to hire a company that uses AI in the recruitment and selection process.

Ob.2: Checking the influence of social media on the decision of Gen Z candidates to engage in a recruitment and selection process based on artificial intelligence.

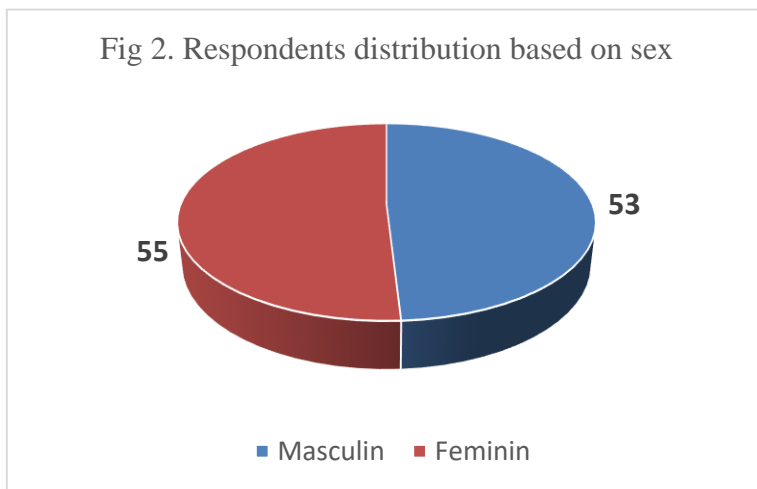
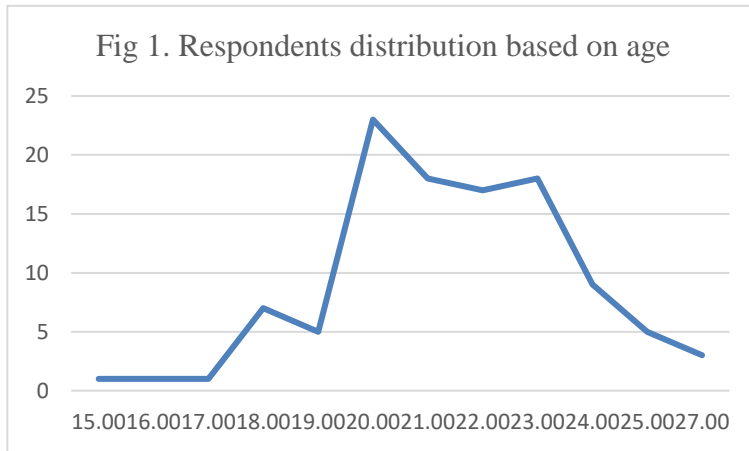
Ip2.1: There is a directly proportional correlation between the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process and the use of the social network Facebook.

Ip2.2: There is a directly proportional correlation between the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process and the use of the social network Instagram.

Ip2.3: There is a directly proportional correlation between the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process and the use of the social network TikTok.

## 6. Result

Following the data collection stage, we obtained information from a total of 108 respondents from generation Z, aged between 15 and 27 years. Following a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, we noticed that there are differences between the shape of the distribution of this variable and the normal distribution ( $D(108) = 0.194$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). Moreover, we noticed that approximately 50% of the respondents are under 21 years of age ( $md = 21$ ) (fig 1). Among them, 55 are female ( $N = 55$ ;  $M = 50.9$ ), while 53 are male ( $N = 53$ ;  $M = 49.1$ ) (fig 2).



Following a frequency analysis, it emerged, according to the mean value, that organizational attractiveness obtained the highest score ( $M = 3.76$ ;  $SD = 0.83$ ). Within this factor, respondents rated most positively the respect they have for organizations using new technologies such as AI ( $M = 3.88$ ;  $SD = 0.81$ ). This aspect suggests that the young generation Z prefer organizations that implement technological innovations. In contrast, the degree of anxiety felt by respondents towards artificial intelligence was the lowest factor ( $M = 2.78$ ;  $SD = 1$ ). Within this dimension, avoiding AI technology because it may appear intimidating obtained the lowest mean value ( $M = 2.53$ ;  $SD = 1.20$ ).

This aspect denotes that young people of this generation, probably due to high access and interaction with technology, do not perceive a high degree of anxiety towards the use of artificial intelligence. Regarding the intention to participate in a recruitment and selection process based on artificial intelligence, the results support the fact that young generation Z are more willing to participate in such a process ( $M = 3.35$ ;  $SD = 1, 06$ ). In fact, they are most willing to accept a job offer after going through the AI-based application process ( $M = 3.5$ ;  $SD = 1.02$ ). However, they are least willing to contact an organization for more information about a job offer if they knew they had to use AI in the recruitment process ( $M = 3.2$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the dimensions and items of the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process, respectively the factors that can influence this intention**

Dimensions and items	N	Average	SD
<b>Organizational attractiveness</b>	108	3.7685	0.83094
I admire organizations that use new technologies like AI.	108	3.78	0.989
Organizations using new technologies like AI inspire me.	108	3.65	0.989
I respect organizations that embrace new technologies like AI.	108	3.88	0.817
<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>	108	3.2741	0.97159
Using AI in the job application process would bring me a personal sense of fulfillment.	108	3.30	1,070
I would feel happy if I used AI technology in applying for a job.	108	3.51	1,055
I would feel independent if I used AI in applying for a job.	108	3.11	1,187
If I were to use AI in my job application, I would feel like I was interacting with the potential employer in an innovative way.	108	3.34	1,169
Applying for a job using AI would increase my confidence in my own abilities.	108	3.11	1,202
<b>Perceived degree of newness to AI</b>	108	3.5949	0.89568
Using AI platforms to apply for jobs is new.	108	3.88	1,021
I would satisfy my curiosity by using AI platforms to apply for jobs.	108	3.53	1,089
Using AI platforms to apply to jobs offers new experiences.	108	3.69	1,036
I feel like I'm exploring new worlds when I use AI platforms to apply to jobs.	108	3.28	1,126
<b>The degree of trust in AI</b>	108	3.2500	1.11385
I could rely on using AI to apply for a job.	108	3.32	1,167
I would trust using AI to apply for a job.	108	3.18	1,183
<b>Anxiety about AI</b>	108	2.7840	1.00292
I hesitate to use AI when applying for a job for fear of making a mistake I can't correct.	108	3.06	1,066
I feel insecure about my ability to use AI technology to apply for a job.	108	2.77	1,165
I've avoided AI technology because it can seem intimidating.	108	2.53	1,203
<b>Intention to participate in a recruitment process</b>	108	3.3500	0.82445
contact a company for more information about a job offer, if you knew you needed to use AI in the recruitment process?	108	3.20	1,066
to submit a job application should you use AI in the application process?	108	3.38	1,030
complete the job application process if you should use AI in the application process?	108	3.31	1,038
receive a job offer from a company that uses AI in the recruitment process?	108	3.35	1,026
accept the job if offered after using AI in the application process?	108	3.50	1,028

Continuing the analyses, we verified, through a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the distribution of the variables related to the intention to participate in a recruitment and selection process that uses a technology based on artificial intelligence, organizational attractiveness, intrinsic motivation to participate in such a recruitment and selection process, perceived degree of innovation, level of trust towards AI and level of anxiety towards AI.

Following the performed analyses, we noticed that intention ( $D(108) = 0.086$ ;  $p = 0.0496$ ), attractiveness ( $D(108) = 0.131$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ), motivation ( $D(108) = 0.090$ ;  $p = 0.031$ ), novelty ( $D(108) = 0.115$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), confidence ( $D(108) = 0.143$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ) and anxiety ( $D(108) = 0.104$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ) are nonnormally distributed.

Thus, in order to achieve the first proposed objective of the study, I continued to check whether there is a correlation between the score of the intention to participate in a recruitment and selection process based on artificial intelligence and the factors that can influence this intention. Considering the abnormal distribution of the variables, we used a type bivariate correlational analysis Spearman. Thus, we noticed that there is a moderate, directly proportional correlation between the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment process and the degree of attractiveness towards organizations that use AI technology ( $r_s(106) = 0.522$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). We also noticed that there is a directly proportional correlation between intention and intrinsic motivation, but whose magnitude is slightly weaker, but still moderate and directly proportional ( $r_s(106) = 0.474$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). Continuing the analysis, we identified a moderate and directly proportional correlation between intention and perceived novelty ( $r_s(106) = 0.533$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). Following a correlational analysis, we identified a moderate, directly proportional correlation between the intention and the trust towards AI ( $r_s(106) = 0.571$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ). In contrast, following a bivariate correlational analysis between intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment process and anxiety towards AI, we observed a weak, inversely proportional correlation ( $r_s(106) = -0.192$ ;  $p = 0.023$ ) (Table 2).

These results coincide with the study conducted by Patrick van Esch and his collaborators in 2021, who noticed links between the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process and the degree of organizational attractiveness, intrinsic motivation, the degree of perceived novelty, trust, respectively anxiety towards AI. They also confirm my hypotheses Ip1.1, Ip1.2, Ip1.3, Ip1.4, and Ip1.5 respectively.

**Table 2: Correlation between the intention to participate in an AI recruitment and selection process and the factors that can influence this intention**

variables	N	m	SD	1
1 The intention	108	3.35	0.824	
2 Attractiveness	108	3,768	0.830	0.522**
3 The motivation	108	3,274	0.971	0.474**
4 The novelty	108	3.5949	0.895	0.533**
5 Confidence	108	3.25	1,113	0.571**
6 Anxiety	108	2,784	1,002	-0.192*

Notes. \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.005$

Next, I wanted to check whether there are statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of the intention to participate in an AI-based recruitment and selection process, respectively the factors that can influence this intention (organizational attractiveness, intrinsic motivation, perceived novelty, trust and anxiety towards AI). Thus, we performed a Mann-Whitney, according to which we did not notice statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of intention ( $U = 1429$ ;  $z = -0.176$ ;  $p = 0.860$ ), attractiveness ( $U = 1292$ ;  $z = -1.031$ ;  $p = 0.302$ ), motivation ( $U = 1402$ ;  $z = -0.342$ ;  $p = 0.732$ ), confidence ( $U = 1266.5$ ;  $z = -1.191$ ;  $p = 0.234$ ) or anxiety ( $U = 1436.5$ ;  $z = -0.130$ ;  $p = 0.897$ ). Instead, we noticed that there are differences between male respondents and female respondents in terms of perceived novelty ( $U = 1133.5$ ;  $z = -2.007$ ;  $p = 0.045$ ), women ( $md = 3.75$ ) perceiving AI as more innovative than their male counterparts ( $md = 3.5$ ) (table 3).

However, the results are not conclusive enough to determine whether these differences are statistically significant.

**Table 3: Mann-Whitney nonparametric test to test whether there are differences between men and women on intention, attractiveness, motivation, novelty, confidence, anxiety**

variables	u	Z	p
1 The intention	1429	-0.176	0.860
2 Attractiveness	1292	-1.031	0.302
3 The motivation	1402	-0.342	0.732
4 The novelty	1133.5	-2.007	0.045
5 Confidence	1266.5	-1,191	0.234
6 Anxiety	1436.5	-0.130	0.897

Following some frequency analyses, we noticed that the respondents of the study use social networks at least twice a week. However, the majority use them daily (N = 82; m = 75.9). Regarding the daily use of the most used social networks among young people (IRES, 2022), there are respondents who claim that they do not regularly use such networks at all, but there are also cases where they are used up to 15 (Instagram, TikTok), respectively 16 hours (Facebook). However, in the case of the Facebook network, 27.8% of respondents do not use this network (N = 30; m = 27.8), while most respondents use it daily for a maximum of one hour. Regarding the TikTok network (N = 79; md = 3), although it is used by almost the same number of respondents as the Facebook network, those who use it, do so in a more frequent way. Instead, the most used social media platform is the Instagram platform (N = 104; md = 3), being unused by only 4 people (N = 4; m = 3.7) (table 4). This data differs from the study carried out in 2022 by IRES, in that in the current research, we observed that the Instagram network is the most popular social network, while in 2022, Facebook was the most used by young people. This change may be due to the fact that the current study only considers young people from the western part of Romania, compared to the IRES study which considered young people from the whole country. Also, this difference can be explained by an evolution in terms of the attractiveness of the Facebook and Instagram networks, the latter becoming more attractive to young people.

**Table 4: Descriptive analyzes related to the use of social networks and social media platforms**

	Social networks	Facebook	Instagram	TikTok
N	108	78	104	79
m	6.41	2.63	3.51	3.77
MD	7	1	3	3
min	2	1	1	1
MAX	7	16	15	15

Following the non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, we noticed that the variables social networks (D (106) = 0.446; p < 0.005), Facebook (D (106) = 0.282; p < 0.005), Instagram (D (106) = 0.219; p < 0.005), TikTok (D (106) = 0.195; p < 0.005) are abnormally distributed (p < 0.005) (table 6). Thus, next, we performed the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test to check for possible differences between male and female respondents in social media use. Following this test, we noticed statistically significant differences between men and women only in terms of the use of the TikTok platform (U = 493.500; z = -2.777; p < 0.005); women (md = 4) using this platform more often than men (md = 2).

To achieve the second objective of the study, we continued the research by conducting a type bivariate correlational analysis Spearman between intention to participate

in an AI-based recruitment and selection process and frequency of social media use. Thus, we observed a directly proportional but weak correlation ( $r_s(106) = 0.210$ ;  $p = 0.014$ ) between the two variables. Continuing the analyses, we did not notice the existence of any statistically significant relationship between the intention and the frequency of use of Facebook, Instagram and TikTok platforms ( $p > 0.05$ ) (table 5). This aspect confirms that the use of smartphones and social networks can positively influence the perception of AI (Vitezić & Perić, 2021). However, the use of a specific network (mainly Instagram, TikTok or Facebook) does not influence this perception.

**Table 5: Correlation between intention to participate in an AI recruitment and selection process and social media usage**

variables	N	m	SD	1
purpose	108	3.35	0.824	
Social networks	108	6.41	1,215	0.210*
Facebook	78	2.63	3,028	-0.094**
Instagram	104	3.51	2,883	0.022**
TikTok	79	3.77	3,072	0.145**

Notes. \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p > 0.05$

## 7. Conclusions

The present study aimed to analyze the perception of Generation Z youth on the use of AI-based technology in the recruitment and selection process. Specifically, I aimed to analyze the factors that can influence the attitude of candidates towards the use of AI-based technology in the recruitment and selection process. The importance of the present research is highlighted by the limited literature that studies candidates' perception of the use of AI in the recruitment process.

In the present research, we analyzed, starting from a scale taken from the specialized literature, the intention of candidates to participate in a recruitment process based on artificial intelligence, the attractiveness towards organizations that use AI, the intrinsic motivation towards the use of tools that are based on artificial intelligence, levels of perceived novelty, trust and anxiety towards AI, along with social media usage.

Thus, we observed a significant correlation between the previously stated factors. Among them, the relationship between intention and trust towards AI recorded the highest magnitude. So, to ensure the participation of Gen Z candidates in an artificial intelligence-based recruitment and selection process, it is important that organizations promote this technology in a way that increases candidate confidence in AI.

Another interesting result of the study is that although the use of social networks may increase the intention of candidates to participate in an AI-based recruitment process, the use of a specific social media platform does not influence this intention. Thus, as long as young people use social media, regardless of which platform they predominantly use, the propensity to participate in a recruitment and selection process that contains AI tools will increase, albeit weakly.

The innovative nature of this study consists in the analysis of Romanian candidates' perceptions of the use of artificial intelligence in the recruitment and selection process, an aspect very little studied in the specialized literature. In addition, the fact that the target group of the study was represented by potential candidates makes a significant contribution to the literature, as such studies typically focus on the recruiter, not the candidate.

The present research has certain limitations, one of which is the relatively small study sample. Another possible limitation would be the fact that the current research has only a quantitative approach in mind, and to obtain in-depth data, it would have been necessary to use a qualitative method as well. Future studies can address these limitations and consider other factors that may influence candidates' perceptions of the use of AI in the recruitment process. Moreover, future research can also use a comparative method between generations,

not just study a specific generation. One can also consider looking at recruiters' perception of candidates' use of AI to prepare for the recruitment and selection process.

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## HIV-AIDS IN ROMANIA, BETWEEN CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCRIMINATION

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**Abstract:** *HIV infection throughout history has undergone a number of definitions, classifications and approaches depending on the available information. The world's first documented case of HIV infection is confirmed in a man from the Leopoldville region of the Belgian Congo. The collected sample containing positive plasma was designated under the code L70, obtained at the beginning of 1959, being frozen and kept in a specialised bank. With small dimensions of the order of microns and with a rather primitive biological structure, the virus is not able to carry out its metabolism independently and needs a host cell that it parasitizes. The infection with HIV and the AIDS disease generated from the beginning a picture characterized by stigmatization, blame and exclusion of the people affected by this disease which ends up being called the cancer that affects people with homosexual behaviour. For over 4 decades, the international scientific community has faced a series of challenges that go beyond medical boundaries, the disease developing community ramifications with a negative impact at the individual and collective psychosocial level. HIV-positive people may face ostracism, rejection and discrimination in various aspects of life, including at work, in the family and in the community. These reactions can negatively affect the emotional health and quality of life of people affected by HIV-AIDS. HIV infection can have a significant impact on interpersonal relationships. Stigma and violation of privacy can lead to social distancing and difficulties in developing and maintaining healthy social relationships within the community.*

**Keywords:** confidentiality, disclosure, blame, stigma, isolation

### 1. Conceptual delimitations, general considerations, brief history

HIV infection throughout history has known a number of definitions, classifications and approaches depending on the information at hand. The world's first documented case of HIV infection was confirmed for a man from the Leopoldville region of the Belgian Congo. The collected sample containing positive plasma was coded L70, obtained at the beginning of 1959, being frozen and kept in a specialised bank. The viral sequences contained in this plasma sample are a starting point for providing information about the evolution of HIV1, as well as for a series of inferences regarding the natural history of the disease (Zhu, 1998). The first publicized case of AIDS was reported in the USA in 1981 among homosexuals. Since not much was known about this condition, it was called the disease of homosexuals. Shortly after researchers established the first descriptions of the disease in adults, the first cases of AIDS in children appeared in the USA, and later on in Africa and Europe. Since the 1960s, signs of illness similar to those of AIDS have been discovered in some residents of Africa who emigrated to the European region (Iftimoaiei, 2004: 8).

In 1982, the name Acquired Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) appeared for the first time, as well as the clinical definition of this pathology. The clinical definition remained valid for a long time.

It wasn't until mid-1982 that scientists realized the disease was also spreading among other populations, such as hemophiliacs<sup>1</sup> and heroin addicts.

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<sup>1</sup> Hemophilia A and B are rare X-linked bleeding disorders and are caused by mutations in the factor VIII (FVIII) and factor IX (FIX) genes. Both factors take part in the intrinsic pathway of blood coagulation and affected individuals may have severe, moderate and mild forms of the disease, defined by low plasma levels of coagulation factors. The prevalence of hemophilia A is 1 in 5000 male live births, and that of hemophilia B is 1 in 30,000 (Franchini, 2012).

In 1983, the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) listed the main risk groups, including partners of people with AIDS, people who inject drugs, people with hemophilia, and people who have recently been to Haiti. As AIDS cases began to appear in the US, the lack of coherent information about HIV infection and its link to AIDS led to panic and stigma surrounding the epidemic. Soon people started talking more and more about a 4-H AIDS club that included homosexuals, hemophiliacs, heroin users, and Haitians, further contributing to the growing stigma (Avert, 2017). In April 1985 in Atlanta, USA, the first international conference on HIV-AIDS was held. More than 3,000 people from 50 countries attended and attempts were being made to establish certain control strategies considering the alarming situation of increasing cases of new infections (Case, 1986). Also in 1985, the first case of HIV-AIDS was reported in Romania. In 1986, after several names, the virus that causes AIDS is definitively called HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus.

In June 1987, the 3rd International AIDS Conference took place in Washington DC reuniting more than 6,300 participants. For the first time, the struggle becomes a political one, during the conference several people protested against the lack of political commitment. Even though by May 1987 more than 20,000 people had died of AIDS, US President Reagan was still very reluctant of making a public statement about the epidemic. The protests were also directed against the US FDA, as experimental treatments were slowed by red tape. Because of the protests, the conference became more closely scrutinized by the media (World Health Organization, 1987). Research from the behavioural and sociological sciences was starting to be increasingly present at conferences. The International AIDS Society (IAS) was established in 1988. With the increase in interest in specialized conferences, the establishment of an association responsible for their organization was required. Scientists from all over the world met and decided to establish an international society governed by an advisory board with Lars O. Kalling as the first president. IAS was initially registered as a non-profit organization in Frankfurt, and in 1994 it was registered as a legal entity in Sweden.

Until November 1989, 13 cases of AIDS had been reported in Romania, but at the beginning of 1990, 1,168 cases were reported to the Ministry of Health, of which 1,094 were children. Thus, in a few weeks of reporting, over half of the pediatric AIDS cases at the European level originated from Romania. Transmission of HIV through the misuse of needles and syringes was the main cause incriminated. This was due to transmission in medical facilities that improperly used parenteral therapy<sup>2</sup> and did not observe the technique and times allocated to the sterilization process. The year 1990 was marked in Romania by the epidemiological explosion of intra-hospital HIV infection, which will bring to light new cases of pediatric HIV and AIDS in the coming years. Starting with 1991, on September 25, Romania ratified the World Health Organization (WHO) convention on the rights of the child and mandatory testing of blood donors was introduced (Popovici, 1991).

During the 9th International AIDS Conference 1993 in Berlin with over 14,000 participants, the importance of combating racism and discrimination is highlighted. Unfortunately, 1993 was a disappointing year in HIV-AIDS research, the results of AZT monotherapy<sup>3</sup> showing no mid- or long-term benefit. The economic impact of the AIDS epidemic is becoming greater and more evident. The CDC changed the definition of AIDS starting in 1993 and introduced three other new entities: pulmonary tuberculosis, recurrent pneumonia and invasive cervical cancer.

Romania signed the Paris declaration in 1994 and the first national anti-AIDS program was implemented in our country, with special funds to be allocated for AZT

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<sup>2</sup> Administration of drugs by injection ( source: paginadenursing.ro ).

<sup>3</sup> AZT, a drug used to delay the development of AIDS in HIV-infected patients. AZT belongs to a group of drugs known as nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs). In 1987, AZT became the first of these drugs to be approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for the purpose of prolonging the lives of AIDS patients (Rogers K.).

treatment starting in 1995, and the WHO reported 4.5 million cases worldwide (Buzducea, 1997, pp. 23-25).

On July 26, 1994, the US Economic and Social Council formally approved the establishment of a joint program created by resolution 1994/24 that aimed to provide a global management model for the response to the HIV epidemic, on monitoring the implementation of policies and strategies to strengthen the capacity of governments to develop specific national HIV-AIDS strategies. The purpose of the resolution was to mobilize the political and social class on a large scale to create a response to HIV-AIDS through a global political commitment by allocating the necessary resources to fight this disease (UNAIDS, 2008, p.29).

Since 1998, triple therapy has been introduced by combining three drugs, and a decrease in viremia<sup>4</sup> below the detectable threshold has been observed by the administration of Amprenavir in children under 4 years of age. In 2002, the balance of HIV infection in the world highlights the fact that women represented 50% of existing cases, and in 2003 there were over 50 million people infected with HIV (Andrioni, 2011, pp.22-23).

The use of combination antiretroviral therapy significantly decreases progression to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and death. Concomitantly with the increase in life expectancy, opportunistic infections decrease, but instead, chronic conditions appear including diseases of internal organs, cancers and endocrine diseases. Since 2003, CDC has recognized the need to better understand the incidence and etiology of medical conditions that occur in the context of HIV treatment and to increase life expectancy for people affected by HIV-AIDS. All this time, mechanisms to limit the transmission of HIV through preventive counselling are required as an integral part of the care of people affected by HIV-AIDS (Vellozzi, 2009).

## 2. Methodology

The article has three main components:

**a) The theoretical section** aims to explain from an evolutionary historical point of view what the HIV infection and the AIDS disease meant and continues to mean with its social ramifications.

**b) The practical, applicative section** aims to analyse the social impact of the disease along with the breach of confidentiality, respectively the disclosure of the HIV seropositivity status at the community or institutional level.

## c) Conclusions

## 3. Research methodology. Data analysis and interpretation

The research was carried out nationally between February 1, 2022 and July 7, 2023 by administering an online questionnaire. All study participants were part of the adult seropositive population in Romania. Criteria such as knowledge of the diagnosis, age of disease onset and the current socio-professional status contributed to shaping the profile of the seropositive population participating in the study. Another particularly important criterion was that of the absolute confidentiality of the beneficiaries. The identification of the beneficiaries was carried out in two stages and represented a real challenge in the investigative approach due to the legislative limitations in the field but also due to the sensitivity of the topic addressed and the confidentiality of information regarding the disease state. The initial research aimed at several dimensions of analysis, comprehensively addressing the HIV-AIDS phenomenon in Romania.

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<sup>4</sup> Viremia below the detectable threshold – with the help of a blood test, the number of viral copies of HIV in the blood of an HIV-positive person is measured. Usually, the higher a person's viral load, the greater their chance of transmitting HIV. Maintaining viremia values below 40 copies makes the viral load undetectable and promotes the maintenance of optimal health (Nall, 2021).

The present study aims at analysing the social dimension of the disease based on the research question: *"What are the effects of disclosing the HIV-AIDS diagnosis in the community of the person affected by this disease?"*

The social dimension *regarding relationships with those around and the community in which HIV-positive people live*. The social representations of the HIV-AIDS phenomenon are more influenced by collective fear, myths and moral values than by scientific knowledge. People tend to rely on subjective and irrational aspects when forming their perception of the disease. Mass media continues to be one of the sources of information for HIV infection among the population. This indicates that media information has a significant impact on people's overall perception and understanding of AIDS. The understanding of AIDS is largely based on myths and popular beliefs, as well as feelings of fear and moral judgment, which can distort the scientific understanding of the disease. This underlines the importance of correct information based on scientific evidence to counteract the negative impact of these misconceived representations (Caputo, Giacchetta & Langher, 2016, p.1171). The concept of stigmatization is a complex phenomenon and is based on the idea of deviation from the values and social norms of a community. The perception and experience of stigma for a person living with HIV-AIDS (PLHIVs) can vary according to membership of different social groups, sexual orientation or drug use (Sayles, 2008, p.748). The stigma associated with HIV infection is present everywhere in society, reflected in culture, in social norms and last but not least in institutions. This stigma is considered to be influenced not only by interactions, behaviours and attitudes at the individual level, but also by political, economic and social aspects of society as a whole (Block, 2009, p.2).

**Table 1: Distribution of PLHIVs participating in the study according to gender (%)**

Subjects / Gender	Male	Female	TOTAL
%	38.46%	61.54%	100%
Abs.	80	128	208

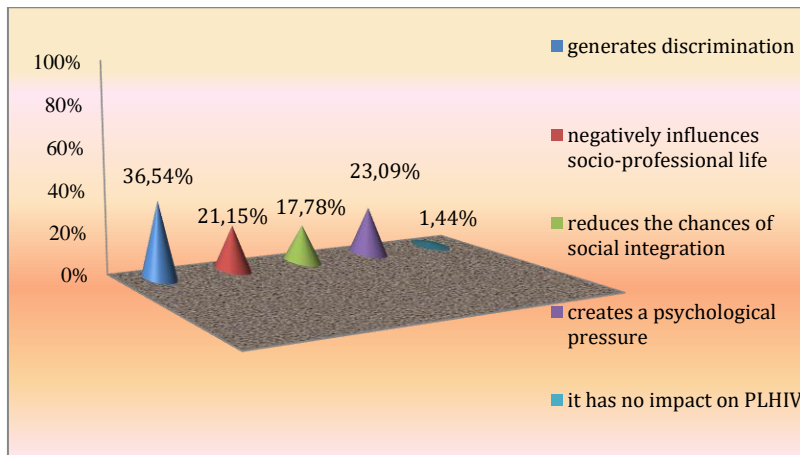
As we can see in the previous table, most people participating in the study are female. Male reluctance to complete the online questionnaire was observed.

**Table 2: Distribution of PLHIVs by age groups after recoding (%)**

Age / Subjects	16-25 years	26-40 years	41 - 55 years	56-70 years	Total
%	0.49%	72.59%	25.96%	0.96%	100%
Abs	1	151	54	2	208

The age distribution of the participating subjects helps us outline the profile of the person affected by HIV-AIDS. More than 72% of them are in the age range of 26-40 years, which may suggest that the subjects are from the HIV cohort.

**Figure 1 PLHIVs privacy violation (%)**



Source: generated by the author

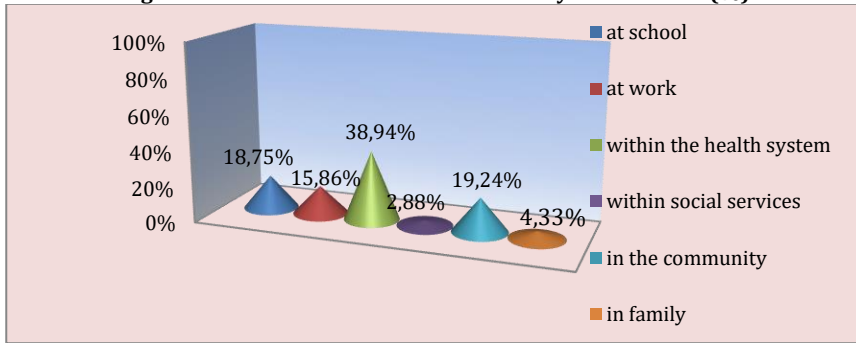
When we talk about the HIV-AIDS phenomenon in a social plane, we inevitably end up addressing situations where PLHIV people's privacy may be violated. Violation of the right to privacy is common among this population. More than 36% of PLHIVs surveyed are of the opinion that once confidentiality is violated, this leads to a series of undesirable situations that ultimately lead to discrimination against people affected by this disease. It should be highlighted that discrimination against people with HIV is illegal in many countries including Romania according to the anti-discrimination legislation. Despite the legislative regulations, discrimination continues to exist in various forms affecting the quality of life of HIV-positive people. Discrimination can be the result of ignorance, fear or stigma associated with HIV infection. Many people still have stereotypes about what HIV-AIDS really means, both in terms of transmission and prevention, which can lead to erroneous collective prejudices. Romania has perpetuated these stereotypes about PLHIV people since the beginning of the pandemic, after the fall of communism when there was a real collective hysteria when people with this condition were diagnosed in the community. It is important to promote education and awareness to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV.

Non-governmental organizations and activists in the field of HIV-AIDS work together to reduce the discrimination of HIV-positive people, through information, HIV testing, appropriate treatment, fighting for the rights of these people.

The fear of violating the confidentiality of the diagnosis creates a psychological pressure for 23% of the study participants. They claim that they feel threatened about their privacy, fearing that confidential information sometimes reaches their community quite easily. PLHIVs are more afraid of the emotional and social reactions of those around them. They wonder how they will be perceived or how their relationship with those around them will change once the HIV diagnosis is revealed. This fear can be exacerbated by others' prejudices about HIV-AIDS. It is important to understand that this fear is the result of social conditions in which the HIV-positive person finds himself.

Emotional and social support, correct information about HIV-AIDS and access to counselling services can help HIV-positive people to manage and overcome this anxiety which, according to PLHIVs, negatively influences aspects of socio-professional integration, 21.15 % among the men being of the opinion that the diagnosis itself creates a barrier that limits them from integrating socially and professionally in contemporary Romanian society. Breach of confidentiality can have a significant impact on the emotional state of the HIV-positive person. This can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, anxiety and depression. Stress and worry about disclosing the diagnosis can affect mental health and general well-being, which can negatively influence social integration.

**Figure 2 Situations in which confidentiality was violated (%)**



Source: generated by the author

Medical services are the most incriminated in terms of violating PLHIV persons' privacy. Almost 39% of the beneficiaries are of the opinion that due to the attitude of the medical staff in treating HIV-positive people, confidentiality may be easily violated. This happens either due to the negligence of the medical personnel, or due to some internal regulations of the hospitals by which effectively, as I mentioned and within the medical dimension of the analysis, PLHIVs end up being tagged with bracelets containing personal data: name, first name, HIV diagnosis and personal code. Through these practices, any person present in the health unit can view the bracelet of the HIV-positive patient, it being sealed on the wrist for the entire duration of hospitalization. Many times PLHIV people confidentiality is violated in health facilities by openly communicating the diagnosis in hospital corridors or in the front office with other people. The existence of an inadequate vocabulary of medical personnel can become stigmatizing for an HIV-positive person especially when the diagnosis is disclosed in a pejorative way: *you, lady with AIDS, let's do the lung x-ray*. Such behaviours must be reported to higher authorities and reported as such. With the consent of an HIV-positive person from the western region of Romania, respecting the confidentiality of personal data, we have presented the example of such a bracelet that seriously violates the confidentiality during PLHIVs' hospitalization both with other patients and with visitors.

**Figure 3 Violation of PLHIVs' confidentiality by applying an identification bracelet**



Source: generated by the author

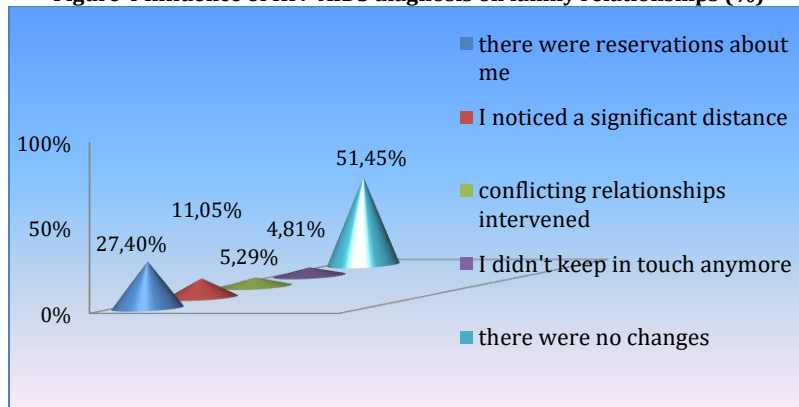
People's people must be informed about how their medical information will be used, stored and protected. HIV-positive people should provide written consent before information is collected and protected. HIV-positive people should provide written consent before information is collected and used within the healthcare system. Access to the medical information of people diagnosed with this disease should be restricted only to medical personnel who are involved in the treatment and management of cases of infection. The identity of people with HIV must be kept confidential in all respects. The education of specialists in the health system regarding the confidentiality of HIV-positive people remains a topical objective. It is important

for PLHIVS to feel safe and trust the health system. By respecting their confidentiality, access to appropriate health care and support is promoted, helping to manage the disease and prevent the spread of HIV.

As regards the violation of confidentiality within the reference community of beneficiaries, this represents a problem encountered in over 19% of the reported cases. In general, the diagnosis within the PLHIVs’ proximal community is disclosed within the circle of friends, in the proximity of the home among neighbours and acquaintances who get to know the diagnosis and even make assumptions based on it. In such situations the subjects experienced avoidant behaviours of those around them. The social marginalization of HIV-positive people further complicates the management and prevention of HIV infection. In such situations, isolation, culpability and social maladjustment of this category of population are reached. School and workplace are two other areas where confidentiality is encountered, all the more so since the configuration of the structure regarding the date of initial HIV-AIDS diagnosis shows us that we have in the analysis a significant number of beneficiaries from the so-called HIV cohort. Schooling in the 2000s for most HIV-positive people was poorly achieved, due to a faulty case management of HIV-positive children integrated into mainstream education.

At the opposite pole, family and social services are the categories where privacy has been the least breached. Families of HIV-positive people generally have a protective attitude out of the desire to provide them with the best medico-social care. Rarely, the existence of the HIV-AIDS diagnosis led to conflicts within the family. Social services are highlighted as the least guilty when we talk about the violation of sprivacy. Nearly 3% of respondents said they had experienced situations where public officials had negligently breached diagnostic confidentiality. Most of the time this was due to the unprofessionalism of some civil servants and the lack of information regarding the social problems caused by HIV -AIDS.

**Figure 4 Influence of HIV-AIDS diagnosis on family relationships (%)**



Source: generated by the author

Like any other chronic medical condition, HIV infection or AIDS may have a negative impact on the relationships between family members, on their dynamics and roles. When one of the parents or their children suffers from this chronic disease, family relationships can undergo changes that can lead to anger or feelings of guilt. In addition, family members may become isolated from each other. However, most of the respondents in a proportion of over 51% are of the opinion that relationships with family members or relatives were not negatively influenced by the existence of a positive HIV diagnosis.

Most of the time, the attitude of the family is protective, especially since most subjects have experienced the disease in all stages of development specific to each age, having been diagnosed in childhood. The situation of the adolescent diagnosed with a chronic disease is

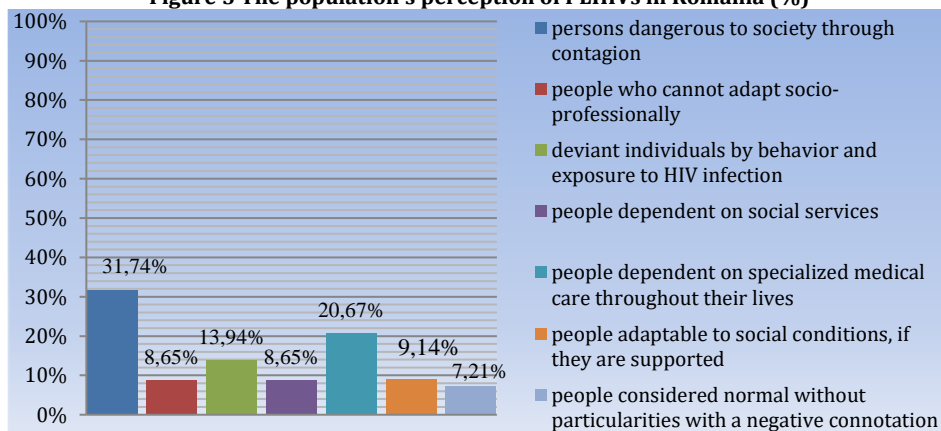


very different from that of a healthy adolescent up to that point who ends up being affected by a serious illness in adolescence. When the illness occurs at the same time as the end of puberty or with the affective dynamics of the process of separation in which adolescents try to find their own identity and separate from their parents, the adolescent may experience a strong sense of guilt. For most PLHIV persons, the disease condition comes to be seen as a punishment in contrast to their desire for independence. There are not rare cases in which PLHIVs experience the disease state under impulse pressure. This may be the result of a variety of factors, including a sense of loss of normality and opportunity at a crucial time of development, difficulty maintaining social relationships and feelings of isolation, as well as the emotional impact of the physical and functional changes caused by the illness.

In general PLHIVs end up receiving adequate support from family, friends and health professionals. This may include counselling, support in managing stress and emotional distress, health education and encouragement to maintain an active social life. It is essential to understand that each person living with HIV is unique and experiences the disease differently. HIV-positive people who receive support from family or loved ones generally have a safe and empathetic environment in which the climate necessary for the proper management of the disease is created. Of course, these ideal situations are not universally valid, more than 27% of the subjects experienced feelings characterized by reluctance, repulsion, hesitation, when the serological status was known within the family. Strained family relationships may be a common and difficult phenomenon at the same time when one of the members suffers from a chronic contagious disease. This is due to the stress and major changes brought about by the disease in both family and individual dynamics. The HIV infection or AIDS disease of a family member brings with it a great negative emotional charge. The family can be under the stress of managing treatment, care and adopting a new lifestyle, which can affect the family routine . These emotional tensions can lead to conflicts between family members. Because of this, there are currently situations in which PLHIV people choose not to reveal their diagnosis within the extended family, the secret being kept in the nuclear family.

For 11% of PLHIVs, finding out the diagnosis within the family materialized in the form of significant distance, in which the people affected by the disease were simply no longer sought out, even on the occasion of their birthdays. In the worst reported situations, we meet more than 5% of the subjects who had to cut off any connection with the nuclear family, leaving home especially in certain cases of domestic violence. These reported situations, although they are not manifested on a large scale within the families of origin of PLHIVs, show us a sad reality of the disease, especially if its management was carried out without prior advice from specialists.

**Figure 5 The population's perception of PLHIVs in Romania (%)**



Source: generated by the author

Stereotypes about HIV-AIDS tend to be based on wrong or outdated ideas about who may be at risk of infection or how the disease is transmitted. In other words, people may have stereotypes or misconceptions about what this disease really means. It is important to try to combat stereotypes and promote education and awareness to ensure a correct and effective approach to the prevention and management of HIV infection and AIDS. More than 31% of PLHIVs are of the opinion that society currently views HIV-positive people as dangerous people for the community due to their high contagiousness. More often than not, the social and cultural impact that the disease has had over the years has caused HIV infection to produce fear in the community. Previous experiences either directly or indirectly through the media can develop fear and anxiety about the possibility of contracting the virus. Many times the media portrays HIV infection in a negative light by exposing situations in which PLHIVs have a deviant behaviour spreading the disease intentionally. Of course, we cannot deny the existence of such cases, but they are in a limited number, in general the large mass of PLHIVs in Romania having responsible behaviours in relation to their disease.

It is important to recognize that fears of HIV infection are normal and should not be ignored. However, the right information and support can be essential to deal with these fears in a healthy way in order to effectively address the prevention and management of HIV infection. Regular testing, use of prevention methods as well as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) can go a long way in reducing fears and maintaining optimal health.

In over 20% of the reported situations, PLHIV persons consider that society continues to regard them as chronic patients who remain dependent on long-term specialized medical care. Thus, it is desired that HIV infection be included in chronic diseases that can be managed in the long term through a multidisciplinary approach with the aim of increasing the quality of life of PLHIVs. In addition to the existence of the 90-90-90 concept (knowledge of the diagnosis, viral suppression, access to ART), there is more and more talk about the existence of a fourth 90 aimed at the quality of life of PLHIVs. Thus, it is desired to move from the medical approach to an approach increasingly focused on the quality of life in the social plane. The development of antiretroviral drugs has contributed decisively to the management of HIV-AIDS. These drugs have succeeded in transforming this disease from a death sentence to a chronic, manageable long-term condition. The availability and administration of antiretroviral therapy has significantly reduced the mortality and morbidity associated with HIV and AIDS, allowing HIV-positive people to live as close to normal as possible. However, the association of this disease with deviant behaviours represents almost 14% of the responses given by PLHIVs. This cultural legacy of negative connotations in which the HIV-positive person is diagnosed as deviant and risky behaviour is rooted in the beginnings of the US pandemic in the 1980s when there were real street riots about blaming minorities or drug addicts for the spread of the disease at the level of society. Criminalizing HIV risk behaviours involves assigning responsibility and legal penalties for behaviours that may facilitate the transmission of the virus. However, there are differing views on the effectiveness of such an approach, and many non-governmental organizations focus on education, prevention and treatment to combat the spread of HIV and reduce the stigma associated with the disease.

Between 7-9% of respondents state that PLHIVs are difficult to integrate from a socio-professional point of view, being dependent on social protection services, and if an attempt is made to integrate them, considerable efforts are needed in this direction.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Although Romania has been trying since the beginning of the 1990s to provide civil society education on HIV-AIDS through information campaigns, they fail to produce significant behavioural changes in the collective mentality. Discrimination against PLHIV people remains one of the most pressing issues that can slow down efforts to prevent and institute HIV-AIDS-specific antiretroviral treatment. There is increasing talk of combating discrimination and stigma in order to create a more just, tolerant and well-informed society about the problems

caused by HIV-AIDS. Discrimination against PLHIVs is often the result of stigma associated with HIV and AIDS. Some people living with HIV may have difficulty accessing appropriate medical services due to fears of discrimination and stigmatization by medical staff. This can lead to poor management of their health and delay or avoidance of specialist treatment. PLHIVs may be discriminated against in relation to work and education due to their serological status. There may be restrictions related to employment, promotion or continuing education, which may negatively affect the financial independence and professional development of these individuals. The frequency of subjects' discrimination was greatly influenced by education, training and social integration. People who attended a form of schooling or wanted to get a job are more exposed to discrimination compared to PLHIV persons who did not follow a form of schooling. Limited interactions within a well-defined social setting may erroneously outline the frequency or absence of discrimination. If we refer to the fact that information reaches the seronegative population quite hard through information campaigns, this lack of information is justifiable.

Associating the disease with deviant behaviours, drug use, prostitution or homosexuality further accentuates discrimination among this category of beneficiaries. Furthermore, the population's perception of PLHIV people remains one with a negative connotation directed mainly towards deviance and increased risk of dangerousness through the contagion of PLHIVs. Behaviours labelled by society as apparently deviant in the case of PLHIV persons further deepen this problem. More often than not, the stigma of the diagnosis mistakenly carries the personal blame of the disease as a punishment for deviant behaviours. Discrimination against this category of people following the disclosure of the diagnosis or breach of confidentiality remains at high levels today, PLHIV people's experiencing this phenomenon to the full. The main causes underlying discrimination are those due to fears related to the disease, insufficient information about the ways of transmission of the disease, along with cultural customs or the dramatic accounts presented by the mass media regarding PLHIVs.

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# ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST: DIMENSIONS, DETERMINANTS, AND OUTCOMES.

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**Abstract:** *Organizational trust is a crucial element in establishing and improving relationships within institutions and in efficiently and effectively attaining their goals. This belief is associated with the individuals' capacity to effectively and skilfully perform their tasks, their confidence in the institution's assistance, the availability of a conducive work environment, and the creation of transparent work relationships where opinions are openly expressed and organizational challenges and functional obstacles are openly discussed, whether with colleagues or supervisors. This study seeks to precisely define the idea of organizational trust, emphasize its various dimensions, and identify the factors that influence it at both the organizational and individual levels. Furthermore, it aims to present the findings about organizational trust. In conclusion, we provide a series of suggestions to improve the level of trust within businesses.*

**Keywords:** organizational trust, trust in colleagues, trust in supervisors, trust in management.

## 1. Opening

The variable of organizational trust has garnered significant attention from researchers and scholars in the realm of social sciences. It serves as the cohesive force that connects relationships and influences interactions inside the organization. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that fostering collaboration plays a pivotal role in the prosperity of any establishment or entity. This is because it cultivates a sense of cooperation, teamwork, and innovation, leading to the attainment of shared objectives. Additionally, it enhances employees' creative aptitude and contributes to their long-term commitment, thereby bolstering organizational loyalty.

## 2. Research Question

Establishing strong relationships inside an organization is contingent upon the presence of trust within the organization. It denotes the shared conviction among members of an organization in the integrity, honesty, and competency of one another. Organizational trust is cultivated via ongoing encounters and shared experiences that strengthen relationships between individuals and foster teamwork. Organizational trust is crucial for enhancing organizational processes, boosting overall performance, minimizing the need for excessive management, and fostering pleasant interaction among individuals. Environments characterized by trust foster a culture where employees feel comfortable sharing information in a candid and transparent manner, facilitating prompt and efficient decision-making.

On the other hand, if there is no trust within an organization, it can harm relationships between employees and create major problems for the organization's stability. In an environment characterized by a lack of trust, individuals tend to adopt defensive habits, which impede creativity and innovation and result in a slower progress towards achieving goals. Hence, this study aims to precisely elucidate the notion of organizational trust, its factors at both the organizational and human levels, and its resulting effects. Furthermore, it seeks to provide an avenue for scholars to further explore this topic in greater detail. The primary inquiry revolves around the factors that influence and the consequences that arise from trust within an organization. Consequently, the subsequent sub-questions arise:

- What factors contribute to the establishment of trust inside an organization?

- What are the consequences of organizational trust?

### **3. Learning Goals:**

- Elucidate the notion of trust in the context of organizations.
- Elucidate the specific aspects or components that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of trust within an organization.
- Emphasize the significance of individual factors such as age, educational attainment, and gender in influencing organizational trust.
- Emphasize the significance of organizational factors in influencing organizational trust.
- Outline the results of organizational trust.

### **4. Concept of Organizational Trust:**

There are various definitions that have addressed the term organizational trust, which have differed according to the approach and aspects taken by their writers. Psychology considers it a state based on optimistic expectations of the other party's intentions, while economics regards it as a positive anticipation that the business partner would act fairly. From a social perspective, academics have diverged in establishing a terminological definition of organizational trust. Some have concentrated on the parties participating in this process, some on characterizing the encouraging environment, and some have tried to integrate the prior psychological and economic views to come up with a more comprehensive definition. Here, we will discuss many definitions, highlighting the areas they focused on and the ones they neglected.

Abdul Nasser Taha (2023: 859) defines it as "expectations, beliefs, and positive feelings held by the individual towards supervisors, colleagues, and top management in their organizations." From this definition, we notice that organizational trust consists of preconceived opinions and beliefs the person holds about what will happen in the future, in addition to positive feelings that express happiness, satisfaction, and gratitude. The definition further clarifies the people engaged in this trust: trust in coworkers, trust in the supervisor, and trust in the management. This is corroborated by Gulden & Duygulu (2018: 164), who describe it as "a three-dimensional construct: first, a person is defenseless against the actions of colleagues whose behaviors they cannot control; second, trust in the goals and actions of the manager; and third, adopting the behaviors of the organization without question."

KARS1 & INANDI (2018: 148) state that "organizational characteristics form organizational trust and guide the behavior of its members towards a specific goal. It also creates a safe atmosphere free from fear of punishment, in addition to the credibility of the organization as perceived by its members, based on the belief that the organization will act in favor of individuals, along with positive expectations about the intentions and attitudes of other group members." This definition highlights that a work environment creates organizational trust characterized by credibility and positive expectations towards colleagues or the organization as a whole.

Sirir Al-Huritsi and Rabhi (2020: 267) define it as "the expectations of the person placing trust that the trusted person (colleagues, supervisors, top management) will perform certain desirable behaviors." This definition clarifies the parties involved in the process of organizational trust: colleagues, supervisors, and management, but it does not specify the types of behaviors everyone desires.

Finally, the operational definition of organizational trust proposed in this study indicates that:

"Organizational trust is the mutual positive expectations of employees regarding the intentions and actions of their colleagues at work, the competence and fairness of their supervisor at work, and the support and care for their interests by their organization's management."

## **5. Dimensions of Organizational Trust:**

Colleague trust is based on optimistic beliefs about the intentions and actions of coworkers, highlighting the interdependence on ideas, information, and assistance in situations where there is commitment and shared ideals.

Supervisor trust involves having optimistic beliefs about the justice and competence of leaders, as well as ensuring that employees receive adequate support, recognition, and responsibilities within a well-functioning communication system.

Trust in management is a measure of employees' optimistic beliefs about organizational leaders. It centers on the leaders' ability to provide support, fair treatment, and commitment to achieving strategic goals. This is achieved through a flexible structure that successfully allocates responsibility.

5.1. Trust in Colleagues:  
Bajaj and Ramila (2020: 307) define it as "mutual cooperation relationships and a degree of mutual dependence, sharing ideas, information, and communications among employees, contributing to achieving the organization's goals." This definition focuses on open communications between colleagues at work and their positive impact on the organization.

Sirir Al-Huritsi (2017: 31) defines it as "mutual cooperative relationships between employees, sharing ideas and information, and this trust is gained under certain characteristics and qualities that make individuals worthy of each other's trust." In this definition, it is added that employees in the organization must possess certain qualities to earn the trust of their colleagues, including commitment to work, values and principles, concern for the colleague's interests, and assisting other colleagues. This fits with the description by Bouden and Zaabit (2021: 212), who characterize trust in colleagues as "a positive inclination among employees in terms of sharing information and adopting an open communication system."

Hazershi, Jaalaab, and Droum (2021: 65) define organizational trust as "the trust organization members have in each other through cooperative relationships and open communications among all individuals, particularly depending on shared relationships and freely discussing work problems and difficulties." This definition agrees with previous ones in that organizational trust involves open and honest relationships among individuals within the organization, where they feel comfortable and confident to discuss work problems and express their opinions freely without fear of criticism.

Bourzak and Shanouf (2020: 100) add that trust in colleagues means "the positive expectations an employee has regarding the intentions of their other colleagues, through mutual dependence, information sharing, and open communications among all parties, and it is gained under conditions such as commitment to work, values, and concern for colleagues' interests." An employee expects that their colleagues have good intentions towards them, creating good communication that leads to establishing close relationships between the individual and the team and, consequently, job engagement.

From the previous definitions, an operational definition of confidence in coworkers may be established as:

"The positive expectations of employees regarding the intentions and behaviors of their colleagues at work and a degree of mutual dependence on ideas and information under conditions of commitment, appreciation, values, and receiving adequate support and assistance from them."

### **5.2. Trust in Supervisors**

Bajaj and Ramila (2020: 308) define trust in the supervisor as "the positive expectations subordinates have towards their superiors at work, based on mutual relationships, trusting that the leadership does not exploit them but ensures their rights." The researchers clarify that this dimension is based on providing the necessary support to subordinates and ensuring their rights, thereby enhancing trust and achieving work goals more effectively. Additionally, confidence in the supervisor allows subordinates to feel safe.

Masnoua and Qaidar Al-Wahid (2021: 453) define organizational trust in the leader as "the subordinates' readiness to perform tasks requested by the leader without knowing the outcomes of these tasks, based on their positive expectations, reflecting the individuals' perception of the leader's benevolence." From this definition, we find that the subordinate trusts their supervisor to the extent that they believe the supervisor will not exploit them, even if given the opportunity. This is backed by Suleiman Tish Tish and Ramadan (2021: 91), who characterize it as "the subordinates' perception that the supervisor is honest, has the necessary and useful competence, and exhibits related behaviors."

Sirir Al-Huritsi and Rabhi (2020: 268) add that employees trust the supervisor when they have a "effective communication system with them, allow participation, delegate responsibilities, and are confident that tasks will be performed appropriately." They emphasize the necessity for supervisors to provide suitable conditions that enable employees to trust their decisions and actions. This definition underlines that trust must be mutual between the supervisor and the subordinate. The supervisor distributed tasks, certain that they would be completed correctly, and the subordinate trusted that the supervisor's judgments were fair and just.

From the above definitions, an operational definition of trust in the supervisor can be established as: "The positive expectations of employees regarding the fairness and competence of their supervisor at work, ensuring they receive sufficient support and appreciation for their efforts, and being treated as responsible individuals within an effective and open communication system."

### **5.3. Trust in Management**

Khalil and Mamri (2021: 38) indicate in their article that trust in management symbolizes "information sharing, participation in organizational decision-making, participation in planning and delegation of authority, and feeling comfortable with the overall decisions that the organization may take." Management with a clear strategy, following a fair organizational policy, meeting the subordinates' needs, and earning their trust are essential.

Bouden and Zaabit (2021: 212) add that "the feeling among organization members that their interests are considered and given priority as much as the organization's goals drives them to sacrifice and prioritize the organization's interests over their own." Here, the subordinates feel a sense of belonging and loyalty to the organization based on its treatment of them, trusting that its decisions are always in their best interest.

Balfar and Beqadir (2022: 712) state that trust in management is "a source of competitive advantage and one of the components of organizational social capital. When there is organizational trust, the individual is accepted within the organizational social structure." This definition emphasizes that the trust workers place in management makes them feel comfortable and secure, increasing their productivity and improving the quality of their work. High social capital means employees have a sense of belonging and strive hard to elevate their firm.

Masnoua and Qaidar Al-Wahid (2021: 453) offer another perspective on trust in management, defining it as "perceived organizational support." This reflects the organization's concern for its subordinates by helping them, treating them well, and listening attentively to their concerns, creating feelings of organizational commitment and supporting the organization's goals. They further note that trust in management and the feeling of its support inspire employees to focus on strengthening their abilities, whether through formal or informal training.

From these concepts, an operational definition of trust in management can be established as: "The positive expectations of employees towards management, such as receiving sufficient support, appreciation, fair treatment, and adherence to a clear work plan that aligns them with the organization's vision and strategies through a flexible organizational structure based on delegation of authority".



## **6. Determinants of Organizational Trust**

Most research agree that the factors of organizational trust are split into individual and organizational variables.

### **6.1 Individual Determinants:**

Organizational trust is influenced by individual factors like gender, age, seniority, and educational qualification. Gender has mixed impacts, with some studies finding no significant differences. Age and seniority have varying effects, favouring older employees and those with specific tenure. Educational qualification has minimal impact on trust perceptions. These factors contribute to the complex dynamics of trust within organizations.

#### **6.1.1. Gender**

Through reviewing several studies, it has been established that the impact of gender on organizational trust varies from one study to another. For example, a study by Al-Hashimi, Bajaj, and Lamour (2020: 318) on the impact of organizational trust on employee retention in small and medium-sized enterprises (a field study of some insurance companies in Laghouat) started from the hypothesis that there are statistically significant differences in respondents' answers regarding organizational trust and employee retention attributed to gender at a significance level of 0.05. They observed that "there are no statistically significant differences as the averages of the answers of females and males were similar" (Bajaj & Lamour, 2020: 318).

Regarding foreign studies that addressed the statistical disparities related to the gender variable, Ming-Chuan, Qiang, Sang-Bing, and Yi (2018: 158) conducted an empirical study on organizational trust, the employee-organization connection, and creativity from a social perspective. They determined that "there are no statistically significant differences in organizational trust attributed to gender, as the value of (t) was (0.016)," which is a result near to zero.

However, studies that identified statistically significant differences relating the gender variable include research by Suleiman Tish Tish and Ramadan (2021: 97). This study focused on the attitudes of Algerian university professors towards organizational trust and found that "there are statistically significant differences regarding the gender variable in favor of males, as the value of (T) was (2.347) and the significance was (0.020), with the strongest inclination towards trust in the supervisor, with an average of 3.388."

#### **6.1.2. Age**

Regarding the age variable, several studies, such as the study by Bajaj and Ramila (2020: 318) on the impact of organizational trust on employee retention in small and medium-sized enterprises (a field study of some insurance companies in Laghouat), found that "there are no statistically significant differences in respondents' answers regarding organizational trust and employee retention attributed to age at a significance level of 0.05."

In contrast, the study by Ming-Chuan, Qiang, Sang-Bing, and Yi (2018: 8) discovered statistically significant variations regarding organizational trust attributed to age, with a significance value of (0.004), which is smaller than (0.05). This finding is verified by Suleiman Tish Tish and Ramadan (2021: 99), who discovered that "there are statistically significant differences regarding the age variable in favour of those aged 50 years and above."

#### **6.1.3. Seniority**

In a study conducted by Bajaj and Ramila (2020: 321), they hypothesized that "there are no statistically significant differences in respondents' answers regarding organizational trust and employee retention attributed to years of service at a significance level of 0.05." This hypothesis was confirmed because the values of (sig) were greater than the significance level.

However, Hazershi, Jaalaab, and Droum (2021: 75) found that there are statistically significant differences in the dimension of trust in subordinates among sample members with professional experience of (11 to 20 years) and (more than 31 years), and among sample members (21 to 30 years), in favor of the (21 to 30 years) sample. There are also significant disparities in the dimension of trust in colleagues in favor of sample members (21 to 30 years) and significant differences in the dimension of trust in the organization in favor of sample members (11 to 20 years). This finding coincides with the study by Suleiman Tish Tish and Ramadan (2021: 100), which indicated statistically significant differences regarding the seniority variable in favor of individuals with 6 to 10 years of experience.

#### **6.1.4. Educational Qualification:**

In their study on measuring the level of psychological empowerment and its impact on organizational trust from the perspective of employees of the Central Directorate of Electricity and Gas Distribution in Djelfa, Hazershi, Jaalaab, and Droum (2021: 73) hypothesized that "there are no statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05 in the perception of the study variables attributed to educational level." This hypothesis was confirmed by the low calculated (t) value and a p-value greater than the significance level, with the significance level for trust in subordinates at (0.072), trust in colleagues at (0.672), and trust in the organization at (0.083). This was explained by the similar educational level inside the firm, where 85% of the staff held a high school graduation.

#### **6.2. Organizational Determinants:**

Trust in the workplace is shaped by several factors, including organizational culture, mutual trust sharing, administrative empowerment, fairness, and transformational leadership. Comprehending and controlling these characteristics is crucial for cultivating a trustworthy atmosphere.

##### **6.2.1. Organizational Culture:**

Many researches have discovered a substantial association between corporate culture and organizational trust. For instance, Hazershi (2008: 11) conducted a study titled "Organizational Culture and Its Relationship to Organizational Trust Among Employees of Local Communities in Djelfa." He started with the hypothesis that "there is no statistically significant relationship between organizational culture and organizational trust." His study used organizational values, organizational beliefs, physical structures, rituals, and ceremonies as dimensions of organizational culture, and trust in colleagues, trust in supervisors, and trust in management as dimensions of organizational trust. The correlation coefficient was (0.674) at a significance level of (0.00), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, suggesting a relationship between organizational culture and organizational trust.

Delahoum and Baghdad (2018: 93) also underlined that "the organizational culture directly affects individual behavior, relying on the principles of human relations such as delegation of authority, which increases employee trust, leading to higher engagement and performance levels."

##### **6.2.2. Administrative Empowerment:**

In his study on "The Impact of Empowerment Practices on Organizational Trust," Yusuf Madouki confirmed that administrative empowerment gives individuals the freedom to take responsibility for the actions they will undertake, unleashing their potential and capabilities, which cannot be utilized under bureaucratic management. His study focused on three empowerment practices: delegation of authority, training, and motivation. Regarding the relationship between empowerment and organizational trust, Madouki (2022: 117) stated that "a manager who delegates more authority to subordinates and reduces control

mechanisms makes them feel administratively empowered, which decreases distrust in the manager." He found a statistically significant impact of empowerment practices on organizational trust, with a correlation coefficient of 0.80, proving that administrative empowerment practices contribute to providing and enhancing trust.

### **6.2.3. Organizational Justice:**

Organizational justice is one of the characteristics determining organizational trust. "When an employee feels fairness from the manager, they develop a sense of organizational trust and belonging to the organization" (Rabie and Saida, 2022: 135). Rabie and Saida started their study on organizational justice and its relationship to organizational trust among employees at Algeria Telecom with the hypothesis that the independent variables represented by the dimensions of organizational justice (distribution, procedures, and interactions) have a significant impact on organizational trust among employees of Algeria Telecom. They observed a favorable association between the aspects of organizational justice and organizational trust. Organizational trust is positively influenced first by procedural justice, then by interactional justice, and finally by distributive justice. An employee has greater trust in the organization when the procedures used to determine work outcomes are fair to everyone, followed by interactional justice, which depends on the quality of interactions with the employee, and lastly, distributive justice, where trust is built when employees find that their work outcomes are evaluated based on equality.

### **6.2.4 Transformational Leadership**

In a study by Alali and Saous (2021: 517) on the function of transformational leadership in strengthening organizational trust, they postulated that the characteristics of transformational leadership have a substantial impact on organizational trust. They employed the following dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. They observed a favorable association between transformative leadership in all its dimensions and organizational trust. A leader obtains the trust of subordinates not just via charm but also by encouraging them, elevating their morale, assisting them to develop and create, and addressing their needs while creating possibilities for additional learning. These are behavioral patterns that subordinates can see and trust.

### **6.2.5. Administrative Corruption**

Abu Al-Maati Ghuneim (2018: 232) conducted a study on "The Impact of Administrative Corruption on the Level of Organizational Trust and Job Involvement in Government Departments in Saudi Arabia." He started from the hypothesis that "there is no significant impact of administrative corruption on the level of organizational trust in government departments in Saudi Arabia." He pointed out that administrative corruption refers to the use of public authority for personal gain. The study indicated a strong impact of administrative corruption on the level of organizational trust among colleagues, with an R2 value of 81.2, indicating a high degree of this impact. Similarly, the R2 value for trust in supervisors was 79.5%, and for trust in management, it was 97.7%.

## **7. Results of organizational trust**

Having trust in the organization greatly boosts creativity, especially in the interactions between employees and supervisors, which in turn promotes inventive results. Knowledge sharing flourishes in an environment where trust is present, enabling efficient interchange of knowledge and enhancing organizational performance. Trust is a critical factor in keeping employees in a company for a longer period of time, as there is a positive correlation between higher levels of trust and longer tenure. In contrast, a lack of trust inside an organization results in a sense of detachment, which in turn leads to disengagement and below-average results. Furthermore, trust plays a crucial role in Total Quality Management

(TQM), since it is closely associated with the successful implementation of TQM when there is trust in supervisors and management. Trust in the organization is strongly correlated with organizational loyalty, fostering cooperative connections and favorable sentiments among employees.

### **7.1. Organizational Creativity**

Organizational creativity entails adopting a fresh viewpoint on organizational issues and phenomena by considering all components, starting from the individual and the work, and extending to the organization's environment and the broader surroundings. This approach stimulates the creation of novel outputs. In their study on the impact of organizational trust on fostering creativity in small and medium-sized enterprises, the researchers posited that there exists a statistically significant correlation between various dimensions of organizational trust (trust in colleagues, trust in supervisors, trust in the organization) and the enhancement of creativity among employees at Alfo Food Café Aroma in Algeria. The findings revealed a strong association between trust in supervisors and the organization, and the variable of creative behavior. This can be due to the increasing recognition among firms of the significance of contemporary leadership and employees' belief in the efficacy of the company's implemented policies. Nevertheless, the presence of organizational trust in colleagues did not have a statistically significant impact on creative behavior. This can be attributed to the lack of initiatives aimed at fostering cooperation inside the organization.

### **7.2. Dissemination of Knowledge**

The process of altering or advancing organizational behavior depends on the exchange and transmission of knowledge from the originator to the receiver, since the circulation of knowledge develops new knowledge that enhances intellectual capital through investment in human capital (Shuwaikhi and Rawaski, 2018: 400). The significance of trust is emphasized, as it facilitates human interactions characterized by cooperation and the unhindered sharing of knowledge, leading to the enhancement and advancement of organizational performance. According to a study conducted by Al-Swai'i (2020: 76), trust based on openness has a substantial impact on information sharing among employees. The relevance, actual sharing, and effectiveness of information sharing were all strongly evident, with an overall average score of 4.1333 and a relative weight of 82.67%. Organizational trust fosters a transparent atmosphere that facilitates the exchange and dissemination of knowledge.

In contrast, a separate study conducted by Ismail Shuwaikhi and Khaled Rawaski (2018: 398) examined the influence of trust between partners on knowledge sharing in joint ventures. The study hypothesized that there is no statistically significant correlation between trust between partners and knowledge sharing in terms of knowledge transfer and knowledge acquisition. The researchers confirmed this hypothesis, concluding that organizational trust is not a prerequisite for knowledge sharing.

### **7.3. Employee Retention**

Employee retention refers to the efforts made by employers to provide a supportive work environment that meets the diverse needs of employees, thereby increasing their satisfaction and loyalty to the firm, while also decreasing the expenses associated with hiring and training new employees (Bajaj and Ramila, 2020: 309). Hence, firms should use administrative methods that bolster trust at different levels in order to keep their staff. The study conducted by Al-Hashimi Bajaj and Ramila Lamour examined the influence of organizational trust on employee retention in small and medium-sized enterprises. Specifically, they focused on several insurance companies in Laghouat. The findings of the study revealed a direct and positive relationship between organizational trust and employee

retention. This means that as organizational trust levels increase, so does the likelihood of employees staying with the company.

#### **7.4 .Organizational Alienation**

Refers to the feeling of isolation and detachment experienced by individuals within an organization. Multiple studies suggest that a lack of trust inside an organization has a detrimental effect on both employee performance and satisfaction. This can lead to a sense of alienation, which is characterized by an inability to effectively communicate and a disconnection from the work environment, ultimately resulting in bad outcomes. Sirir Al-Huritsi and Karima Rabehi conducted a study on the influence of organizational trust dimensions on organizational alienation. They discovered a negative correlation between organizational trust dimensions and organizational alienation. The study found that the computed (t) value for trust in colleagues was -6.61, for trust in supervisors it was -8.84, and for trust in management it was -9.82 (Sirir Al-Huritsi and Rabehi, 2020: 279).

#### **7.5 Total Quality Management (TQM)**

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a comprehensive management system that focuses on ensuring customer satisfaction. It emphasizes the importance of not only material resources but also social resources, with organizational trust being a key element. In a study conducted by Al-Saadi, Al-Shammari, and Al-Karaawi, the researchers examined the correlation between organizational trust and Total Quality Management (TQM) in higher education. They formulated the primary hypothesis that "organizational trust, as measured by its various dimensions (trust in supervisors, trust in colleagues, trust in management), has a significant relationship with TQM." The researchers arrived at the following conclusions:

The relationship between trust in coworkers and TQM is fairly positive, with a correlation coefficient of 0.51. The lack of cooperation with colleagues was attributed to the absence of knowledge generation, which in turn hampers Total Quality Management (TQM).

The relationship between trust in supervisors and TQM is highly favorable, with a correlation coefficient of 0.94. The supervisors' fair and professional interactions with employees elucidated this.

Trust in management and TQM exhibit a robust positive link, with a correlation coefficient of 0.95. The management's dedication to honoring employees' viewpoints and promoting Total Quality Management (TQM) was the reason behind this.

#### **7.6. Loyalty to the Organization**

In a highly competitive and open market, human capital has become the only way to guarantee a competitive edge. Hence, it is imperative for institutions to prioritize their human resources, cultivating a sense of trust among employees, their superiors, and management in order to generate favorable attitudes, with organizational loyalty being of utmost significance. A study conducted by Mowafi and Deif (2016: 49) examined the connection between organizational loyalty and organizational trust. The study found that organizational trust, in its different aspects, has a significant influence on organizational loyalty. This is because the organization makes wise decisions that benefit its employees and promotes cooperative relationships between employees and supervisors. As a result, organizational trust is nurtured, leading to an increase in organizational loyalty.

Conversely, certain research has yielded findings that contradict this. The study conducted by Tijani and Boulerbah (2020: 208) demonstrated that the employees of the institution under investigation have a low degree of trust in the organization. Additionally, the study found a modest but favorable statistical correlation between organizational trust and organizational loyalty.

## 8. Conclusion

Ultimately, organizational trust serves as a robust cornerstone for any firm aiming to achieve prosperity and steadfastness. Effective communication is not a discretionary element, but rather a fundamental building block for establishing robust and enduring relationships across all individuals and groups within the corporate setting, including coworkers, supervisors, and management. Although factors such as gender, age, tenure, and educational qualification do not typically have a major influence on establishing trust within an organization, organizational factors such as organizational culture, administrative empowerment, organizational justice, and transformational leadership do play a significant role in providing and improving trust.

Research has shown that organizational trust has significant impacts on various aspects of an organization. Specifically, it plays a vital role in fostering organizational loyalty, promoting information sharing among employees, improving staff retention, and boosting organizational creativity and innovation. Lack of trust inside an organization causes employees to feel disconnected from their institution, which in turn leads to a sense of alienation from the organization.

Based on the information provided above, the following suggestions are put forward:

- Improve transparency by conducting training sessions for employees.
- Establish efficient and transparent communication channels to facilitate the unrestricted and seamless exchange of information.
- Establish unambiguous and mutually accepted criteria to guarantee impartiality and moral principles in every organizational procedure.
- Allocate resources towards implementing mentoring and guidance initiatives that facilitate employees' comprehension of their responsibilities and influence within the organization.

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# NEIGHBORHOOD GANGS IN ALGERIAN CITIES: ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES AND COMMUNICATION DISRUPTIONS

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**Abstract:** *The study aims to understand the phenomenon of neighborhood gangs in Algerian cities by addressing the concept of neighborhood gangs from a sociological perspective. Subsequently it goes beyond the deterrent legal measures to include its sociological, relational, and communicative dimensions. Furthermore, it examines the extent to which the issue of neighborhood gangs is tackled in sociological research that considers the city as a social laboratory for monitoring such negative phenomena. To delve deeper into the phenomenon, we shed light on the environmental determinants and the value disparities that have contributed to its emergence and proliferation in the Algerian cities. Hence it resulted from the urban fabric's failure to keep pace with the social fabric. Additionally, the reasons behind the emergence of neighborhood gang and its fundamentals are primarily value-based and social factors. As a result, exploring the nature of Algerian individual's value patterns, their variations, and conflicts within communities and spaces is an important approach to understand the specificity of the phenomenon and finding practical scientific solutions based on daily life. By reviewing the value patterns of Algerian society and activating them positively, such as respecting neighbors, accepting others, respecting elders, cooperating, and avoiding harm, all of which combat negative phenomena and encourage fruitful communication. Also, it enhances the roles of social development institutions, bridging dialogue and communication among individuals within and outside cities, integrating social considerations into urban plans, and addressing marginalized spaces while providing suitable environmental conditions.*

**Keywords:** Neighborhood gangs, Algerian cities, Communication disruptions, urban communication, the communicative dimensions.

## 1. Introduction

Cities live in a competitive and globalized environment, where the focus lies on their image and shaping positive impressions towards them has become a real challenge. In the face of globalization's ramifications, which call for the elimination of boundaries, cities are demanded to be reimagined and symbolically reshaped. Communication has become central to this formation, as it serves as a symbolic space for constructing meanings and managing symbols. Consequently, cities have transformed into communicative interfaces seeking to harness all urban attraction factors to highlight their urban and cultural identities, amenities, facilities and the sophisticated lifestyle of their inhabitants. They aim to imbue spatial dimensions with artistic, aesthetic, functional, and communicative values.

However, this developmental orientation towards granting cities a marketing communicative language faces several problems and obstacles. These include fierce competition among cities, the domination of certain spatial areas over others, and the emergence of a form of geographical classism based on urban affiliation. Urban residents derive their status from belonging to prestigious and glorious cities, granting them the right to disdain and ridicule others residing in cities lacking urban allure. Conflicts are no longer limited to urban and rural populations but extend to conflicts within cities themselves, between upscale, marginal, and popular neighborhoods and streets. This has created a new more conflict-ridden parities; between rural and urban, peripheral and local, and between central and marginal cities.

Urban discrepancies alone do not solely create these conflicts; rather, the failure of social fabric to keep pace with geographical fabric in terms of constructing and preparing these cities is the most significant factor leading to these imbalances. Architectural constructions often clash with human relationship engineering, and the varied geographical spaces compete with human geography along with its psychological traits, social constraints, and cultural backgrounds. Failure to consider the nature of urban formation and its rapid movement, transferring individuals from different neighborhoods and placing them in new spaces with new standards and adaptive challenges, creates power struggles based on age, gender, status, profession, social roles, cultural affiliations, inclinations and interests. This leads to the emergence of several negative phenomena, ranging from marginalization, exclusion, alliances against the different other, to the formation of alliances and groups seeking to occupy and seize space, resorting to violence against those outside it, known as the phenomenon of gangs, which consist of individuals who engage in violent acts within a specific spatial area, using communication as a means of unity and coercion, employing physical violence or adhering to a communicative code ranging from insults, contempt, scorn, threats, to swearing. They declare their affiliation through a visible identity manifested in group labels that represents its characteristics, personality, dressing styles, behaviors within ethical boundaries, rituals, and the criteria for group membership and punishments for those attempting to threaten its security or disrupting its zone. Consequently, cities have transitioned from fruitful communicative spaces to conflict-based spaces, as described by the researcher Patrice Flichy, “communication and its tools paved the way for war against time and place. (Massit-Folléa, 2001: 178-189.)

Algeria, like other countries, sought to infuse its cities with communicative spirit, adding a humanizing print and attempting to benefit from the diversity and richness of their urban attraction factors as products of various cultural patterns: Carthaginian, Roman, Byzantine, Berber cities, and Islamic Arab cities. However, it faced similar problems. Urban planning and the construction of new cities were accompanied by significant and unbalanced demographic growth, overcrowding with limited facilities, pollution, lack of entertainment venues, environmental crises, scarcity of green spaces, sudden lifestyle changes, and the emergence of slums and gentrification phenomena. Furthermore, cultural, social, and psychological differences among individuals with different affiliations exacerbated social problems such as unemployment and the lack of job opportunities. All these ecological and social factors tore apart the urban and social fabric of Algerian cities, fueling the phenomenon of gangs that infiltrated slums and moved them towards cities. All these constraints make cities facing present and future challenges regarding all forms of violent practices, attempting to disrupt these spaces randomly.

Since it is a deeply rooted and old phenomenon, legal deterrence alone will not succeed in reducing the phenomenon. It requires a sociological analysis that attempts to find its roots, motives of its emergence and ways to overcome it. Furthermore, it needs research on ecological factors associated with the city as a spatial environment that may feed into these phenomena, in addition to the social and psychological factors that encourage youth to engage in such phenomenon and the cultural backgrounds that nourish these motives.

This is what we will try to tackle by delving into the concept of neighborhood gangs, their presence in sociological research that considers the city as a social laboratory for such phenomena, and then examining the ecological and value factors that have contributed to their formation and proliferation in Algerian cities. This is the only way to propose practical solutions based on daily life, originating from the individual's value specificities, rather than providing theoretical solutions and ready-made formulas that overlook reality and claim total knowledge thereof.

## 2. Concept of Neighborhood Gangs: Exploring the Communicative Dimensions

Neighborhood gangs are terminological concepts with dense connotations, contributing to an extensive semantic field where terms like mafia, collective violence, and terrorism are often used interchangeably or as alternatives. However, neighborhood gangs constitute an independent concept with its own criteria, characteristics, and defining features. It also has its own specificities and frameworks that vary depending on the discipline framing this concept, whether it belongs to various legal, criminal, social, or political disciplines. In this context, we will focus on the communicative aspect, which defines neighborhood gangs as a social phenomenon reflecting communicative dysfunctions with oneself, others, and the environment.

The term "neighborhood gangs" is an Arabic word corresponding to the English term "gangs." The concept of neighborhood gangs dates back to researcher Thrasher in 1927, who relied on statistical data, court records, observations, personal documents, and interviews in the city of Chicago. He considered them a group of games that provide an important source of social support during the transitional period between childhood and adolescence, within environments characterized by social and economic marginalization and social chaos. (Guay, 2015: 83-103)

The researcher focused on the age group to which gang members belong and on the motives for joining them, considering them as expressions of belonging and attempts to assert recognition in the face of marginalization challenges. He described this phenomenon as a game, a concept representing a kind of circumvention used by individuals in case of communication blockages, employing strategies and tactics when failing or desiring to circumvent the behavioral norms imposed by higher authorities.

Researcher Gerald Ayl Suttles, in his book titled "The Social Order of the Slum," argues that the emergence of gangs is a communal defense mechanism composed of a group of unruly and undisciplined youth. This group is well-known to all neighborhood residents and families, establishing a network of personal acquaintances in other neighborhoods to increase its fame and control over the area. It is formed through competition and control over zones, with an internal structure and loyalty reinforced by conflict, organized hierarchically with defined roles and a place to produce a new identity. (Guay, 2015: 83-103)

Focusing on the communicative aspect of neighborhood gangs and considering the gang as a primary affiliation group, it competes with and sometimes surpasses the family in importance. It has its own system, structure, roles, and hierarchy. However, it differs from other groups in that the sole binary governing it is blind loyalty to the self and conflict with the other, lacking negotiation, understanding, participation, or dialogue. This gang gains its legitimacy by announcing itself, aiming to be known by everyone, seeking to reinforce its presence and defend its existence through a network of relationships. Its goal is not to achieve material benefits but to assert its recognition within its zone and adjacent zones, making it a defensive mechanism rather than a conscious action of expressing failure in communication.

Researcher Albert Cohen presented gangs as a group consisting of deprived, marginalized, and the youth opposing to the prevalent culture. Those who resort to violent and illegal means to adapt to or create a separate culture. Gang culture consists of shared meanings passed down from generation to generation, including symbols, recognition marks, rules, and values. Gang culture embodies the following dimensions (Fredette, 2014: 289)

– **Symbols and identification marks:** These refer to the visual aspects of this culture, including the group's name using aliases for members or a title representing the gang's character or activity nature, unusual ways of dressing, members' tendency to show off and flaunt whether displaying physical strength or showcasing wealth through wearing jewelry and international brand names on belts or shoes.

– **Creation of a cipher and communicative code specific to the group:** Developing verbal communication strategies like slang and specific speech patterns and a non-verbal

language such as tattoos, gestures, and writing on walls, as well as defining the geographical boundaries of the territory and communication among group members within this spatial domain.

– **Rules and rituals:** These refer to the methods and patterns of thinking and behavior governing the group's life and all the habits passed down from former gangs to the newest members.

Gangs are characterized by defining their purpose, integration methods, membership criteria, rewards system, imposed punishments, and determination of accepted positions that receive welcome and positions that lead to punishment, rejection, expulsion, and ridicule. They follow the law of silence and non-betrayal or treason when one member is captured. They undergo tests to earn trust or prove that the recruit is trustworthy. In both cases, they must demonstrate their proficiency in committing crimes. There is a formal and informal code of conduct to gain status, respect for hierarchy, such as defending the gang's honor, protection from rival gangs. Values of brutality, masculinity, manhood, love of money, and the rejection of mercy are prevalent.

### **3. The City as a Breeding Ground for Neighborhood Gangs**

The Chicago School is considered the real starting point for sociological studies concerning violence and deviance in urban spaces. It addressed the link between civilization, urbanization, migration, social and spatial discrimination, and marginalization, alongside the increase in crime rates in major cities. The study of cities and urban areas began with sociologists regarding Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, William Thomas, and Louis Wirth in the 1930s at the Chicago School. They considered the city a social laboratory and a space for interaction with connotations of disorder, marginalization, integration. Thus, the city became a space for social movement. (Davila, 2008: 237) Along with the researcher Chambart de Law, the Chicago School sought to present an environmental approach, considering that place and region have an impact on the social construction of the city. Social relationships are shaped by environmental determinants, and social practices are framed spatially. The city is a product of power relations, domination, power distribution and decision-making centers that affect how places are furnished, built, its space is distributed and shared. (Davila, 2008: 237)

In an article presented by Robert Ezra Park in 1916, he proposed research on human behavior in the urban environment, serving as a guide for studies on deviance. The interest on the concept of neighborhood gangs in cities emphasizing contextual aspects, the modern perspective of cities, immigrant rates, urban space development, social inequality, subcultural youth and racism. (Davila, 2008: 237)

In 2009, Poulin linked the presumed proliferation of street gangs with the neoliberal transformations of the country and the capitalist economy. The country that sought to manage cities, impose security, and implement governance strategies and conflicts risen between indigenous city dwellers and newcomers. As a result, individuals create their own spaces within what is known as visible minorities to manipulate these policies, inciting riots, violence, and sabotage. In an ethnographic study of youth in Kerala, India, researcher Lukose identified the origins of conflicts over urban space in neoliberal cities, attributing them to the demands of conservative urban residents for strict law enforcement and cleaning such regions from all forms of riots. In contrast, the marginalized groups tried to assert their existence by forming gangs. Meanwhile, the country attempts to compel both groups to coexist together as a way to apply rules of social justice and equitable distribution of spatial areas. Thus, gangs moved from dark, isolated areas and populous neighborhoods to occupy major cities. (González Castillo, 2015: 113)

### **4. Crisis of Neighborhood Gangs in Algerian Cities: Motives for emergence**

Neighborhood gangs are a complex and intertwined phenomenon shaped by several correlative factors and causes. There are several motives and factors that contribute, in one

way or another, to the development and nurturing of the neighborhood gangs phenomenon in Algerian cities. To provide a deeper understanding, we have dissected these factors into environmental and value-based ones, in an attempt to simplify reality and select and choose elements that were impossible to understand in its complete complex form.

### **– Environmental Factors Contributing to Nurturing Neighborhood Gangs in Algerian Cities:**

As mentioned by the Chicago School, the environment plays a role in the proliferation of gang phenomena in cities. Dealing with city planning and its facilities, the lack of consideration for density, balance, and the preservation of social bonds and convergence in orientations creates conflicts. The researcher Pierre Bourdieu carried out studies on urban ecology and how individuals adapt or do not adapt to their environment. The city is a space for dialectical relationships between individuals and places, a mixture of nationalities, not just a material condition in itself because it is connected psychologically, ideologically, and civically, backgrounds which pushes individuals to position themselves like fear of others. (Belguidoum, 2009: 1)

Algerian cities suffer from congestion, imbalance in distribution and density, lack of facilities, and the inclusion of newcomers who bring habits and behavioral patterns compatible with rural life, creating an environment prone to conflict. Gangs are formed as a cumulative process resulting from pressures, psychological, social, and economic imbalances, and practices from society against society itself due to deprivation of the natural right to life. They emerge from poverty, deprivation, lack of legitimate rights, and the rights to comfort, work, and training, and confiscation of youth dreams of a promising future. Accelerated migration of populations to new cities without fully providing facilities, increasing pollution rates, waste proliferation, and lack of transportation create feelings of anger, annoyance, and frustration, generating feelings of anger, annoyance, and frustration, and a sense of failure stemming from external conditions, the vengeful tendency, and the absence of channels for expression.

### **– The City as a Space for Value- based Conflict**

The phenomenon of gangs, as we have seen in the concepts, emerges for value-based reasons and motives such as attempting to gain status, seizing value, struggle for power, and protect oneself from others, all of which are conflicts that may be fueled by value systems defended and prioritized by the Algerian individual who organizes his behaviors and actions based on them. If he fails to impose his values in a project, he uses coercion and violence to impose these values, especially in spatial domains where divergent, variant and conflicting values are mixed, especially since we know that cities and their neighborhoods do not consider this value dimension lies between residents and newcomers. This does not mean that the Algerian value pattern is negative or positive in itself, but rather how to deal with it and employ it correctly or incorrectly is what transform it into a proper value practice or into a argument-based pattern that seeks to proliferate the value-based misconception. Thus, we try to explore some of the value-based imbalances that distracts the relations and leads to negative phenomenon.

### **– Imbalances in societal values and their ambiguity and lack of unity**

It is difficult to speak about a singular value system, as the values within it are a result of several systems of values coexisting and conflicting with each other. This multiplicity of values in the urban space creates the need to belong to a group that shares the same values, while struggling against another group that is distant in terms of values. The report titled "Fifty Years of Development and Perspectives for 2025" emphasized the scarcity of information about the prevailing value system in the Maghreb environment, including Algeria, as they share the same value reference, which exacerbates its complexity and ambiguity. The report also affirmed that the value system among the Maghreb and Arabs, in general, is

marked by varying characteristics, fluctuating between idealized pride and unjustifiable condemnation, as an example, which makes it difficult to interpret uniformly without identifying a coherent trajectory for its evolution over the past half-century. (Rachik, 2004: 9)

Haleem Barkat also states, "The dominant Arab values are mechanisms of defense rather than values of renaissance. (Barkat, 2004: 120)" This encourages the emergence of groups against other groups and fuels the emergence of negative phenomena such as gangs as an expression of collective values more than embodying acts of rioting. Both researchers Klein and Maxson affirm that joining gangs does not primarily serve profit motives but rather signifies cultural symbols that allow them to assert their existence, thereby adding additional meanings to the committed crimes (Hamel, 2015: 18).

**– Oscillation in the Algerian individual's relationship with themselves:**

One can discern the relationship of the Arab and Algerian individual itself through the opinions of many researchers, including Mustafa Hijazi, who asserted that "The Arab individual lived in a crisis with himself, experiencing a sense of inadequacy and loss of self-confidence, due to living in a constant state of threat, lacking a sense of strength and ability to confront, and needing a leader or a magical savior." This sense of inadequacy makes them hostile to democracy, which is fundamentally based on belief in the creativity of the masses. The Arab individual feels ashamed of himself and fears from shame and scandals, having an excessive sensitivity to anything that threatens their external appearance they try to present, experiencing disturbances in their thinking methodology and mental organization in dealing with reality, leading to randomness and poor planning (5. Mustafa Hijazi: *Social Underdevelopment: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Oppressed Human*, 2005: 45-51). The doctor Hicham Cherabi attributes the prevalence of these negative values to the cultural system that praises conformity to others' opinions and distrust in one's own opinions. He learns adherence, discretion and compliance to the authority. The punctual child is the one who obeys, comply and does not ask nor argue. Also, using violence, behaviors of imposing control and mockery in education makes the individual less respectful and thus, he learns valorizing himself through disrespecting others. (Sharabi, 1984: 105)

Moreover, in a survey conducted by Abdul Hafeez Mokadem on the social values of Algerian society, it was found that self-esteem was the second value chosen by the sample vocabulary. It was explained by the nature of social upbringing dominated by indoctrination and control mixed with blame and reproach, and the cultural pattern of Algerian society, which cultivates obedience, subjugation, a sense of inadequacy, reflected in the daily treatment received by individuals in administrations, public facilities, and the street. This leads to a loss of dignity, arbitrariness, and indifference, prompting individuals to compensate for this feeling by focusing on what adds a sense of respect to themselves as a defense mechanism against weakness and destruction. (Makadim: 11)

All of this facilitates the integration of youth into gang culture, which achieves a sense of belonging and appreciation, especially with the culture of contempt experienced in Algerian cities and the denigration of newcomers as disruptive elements. Studies by Decker and Lauristen confirm that a gang provides a space for belonging, creating another space and acceptance that makes individuals more eager to join it. Additionally, the need for respect, appreciation, and the need for friends are among the most motivating factors for individuals to join gangs, along with the need for money and drugs. (Descormiers, 2015: 141)

**– The presence of collective values that promote negative belonging:**

The prevailing values in the Algerian and Arab society in general are hierarchical values, whether within the family, in schools, or in various institutions of society. The value of the individual and their status in Arab culture is primarily determined by factors such as age and gender. This type of values has been termed by Dr. Haleem Barkat as "horizontal and vertical values," which mainly concern the relationships between some social and main

centers, and most of them operate in the light of the nature of power in a unidirectional manner from top to down, based more on obedience and fear than on love and respect. This does not mean that Arabs were submissive, but their rejection of authority was often through violence rather than through discussion, dialogue, and cooperation between conflicting parties. (Barkat, 2004: 128)

The prevailing values in Algerian society are more collective than individualistic, where individuals are treated as members more than independent individuals, and unity with the group and belonging to it reaches a high degree, with allegiance to it surpassing allegiance to the nation. If commitment to group values teaches the individual solidarity and commitment and makes them feel secure and reassured, daily social pressure, which imposes a type of strict conformity, deprives them of much of their freedom, individuality, and independence, and their reliance on themselves, leading to a tendency towards individualism, selfishness, and self-centeredness, sometimes drowning in collective values that do not necessarily mean loyalty to the community and prioritizing public interest over private interest. Loyalty to the tribe outweighs loyalty to the nation, loyalty to the family outweighs loyalty to the tribe, and loyalty to oneself outweighs loyalty to others. This may open the door to forming neighborhood gangs that force individuals to join them or at least comply and conform to a code of conduct that prevents them from moving from one street to another or from place to place without the gangs' permission. Engaging in violence by forcing individuals to commit acts due to the pain they experience. Gang violence takes various forms: physical violence using weapons and physical assault, psychological violence through insults, derogation, contempt, and bullying of the victim. If the individual does not find proper containment methods and a healthy space to apply and practice the existing collective values based on cooperation and collaboration, they may resort to extreme adherence or allow others to practice this extreme exclusion on them by adopting adherence and compliance.

Additionally, individuals experience a split between public behavior based on group compliance and the necessity of submission to avoid punishment or deprivation, and secret behavior based on pleasing oneself and meeting its personal interests. Thus, the Algerian individual grows up within a group that regulates their public behavior based on hypocrisy, compliance, and not expressing their true opinions, within an atmosphere of opportunistic loyalty and affiliation. This loyalty quickly disappears with the disappearance of interests, as a form of evasion and flexibility away from the culture of dialogue and honesty, where the individual incurs the losses of exclusion and marginalization. This may create a sanctification of the group and the necessity of loyalty to it in the individual, leading to a fear of rejection, which may lead them to withdraw and avoid the group and attempt to evade it. The gang is also an unequal mimicry of what the individual experiences in natural situations with their family, at school, and in the street, where everyone tries to impose their rules and conditions on others. This behavior leads them to either comply with the gang's laws and rituals or join it to feel protected and secure or avoid it negatively without feeling the need to resist it or inform the police about it or reject its behaviors.

#### **– The impact of the wrong education of family on engaging in gangs**

According to sociologist Robert Merzonmakiver, "There is nothing in society that surpasses the family in the strength of its social importance. It influences society as a whole in multiple ways, and the echoes of the changes it undergoes reverberate throughout the entire social structure." (Toubtoush, 2011: 159) A study conducted by Thormay et al. in 2003 confirmed that teenagers whose parents have low education levels or who come from single-parent households are more prone to joining gangs in order to seek protection, acceptance, and support. (Kelly, 2015: 126) Returning to Algerian families and the changes they have undergone, such as the rise of nuclear families due to urban migration and separation from extended families, neighbors, and relatives, families have become more oriented towards individualism. This shift is especially evident with women entering the workforce and sharing

responsibilities with their spouses, leading to a focus on nuclear families that allow for independence in housing, decision-making and child-rearing. In this context, a study indicated that 71.3% of Algerian women surveyed stated that they make decisions similar to men or more so in matters related to child-rearing. Additionally, working women have a wider participation in decision-making within the family compared to their non-working counterparts. (Dahmani, 2005/2006: 91) Furthermore, fathers are increasingly adopting the character of modern fathers, relinquishing some of their authority, and showing clear tolerance towards their children's behavior, sometimes even remaining silent about behaviors that deviate from customs and traditions. In their relationships with their children, parents engage in what Helen Klein calls "projective identification," where they seek to rid themselves of everything forbidden and disliked by projecting it onto their children. This allows parents to feel victorious, even if retroactively, by allowing their children to express what they were unable to express when they were children and adolescents. (Setoutah: 98).

### **5. The Impact of Media on the Attraction towards Neighborhood Gangs**

In light of the declining attention and negligence from neighborhood representatives and social development institutions, the media has become a crucial source for youth and teenagers to understand reality, acquire the necessary information and knowledge, shape opinions, determine attitudes, and frame the behavioral patterns. The fact is especially increasing as the direct personal experiences of contemporary individuals regarding reality diminish. The Canadian researcher Judith Dubois asserts that among 95% of individuals claimed that they obtained information about crime from the media. Moreover, the individuals' increasing media dependency in terms of crime issues, coupled with rising social phobia and anxiety, diminishes their resistance to media offerings. As a result, they become more exposed to media manipulation. Media outlets strive to captivate youth by portraying Hollywood fantasies that glorify neighborhood gangs and depicting them as a legendary hero. Their leaders and members are portrayed as charismatic figures with leadership abilities and a higher sense of humanity surpassing ordinary individuals. Also, neighborhood gangs are depicted as mythical forces, saviors of humanity and tools for achieving social justice and equality. Constructing these exciting and attractive models of gang personalities in films and series is an attempt to represent them as a normal familiar phenomenon within societies and cities. Subsequently, youth and teenagers are promoted to emulate and imitate them in real life without full awareness of their implications and harms.

### **6. Conclusion**

Based on the afore mentioned discussion about neighborhood gangs' motives of emergence and characteristics within the Algerian societies, we propose a series of suggestions which do not claim to offer definitive solutions to the problem, but rather encourage thoughtful exploration of a comprehensive scientific and practical avenues to delve deeper into addressing this issue:

- **Redefining the Concept of the City:** Beyond demographic and geographic considerations, re-evaluate the urban landscape including economic activities such as trade and crafts, the local center of power and state institutions, and urban planning...etc. Broaden the definition of the city as a conceptual reality reshaped by multiple functional, aesthetic, political, economic, and social approaches. Hence Incorporating the human dimension in urban planning and distribution helps mitigate any negative phenomena resulting from ecological conditions.
- **Redefining the Concept of Neighborhood Gangs:** Investigate the motives behind their emergence, moving beyond the narrow legal frameworks to explore their roots, values, communication efforts, and the socio-psychological motives that contribute to their emergence. Inevitably, these gangs will be dismantled and combat along with finding ways to exit from this cycle.



- **Reviewing the Negative Value Patterns:** Identifying and mitigating the negative value systems that fuel these malignant cells eroding and infecting the human, social, and cultural fabric of the Algerian cities. Also, addressing the Algerian noble values such as respecting neighborhood and blood relations. Additionally, respecting others especially elders as part of the human culture. Fostering cooperation and solidarity through the desired voluntary communal efforts and combating anyone seeking to harm others.
- **Reviewing our reductionist perceptions about cities,** especially shadow zones and border cities since it is perceived as enclosed spaces representing not only the state sovereignty and territorial integrity but also stand as a protecting barrier that safeguarded the security of people and protect them from the neighboring regions. Also, it is considered a peripheral region compared to central areas (cities and regions located centrally). Subsequently, these areas were lacking the essential living conditions and, thus, border areas become hotspots for gangs attempting to reclaim recognition and rights. It is urged to portray border cities as tourist attractions and transit zones for development, bridges for cooperation and communication across borders. Absolutely, communication is the cornerstone connecting line in any developmental project capable of managing cultural and social differences across border regions within nations. Therefore, it is necessary to respond to current transformations that have created new, more inclusive boundaries that assimilate and integrate rural and urban, global and local, central and marginal dualities."

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## THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN. CASE STUDY

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**Abstract :** *Established by Government Decision on January 2, 1990, the Quality of Life Research Institute (ICCV) is the most important scientific research institution dedicated to quality of life and social policies in Romania and one of the most significant in this field in the world. The Institute is part of the research network of the Romanian Academy and is a member of the "Costin C. Kirițescu" National Institute of Economic Research. The institute carries out prodigious scientific activity in the major research areas of quality of life and social policies and in related research areas: health, education, employment, housing, family life, standard of living, poverty, public services, social development, social economy, being concerned with the analysis of the transition and, in general, of the long-term change of the Romanian society. Quality of Life Research Institute assumes the responsibility of actively contributing to the development of Romanian society, through institutional development and the elaboration of legislation in the social field. The involvement in the development of the strategic framework of public policies in the social field, including in the development of national legislation in the social field, is visible in documents such as the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and Plan for the Promotion of Social Inclusion, (Joint Inclusion Memorandum) – country strategic document for social inclusion, developed by the Government of Romania together with the European Commission, the package of laws on the labour system and labour relations, the law on social assistance and the minimum income, the law on the national social assistance system, the law on education - the chapter on university education.*

**Keywords:** quality of life, children, social policy, poverty, education.

### 1. Introduction

Social policy is, in a modern state, the most sensitive point of politics as a whole. In this field, the ability of a political formation to propose viable solutions for fundamental social needs and problems is proven. In a broader sense, social policy is a set of political concepts and programs intended to maintain, protect and develop the vital sources of society. If this field is overlooked or left to fate, any attempt at development, in whatever field of existence, is absorbed by the density of social problems. Moreover, the existence of a discreet, generous and powerful state of minimum welfare for all individuals is the outcome of the most important "lesson" of modernity.

#### *Motivation for choosing the present theme*

We cannot ignore the difficulties which the welfare state is facing today, which according to most analysts is in a crisis from which it is difficult to foresee. In our country, the current situation is particularly precarious in the field of social policies. The state itself pushes the entrepreneur into the races of a primitive and wild capitalism through an exaggerated, undifferentiated and senseless taxation and through sophisticated bureaucratic obstacles. The income obtained through work has devalued; social protection of disadvantaged social groups is achieved at a ridiculous level and support for local communities is almost non-existent. So, considering what was presented previously, we propose to analyze to what extent institutionalization affects the quality of life of a young person, looking at the social policies used by the special protection system. According to a „dictionary” definition formulated by

Ioan Mărginean (deputy director of ICCV) "social policy is embodied in specific legislative provisions, decisions and administrative regulations, social programs, income transfer (taxes, fees, pensions, allowances, allowances, scholarships etc. within the systems of social origins and social assistance) the financing, production and provision of goods and social services for the population" (Marginean, 1994). "Social policy represents the intervention of the state in the configuration of the social processes characteristic of a certain collectivity, in order to change them in a direction considered by political actors to be desirable. Thus, through own mechanisms of distribution and redistribution of existing resources in the community at a given moment, the achievement of collective well-being is attempted" (Zamfir, 1995).

"Social policy can be understood as the set of regulations, measures, activities undertaken mainly by the state (but possibly also by other interested agents) in order to change the parameters of the social life of a community, in a sense considered desirable at a given time" (Zamfir, 1995).

The British sociologist TH Marshall gives an extended and comprehensive meaning to the concept by formulating the objective of social policy: The essential objective of social policy in the 20th century is to ensure the welfare of citizens (Marshall, 1990). Elena Zamfir (1995) identifies several types of social policy objectives:

1. Promoting public goods: defense, security, urban infrastructure, health, education, culture, science.

2. Protection or social security of segments of the population, which for one reason or another, are in difficulty. It considers two relatively distinct components: the social insurance system and the social assistance system.

3. Social development that formulates types of objectives to ensure certain social conditions, which are considered to be globally important for the community in the process of developing science and culture, the education system, the diffusion of culture, promotion of the family and care child, increasing social solidarity and the spirit of international collaboration, human responsibility, etc.

### **1. The standard of life of the Romania population**

The phenomenon of poverty was and is present in all types of human communities and in all times. The various methods used to measure poverty start from the definition of a line of demarcation between the poorest and the least poor. Individuals or families who benefit from a standard of living located below this demarcation line, conventionally called the poverty line, are considered poor. The phenomenon of poverty is real in any society and produces lasting consequences in the sphere of human development. The phenomenon combines three big problems for the individual, his family and the social intervention needs of the state:

1. the diminishing of the individual's independence in the society of which he is a part and his inability to overcome the respective situation, at which point the state must intervene through public policies to help him get out of the situation;

2. failure to meet the minimum standard of living accepted in the respective society leads to the social exclusion of those persons and increases the risk of falling into poverty;

3. social protection programs must take into account not only the population located below the poverty line, but also the population located in an area of economic precariousness, or socio-economic risk. For the population in the risk area, preventive social protection measures can be taken, so that the probability of their entry into poverty decreases as much as possible.

In absolute poverty, the individual does not have access to the satisfaction of basic needs (the individual cannot feed himself or wear clean clothes, does not have access to a home, etc.). This situation leads the individual and his family to a life of many deprivations.

*Relative poverty* is appreciated in the context of the evolution of the society in which the phenomenon is evaluated. The new poor are the people who used to be able to satisfy

their basic needs, but who, for various reasons, are deprived of access to a socially acceptable way of life. These reasons by which a person and his family can fall into poverty are: long-term unemployment, a serious illness, over-indebtedness, the death of one of the family members, divorce, these are some of the causes that generate poverty (Brémond, J., Geledan,, 1995). The inability to obtain the goods and services fundamental to existence, should lead the authorities to help those individuals materially, financially or through any other social assistance services.

## **2. Children of the state, children of nobody**

The data from National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption (ANPDCA), at the end of 2018, shows that there were 52,783 children in the protection system, of which 17,096 in the residential system and 35,687 in the family system, which includes 17,835 foster carers and 13,133 extended families. The number of employees within the County Directorates is 32,297 people, 34.79% foster carers, 38.80% employed in residential services. The most difficult situation is for children in large foster care centers, where the most abuses take place, but Romania has assumed that by 2020 it will close all these centers. Due to the pandemic, this deadline was not met.

It's a big difference from those 100,000 institutionalized children in the early 90s. Back then, the press was flooded with images of shaved-headed, identically dressed children rocking themselves mechanically with blank stares under the watchful eye of uniformed staff.

The lack of a functional system of socialization and protection for people with disabilities, during the communist period, with their marginalization, turned orphanages in Romania into living examples of a policy of deep discrimination and intolerance. The disastrous results of this policy were revealed to public opinion only after 1989, through a large media campaign led mainly by Western TV stations.

In June 2017, the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism submitted a criminal request to the General Prosecutor's Office regarding the inhumane treatment, during the communist period, of the residents of the hospitals and nursing homes in Cighid, Păstraveni and Sighetul Marmăției, the outcome of which was the death of at least 771 children.

One of the major changes in the protection system is that, since 2018, children under 7 are no longer institutionalized in large centers. Numerous studies have shown that institutionalizing children, especially in the critical developmental age range of 0-6 years, has dramatic effects on their IQ and predisposes them to attachment disorders and multiple other mental health, learning and socialization problems.

Institutionalization itself is a trauma, not knowing what will happen to you, where you will go. Especially now when young people don't know where they will go: the center is closing, do we stay with those we get along well with or with others, with our favorite educators or not, maybe we go to another school? There are so many question marks for children. Chronic stress affects the functioning of the brain, the ability to learn, concentrate, and memorize.

"I had some colleagues in the placement center, we used to be beaten up a lot. I mean physical violence. So, I can't even imagine. They were trying to scream, to defend themselves somehow..., I don't know how to express myself. And the staff kept trying to hit them, kept trying to.. And now I remember when a child screamed very loudly, screamed extremely loudly that he wanted his mother's love... At some point the years passed and everything was established, the kind of shocks, traumas..., some of them started having nightmares... Here was a very sad time for me. I was very moved by the fact that the staff, they were becoming aggressive, that physical violence was applied when they were younger. It was a very shocking thing and they were actually forcing them to take pills. I don't know how to tell you. They were trying to sedate us. Yes, they sedate us with lozenges" (Viorel Iordan, former child in children's homes, now volunteer at the Voice of Abandoned Children).

In a sample of 10 EU member countries (Denmark, France, Great Britain, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania and Poland), there is no clear legal definition of the term of child abandonment. The lack of a clear definition and the ambiguity regarding the aspects that constitute child abandonment, raise challenges for the study and practice of this phenomenon. **"Forced" abandonment**– is the forced taking of the child from the care of the parents/guardians by the social assistance and child protection systems responsible for supervising the good upbringing of the child in the family. For this purpose, in certain cases, social services investigate the upbringing of children in the family and can decide whether it is necessary to take them into foster care.. In some developed societies, these services can decide to take over children under unclear conditions (cases of Finland, Norway, France, Great Britain).

### **3.Ensuring the child for an undetermined period in certain institutions**

We are talking here about that situation when the family does not explicitly make the decision of definitive abandonment. There is a need to clearly distinguish the situation in which such entrustment is made under various pressures generated by life conditions and in which a family clearly expresses its temporality, preserving relations with the child, versus those situations when a family is disinterested of the child and does not maintain emotional and personal relationships with him. These situations, from the experience of the last period in our country, often lead to abandonment. It is a traumatic and quite uncertain situation, which after long periods becomes a quasi-abandonment (semi-abandonment) type. Due to the fact that in the majority of cases, there are no force majeure reasons to stop parents from maintaining the link (even sporadically) with their own child placed in qualified institutions (example: the parent in prison, physical disability, mental illness) negative parental behavior is not can only explain it through his own personality. The common characteristic of parents who abandon their own children is, in addition to a frequent socio-cultural mess, a marked instability and strong immaturity.

In the case of abandonment, the child does not have a series of basic needs satisfied, such as biological needs, safety and affiliation needs, as well as specific needs for physical, mental and social development.

### **4. „Hope and homes for children” Foundation**

As for dropout prevention programs, similar to those for reintegration, they are carried out, with countless efforts, only by NGOs. The Romanian state seems to lack any power to protect its children. They remain just numbers, in some useless statistics.

*"Hope and homes for children" foundation*, a non-profit organization that fundamentally changes the child protection system in Romania.

In 1998, the hope and homes for children foundation started a pioneering program in Romania: closing orphanages where it was estimated that 100,000 abandoned children lived. We knew that the individual care and attention a child receives within a family is priceless. and I also knew that those children in the orphanages received neither attention nor love. They managed to close down 63 orphanages, and that meant more than 6,747 children removed from foster care. Most returned to their own families, some were, and still are, raised by foster carers. Others, the older ones, have taken the first steps towards an independent life: a job, a home, however small, but let it be just theirs.

It has built 116 family-type houses, their aim is to provide an environment as close as possible to that of a family, where children receive a "well done", a "it's okay, try again", a "you're sad and I understand you", a " you are happy and I laugh with you". In other words, some of those things that all children need: love, care, education, emotional support, belonging.

It has kept more than 37,969 children with their families, stopping more children from entering orphanages, giving vulnerable families the support they need to stay together.

It helped 2,140 young people, young people leaving the protection system are often alone and unprepared for an independent life, through the social and professional integration program. For some we provided housing, for others we supported them to become what they wanted: car mechanic, barber, baker, teacher, nurse, teacher, parent.

"If it was said that in affection reside the great successes of mankind, and in the absence of affection its great failures, the statement referred to the fact that the sensitivity of the world begins in childhood, through the family and then asserts itself as the most faithful genius of every man" (Baudelaire).

## 5. Case study

### **Research question:**

How does institutionalization affect the quality of life of young people?

**Case selection:** Case study based on the quality of life of institutionalized youth.

**Data collection and processing:** The data was collected and processed based on the personal experience reported by the subject in question.

The development of children raised outside of a loving and caring family environment is affected on all levels. The lack of attachment ties accentuates the child's insecurity and vulnerability, affecting his self-image, emotional identity, ability to form relationships with others and undermining his personal effectiveness and self-regulation capacity.

Placing children in an institutionalized environment with many other children and staff working in shifts has a long-term effect on their personality. Residential institutions meet the characteristics of the "total institution" as described by Goffman (1961). In his view, the total institution is a place where a large number of people in a similar situation live together, isolated from the rest of society. These institutions are characterized by:

- the interpenetration of some spheres of daily life such as the period of activity, free time and rest: instead of being differentiated, each is carried out in the same place under the control of the same authority and under the same conditions;
- any activity in the daily routine is carried out en masse, with individuals doing everything together, same thing, same time
- the activities of the daily routine are strictly scheduled, taking place in an order prescribed by a system of rules established by the authority of the institution;
- the prescribed activities are aimed at satisfying the institution's official objectives, not the needs of the assisted individuals

DGASPC (Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection) is the institution that has the role of implementing policies and strategies in the field of social assistance regarding the protection of children, families, the elderly and people with disabilities. DGASPC has under their authority the residential institutions that protect children separated from their families. They also have responsibilities regarding children who are victims of violence of any kind, but also children who need special protection measures (due to their separation from their families). These responsibilities are complementary to those of local councils at the level of municipalities, cities and communes.

### **The consequences that an institutionalized youth may suffer, based on the clear and real statements provided by such former beneficiary**

#### ***Children's limited access to the outside world***

*Only during weekend they'd take us out of the center. On Saturdays, they would take us to a boulevard, where some children passed by from time to time, who would gather up anyway by the time we had to leave... They wouldn't keep us outside for very long, 2 hours at most: "hold*

*hands and head back into the dorm" was the phrase that would wipe all the joy from our naive face.*(DC, 20 years, reporting period 2017-2020)

***The equalizing attitude affected*** fundamental identity aspects:

*We were all dressed the same, because the entire wardrobe was purchased from the same store. This aspect caused those around us to label us as "dormitory", due to the identical clothes we wore. This has led me to now do anything, just to know that no one wears what I wear.* (DC, 20 years, reporting period 2013-2017).

***Unpredictability and the reduction of the degree of autonomy:***

*To be able to go out alone you had to be 16 years old. We asked for free tickets, but they didn't always give us those. How they felt like it: if they wanted, they would let you, if they didn't, they didn't. They'd ask us so many details about where we wanted to go. If you turned out late than the time imposed by them, you'd hardly manage to get another ticket that week.* (RM, 21 years, reported period 2017-2021).

***Emotional violence:***

*The words were the most painful, because they can't be forgotten.. This type of violence was most pronounced with one of the foster care assistants I was placed in the care of,, in the country side. They often told me that I'm not good at anything, that I'm the "village fool", and at one point, they made me hit my head against the wall 3 times saying "I'm a fool" (FD, 19 years, reporting period 2010)*

***Discouraging children, minimizing goals, ambitions, systematically destroying self-esteem:***

*"Nothing will be chosen from you. There is no point in taking the national assessment, you will fail anyway. Two years of professional experience is enough for you, after which you can see your way." There were times when I went to the head of the center and told him that I wanted to continue my studies at a College and I expected him to encourage me, but he said: "Are you in college? Look at Student X, you are not at their level". (TD, 20 years, reporting period 2020).*

***Indications of mental disorders as consequences of experiences of violence***

The mistreatment suffered combined with the lack of emotional support led to mental problems.

***Symptoms of depression:*** helplessness, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts and attempts, anger, lack of initiative and motivation: *I had the intention of trying to end my days. I had a bad depression with three suicide attempts. The attempts failed, so I chose to run away from home. I didn't tell anyone what was happening to me because I was taught to internalize any experience.* (SC, 20 years, reported period 2016).

***Negative attributions and expectations*** (negative self-evaluation, lack of trust in people, inevitability of victimization in the future): *Fear of interacting with a stranger, low self-esteem, still work on it. It affected me emotionally...* (DC, 20 years old, reported period 2013-2021).

***Professional and social failure***

*I have managed to overcome life's trials and obstacles, but to tell you the truth, I have a lot of classmates who have dropped out of school since elementary school, and now they don't know what to do to earn a living.* (DC, 20 years, reported period 2019).



## 6. Conclusions

Clothing, food, children's privacy, room arrangements, etc., have all undergone significant changes within the protection system in the last 15 years. Compared to life in mammoth institutions (Bejenaru and Tucker, 2014; Neagu, 2017), but unfortunately, the quality of care, the relationship between adults and children did not change in tandem with structural changes, even though the ratio of staff to children has dropped considerably. Even if staff do not intentionally commit abuse, the mod

functioning of an institution, with all its characteristics (lack of attachment, egalitarian attitudes, impersonal care, personnel changes, lack of stability, stigmatization, etc.) produces serious negative effects on the development of institutionalized persons, influencing all their living domains (Frost, 2011), (Akermann et al., 2012, Groza and McCreery Bunkers, 2017, Spröber-Kolb et al., 2017).

Among the psychological consequences, in addition to feelings of fear, we also mention the feeling of helplessness associated with it, and in the long term, the reliving of traumatic events through flashbacks and nightmares, intrusive memories, avoidance reactions (refusal to talk about certain homework, avoiding close relationships), extremely low self-esteem, lack of emotion regulation, anxiety, irritability and impulsivity. Likewise, the consequences of emotional neglect and violence have led to attachment disorders, difficulties in forming and maintaining long-lasting positive relationships.

Without reliable adults during childhood, young people will have a hard time trusting those around them, asking for and accepting support, and investing in relationships with friends or as a couple. And even if you search, they often encounter new failures because they lack communication and conflict resolution skills. Among the effects on the economic and educational level, we can mention: low performance, school failure, lack of work skills, the difficulty of maintaining a job, supporting oneself and maintaining a household (Dima and Bucuța, 2015).

That is why a category of young people lives in extreme poverty, becoming dependent on long-term benefits and social services. Housing is a problem for most young people, with housing services for almost all young people in need of protective services. If these services are lacking, lack of future perspective, associated with impairments in the ability to maintain employment and lack of self-control can lead to behavioral disorders, or even criminal or suicidal behavior (Blakemore, 2017).

According to the service needs of young people, Stein (2005, 2012) identifies 3 categories: those who have managed to overcome childhood traumas (moving on), those who are just surviving (survivors) and those who are still struggling, facing the traumas. (fighters) (Stein, 2005).

### *Group of those who have overcome trauma*

These individuals have usually experienced some or all stability and continuity throughout their lives, including lasting attachment relationships. Because they had experience with family life, they were able to understand and process the reasons for institutionalization most of the time. They were often successful at school, and leaving the system in their case was gradual, planned. Young people in this category feel more "normal" as they are already outside the protection system. To the feeling continuing education, getting a job or forming one's own family contributes to normality. Their support needs are minimal: financial support after exiting the system to pay rent, or preventive services to receive legal information (Rác, 2017).

### *The Survivors*

The second group, consisting of those who survive, have experienced much more instability, change and violence in the protection system than those in the first group. They usually left the protection system suddenly, without prior training, at a younger age, without

qualifications that would allow them a good professional insertion. After leaving the system, they frequently experience housing (including periods of homelessness) and employment problems: they live in casual, poorly paid and emotionally unsatisfying work, often ending up unemployed. They are prone to problems in professional and personal relationships because of the emotional problems they have: dependence on help, alienation, lack of self-control of impulses, fits of anger. Where, the personal and professional support they received after leaving the contact protection system in successful integration (Stein, 2012). They need case managers, social workers, therapists or other specialists, mentors and relatives to maintain relationships with them and form a support network that counteracts the negative effects of institutionalization and promotes resilience. Their chances increase if they benefit from personalized support during the institutionalization period and after, mentoring on topics such as life skills, time and money management, self-efficacy and professional help for emotional regulation and building social skills (Stein, 2005; Rác, 2017).

#### *Those who are still struggling with trauma*

People in this group had the most traumatic experiences before they got into the system and didn't have the opportunity to process them. They did not have stability in the system either, being often transferred from place to place, thus they did not have the opportunity to form stable attachment relationships. They usually leave the system unprepared, without independent living skills. Their level of education is low, they have difficulties in finding a job or housing (Stein, 2005, 2012).

In terms of mental and physical health, they may be severely affected. They often cannot support themselves because they grew up in centers for people with disabilities. Residential services are necessary for them. Prostitution, human trafficking, drug and alcohol addiction, and prison are some of the things that they become victims of. The needs of this group: complex services that include psychological and/or psychiatric support for mental health problems, trauma processing, managing emotions and increasing interpersonal skills, social support for housing, money management and life skills training and financial support (Rác, 2017).

The categorization presented here can be useful in developing the problems of those who have left the protection system, with the aim of adequate planning of the resources made available to those who have left the child protection system and of an established stage where the differences of young people are. However, the planning of individual interventions requires a more comprehensive understanding of the individual experiences and needs of institutionalized young people (Dima and Bucuța, 2015). Stein (2012) considering that the proposed interventions must help young people develop a positive sense of identity, overcome stigma and overcome their "institutionalized youth identity".

At the same time, complex intervention programs can offer assistance for overcoming educational and occupational deficits (Stein, 2012) as well as some opportunities for gradual transitions, similar to normative transitions from the role of an institutionalized young person to that of an autonomous adult.

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# PREVENTING SCHOOL FAILURE THROUGH MODERN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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**Abstract:** *School failure is a complex phenomenon, with social, pedagogical and individual determinations. This article analyzes the relationship between education, socialization and the educational ideal promoted in a society. School deviance is shown to be indicative of wider systemic dysfunctions. At the pedagogical level, the main causes identified are: the inability to adapt to the needs of each student, the perpetuation of inequalities and negative labeling. To combat it, modern educational management strategies are proposed: student-centered learning, prevention of discrimination, inclusive education, teacher training in new paradigms. The transition to a modern education, focused on the uniqueness of each student, is a complex but necessary reform. The multidimensional approach - social, managerial and pedagogical - is essential for the creation of a performing and fair educational system.*

**Keywords:** school failure, school deviance, educational management, student-centered learning, inclusive education, labelling

## 1. Introduction to the issue of school failure

In order to properly understand school failure and related phenomena, a broader perspective on the relationship between socialization and education is first needed. We will therefore analyze the concept of "educational ideal" and the relationship between the education system and the other components of society, with application to the situation in Romania.

We start from the premise that the evolution of a society depends on its ability to transmit through socialization the norms, values and knowledge necessary for the integration of the individual in society and then in the field of work. Socialization is the complex process through which man becomes a social being, internalizing beliefs, norms, values and action models specific to his society (Darmon, 2023).

Education, a narrower concept than socialization, refers to the transmission of culture and the generation of individual or collective learning. (Lazar & Vlăsceanu, 1994: 198) Pedagogical theory and practice distinguish between informal, non-formal and formal education (Soto Kiewit et al, 2023). Informal education includes spontaneous lifelong learning through interaction with the immediate environment. It is unstructured and heterogeneous. Formal education is organized in the education system. It presupposes a rigorously regulated framework and institutional objectives. Non-formal education complements the other two forms, being personal development programs outside the formal curriculum (Soto Kiewit et al, 2023).

According to Talcott Parsons' systemic theory, education is one of the fundamental mechanisms by which the social system maintains its equilibrium and ensures its reproduction. Thus, each society forms its own educational ideal, promoting an attitudinal and behavioral model considered exemplary for future generations (Wasilah, 2023). The educational ideal has a strong axiological charge, determining what is desirable or undesirable, worthy of being cherished and passed on. Likewise, the educational ideal is subject to variability, both over time within the same society and between different societies in the same historical context.

The educational ideal is influenced by major changes at the level of the entire social system, as well as by emerging ideologies and cultural patterns that are rapidly spreading in society. For example, with the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the educational ideal was redefined for the formation of generations adaptable to a constantly changing world. Therefore, the educational and educational system must take into account the needs and values of society, it being difficult to imagine a neutral education from an axiological point of view. The educational ideal results from a negotiated compromise between the educational system, the cultural system and society as a whole (Hadîrcă, 2010: 3-6).

Society is made up of multiple interconnected subsystems. According to Talcott Parsons' theory, the four main subsystems are: cultural, normative, political and economic. There are complex interactions between the educational ideal and these subsystems. Therefore, the cultural and normative systems establish the content of the educational ideal through the norms and values promoted. The political system can orient the educational ideal according to the dominant ideologies at a given time (Wasilah, 2023). For instance, major political regime changes often generate crises in education, by perpetuating outdated paradigms. Such ruptures between the culture promoted in the school and the culture of the youth can lead to tensions and conflicts, illustrated by increased rates of absenteeism and school dropout.

The relationship with the economic system is reflected in the correlation of education with the labor market, through the training of skills suitable for professional insertion. Conversely, the economic system provides the financial resources needed for education (Wasilah, 2023). Chronic underfunding in Romania limits the optimal functioning of schools and partly explains the high rates of school deviance. Institutional prevention mechanisms are difficult to implement in survival conditions. Overall, the educational ideal results from a balance between all these social subsystems, being shaped by the specific needs and values of each society.

The crisis of the education system in Romania has several dimensions: structural, financial, content, methodological, etc. In this context, the school encounters difficulties in fulfilling its role as an agent of socialization (Vlăsceanu, 1995: 255-284). High rates of school deviance, especially absenteeism and dropout, are a visible effect of this crisis. According to Durkheim's perspective, deviance is not problematic in itself, but only when it exceeds certain limits. Hence, moderate scholastic deviance can be viewed as a normal phenomenon with certain functions. In this view, the complete elimination of school deviance is not a realistic goal. Countermeasures are only imposed where limits are exceeded. Also, where school deviance is alarming, the causes of this weakening of norms must be identified. Within normal limits, however, deviance indicates the normal functioning of the school system.

Modern pedagogy emphasizes not regional statistics, but the micro-level teacher-student relationship. School success or failure depends on the harmonization of this relationship, cooperation and mutual responsibility. Thus, the student-centered school and constructivist pedagogy emphasize the fundamental importance of the interaction between the educator and the educated in school success. Modern student-centered pedagogies, which emphasize the teacher-student relationship, collide with the complexity of school reality and the multifactorial nature of educational problems. The balance between common standards and individualization is difficult. The student must conform to the curriculum and the required skills are rigidly formulated, leaving little room for constructivist approaches (Puentes Lérida et al, 2020). Also, the hierarchical organization of the education system is in contradiction with the vision of the new pedagogies.

The apparent divergence between Durkheim's sociology and the new pedagogical models reflects the distinction between individualism and holism in sociology. In fact, deviant behavior has a two-dimensional nature, individual and social. Deviance means breaking the norms of a society or group, not just the legal ones. In consequence, many behaviors in the

school environment border on deviance. When they break laws, we are dealing with delinquency, crime or murder. In the analysis of deviance there are biological, psychological and sociological perspectives. Biology sees genetic causes, psychology individual traits, and sociology social factors. For instance, Lombroso believed in the born criminal, Tarde in social imitation, Freud in the role of personality. The sociologist Durkheim introduced the statistical analysis of suicide, a paradigm taken over in the study of deviance.

School failure is a complex phenomenon, the roots of which must be sought beyond the direct relationship between teacher and student. It reflects systemic problems and entrenched mindsets throughout society (Gubbels et al: 2019). For example, in a culture where academic performance and socio-professional status are the only valued criteria, a constant pressure is created on learners to continuously excel academically. However, such a competitive vision is limiting, frustrating and discouraging students with less theoretical skills, but who may have creative or social talents. At the same time, the perpetuation of outdated pedagogical methods is due to a generalized mentality regarding the conformity and discipline necessary to reproduce traditional social roles and hierarchies.

The change of educational paradigm is made difficult by the persistence of such customs at the societal level. Last but not least, the chronic underfunding of the education system denotes a lack of political and civic prioritization of investment in education, which limits the possibilities of structural reform and leads to the perpetuation of school failure. To be effective and sustainable, the solutions must not be sought only in pedagogical reform, but in a change of mentality at the level of the entire society, so that there is consensus and real support for the modernization of education and the holistic training of new generations.

## **2. Pedagogical causes of school failure**

Pedagogical or psychopedagogical factors largely explain the occurrence of school failure. Psychopedagogical models focus on the ways in which learning takes place, emphasizing the student-teacher and student-collective interaction, therefore on the external factors that influence success. The debates regarding the nature of this relationship are endless, from traditionalist to postmodernist positions.

Constructivist postmodern pedagogy believes that not training, but educational interaction centered on cognitive and applied objectives is essential. Wherefore the tension between the individualization of learning and the need for common evaluation standards appears (Windschitl, 2002: 131-133). The student must comply with a predetermined curriculum, with rigidly formulated mandatory skills. This hierarchical and functionalist organization of the educational system is opposed to constructivist principles, and can encourage absenteeism and dropout.

Modern inclusive pedagogies, which support the exploitation of each student's potential, are difficult to integrate into rigid educational systems. The challenge lies in finding a balance between the demands of a unified national curriculum and the need for individualized instruction, so that all students can capitalize on their creative potential, not just their academic potential (Windschitl, 2002: 131-133). The teaching staff has an essential role in motivating each student and preventing school failure. But the educational paradigm shift also requires the structural reform of education to become more flexible and inclusive.

An essential aspect is the inability of the teaching staff and the school as a whole to respond to the particular needs of each student. This is a major factor in school failure. Intelligence and other intellectual psychological predictors are relatively weak in predicting academic performance. This indicates that for many students low motivation, negative attitude towards school, emotional or family problems are the main causes of failure, not cognitive impairments (Fontana, 1981). Therefore, failure could be prevented through an individualized pedagogical approach and the stimulation of participation, according to the psychological profile of each student.

The personality of the student and the teacher plays an essential role. In the learning process, in addition to cognitive functions, an important role is played by the integrative temperamental-affective structure, specific to each one. Thus, the sanguine or phlegmatic type is more conducive to maintaining the academic rhythm, while the choleric or melancholic type presents risks (Fontana, 1981). Although temperament changes with psycho-emotional maturation, the basic pattern persists.

Therefore, the prevention of school failure requires both personalized pedagogical strategies that capitalize on the unique psychological profile of each student, as well as teacher training to understand and adequately manage the diversity of temperaments and personalities in the classroom. A student-centered school cannot be realized without a careful analysis of individual traits that can inhibit or, on the contrary, optimize the learning and development of each student.

The student's personality, with its unique temperamental and character traits, plays an essential role in school performance (Fontana, 1981). For example, extraversion or introversion influences how one interacts in the academic environment. It was found that extroverts have better results in primary education, and introverts at university level, due to differences in didactic approach. Also, excessive anxiety or the lack of it affects performance: anxious students perform better in a relaxed environment, while less anxious ones are stimulated by competitiveness.

Therefore, in order to prevent school failure, it is necessary to adapt educational strategies to the temperamental and characteristic peculiarities of each student. The teaching staff must help anxious students manage their irrational fears, but also stimulate the motivation of those who are too relaxed. Ignoring these specific needs can lead to disinterest and school dropout.

Another problem is the perpetuation of inequalities in the educational system. According to critical theories, school should not reproduce social inequality, but combat it through emancipatory education. This involves the development of critical thinking, the courage to challenge authority and reflexivity, not passive conformity. The objective is to teach students to overcome their condition and build a more just society (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011: 77-85).

All in all, a modern pedagogy should take into account both the uniqueness of each student and the systemic inequalities that need to be overcome. This is the only way to implement a truly education centered on the real needs of students and on the full development of each one's potential, preventing school failure.

### **3. Modern strategies to prevent school failure**

#### **3.1. Pedagogical approaches centered on the needs of the student**

The implementation of student-centered learning requires complex efforts at the managerial level to adapt the entire educational process to the specific needs of each individual student.

First, there is a need for diversified educational resources to meet the varied learning interests of students - textbooks adapted to several levels, interactive curriculum aids, adaptive educational software, online platforms with adapted multimedia content. The development of such resources adapted to individual learning styles requires strategic planning and consistent budget allocations at the managerial level (Popa, 2020).

The second critical aspect is the continuous training of teachers in personalized teaching-learning-assessment methods. Teachers must be supported to diversify their teaching strategies, apply individualized assessment tools, use modern technologies to meet the needs of each student (Popa, 2020). This involves well-structured training programs, mentoring, examples of good practice, encouraging didactic innovation. At the managerial level, the resources and time necessary for the continuous training of teachers must be ensured.

Another essential element is the development of clear procedures for the early identification of students at risk of school failure, through periodic psycho-pedagogical assessments. Based on these, personalized intervention plans can be created through which students receive specific support. The involvement of school counselors is critical. Partnerships with community specialists can bring additional expertise (Kaput, 2018). Also, continuous assessment tools are needed to measure each student's progress and adjust instructional strategies. Regular feedback to students and parents as well as between teachers is essential. At the managerial level, the tools for monitoring and communicating the progress of each student must be created.

Finally, an organizational culture that truly promotes the values of student-centered learning is needed. The school principal has a responsibility to consistently communicate the importance of focusing on the individual needs of students and to encourage the application of best practices in this regard.

Although challenging, the transition to a modern educational paradigm, truly centered on each student, is essential to prevent school failure. This requires complex reform efforts at both the pedagogical and managerial levels.

### **3.2. Combating labelling**

The labeling or categorization of students by teachers is a complex process that can have significant negative consequences if not managed carefully. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism, school reality is socially constructed through the interpretations students give to their experiences and the negotiation of meanings in interaction with teachers. Thus, deviance occurs when the teacher's definition of the situation conflicts with the student's (Samkange, 2015).

Historically, there have been several theories explaining how labeling occurs in school. According to the law of situation definition, once a student is defined as "good" or "poor", he will have results aligned with this label. Theories of the social self-emphasize the impact of the definition by the other on the student's self-image. Lemert distinguishes between primary deviance, arising from various reasons, and secondary deviance, generated by initial labeling. Becker believes that groups create deviance by imposing rules and labeling those who break them. Goffman defines stigma as a discrediting attribute of a person that leads to social exclusion. And Hargreaves explains the process by which teachers classify students into predetermined categories - conformists, deviant and mediocre.

Even if it is inherent, labeling can have harmful consequences such as discouragement, discrimination or even school dropout among those perceived as "weak" or "problematic". To prevent these effects, teachers must first analyze their own biases or expectations of students (Samkange, 2015). An inclusive school culture involves avoiding placing negative labels and offering positive, constructive feedback focused on the progress of each individual student.

Teaching-learning-assessment strategies must be adapted to the specifics of each student, and expectations must be communicated in a realistic, motivating way. Clear institutional procedures to prevent and combat discrimination are essential. Psychoeducational counseling can help identify underlying learning difficulties or emotional problems. Family and wider community involvement is necessary to support each student to reach their full potential.

The fundamental objective is to overcome the conformist-mediocre-deviant paradigm, promoting an environment in which every student, regardless of their background, is encouraged to trust their own strengths and develop their authentic talents (Kaufman, 2014). A modern, student-centered school starts from the premise that all students have inner resources that must be cultivated through a personalized, empathetic and non-prejudiced approach.

Negative labeling in the school environment can cause certain problematic adaptive reactions on the part of students. Some may try to change their reference group by joining



those who adopt alternative norms to school norms. Others may group together with those in the same situation, forming bounded subcultures. There is also the phenomenon of negative labeling of "nerds" by those previously marginalized. Other reactions can be absenteeism or the effort to access the performed group.

From a psychological perspective, these reactions are based on certain cognitive and motivational mechanisms. Clinical psychology theories focus on the internal dynamics of the learner - anxieties, ego defense strategies, unconscious conflicts (Kaufman, 2014). Social psychology theories explain through the influence of the environment - needs for belonging, recognition, self-esteem.

To prevent these negative effects, teachers should be supported to adopt an empathetic style, provide constructive feedback that strengthens self-esteem, use positive rewards. Psychopedagogical counseling can identify the emotional problems that determine certain behaviors. Family involvement is essential for sustaining motivation. And at the institutional level, an inclusive environment that promotes cooperation and valuing diversity can prevent marginalization (Samkange, 2015).

The ultimate goal is for each student to be encouraged to trust their own inner resources and develop a positive self-concept so that the labels applied by others no longer have the power to determine their school trajectory. A modern educational approach, empathetic and centered on the needs of each student can prevent the negative effects of labelling.

### **3.3. Inclusive education**

Inclusive education involves a school paradigm that values diversity and aims to ensure the full participation of all students, regardless of their background, abilities or specific needs. Unlike the traditional model that focuses on normative academic results, inclusive education emphasizes the progress of each student from his current level (Ion & Uzeanu, 2019).

This approach can significantly contribute to the prevention of school failure, as it promotes a sense of belonging, increases intrinsic motivation and provides adequate support to help all students reach their full potential (Ion & Uzeanu, 2019). Inclusive education reduces the pressure to standardize and allows a focus on unique talents, not just school results. Implementing inclusive education requires differentiated teaching strategies adapted to each student's learning styles, as well as assessment tools that capture individual progress. Training teachers in the use of inclusive practices is essential. School-family-community collaboration and specialized support services can help students with various difficulties (Cucer, 2010). At the level of educational policies, there is a need for curricular reforms, increased funding and clear procedures to ensure non-discriminatory access to education. Last but not least, the change of mindset among teachers and the community is crucial.

Overall, inclusive education can significantly contribute to creating a school environment that values all students equally and gives them real chances to succeed through personalized approaches. This leads not only to better academic results, but also to the development of a more equitable and inclusive society.

### **4. Conclusions**

School failure is a complex phenomenon, with determinations at social, pedagogical and individual levels. To understand it correctly, it must be viewed from the perspective of the relationship between education and society. Education serves to transmit culture and train future generations according to the educational ideal promoted in a certain context. Therefore, dysfunctions in the education system reflect wider problems in society.

School deviance occurs when the school no longer meets the conditions to fulfill its role as an agent of socialization. School failure in increased proportions indicates a crisis in the relationship between the educational system and the other social subsystems. Consequently, in order to be effective, the solutions must be sought not only in school reform, but also in the

transformation of certain mentalities and social customs that inhibit the modernization of education. At the pedagogical level, the main causes of school failure reside in the inability to adapt educational strategies to the particular needs of each student. Poor motivation, emotional or team integration problems often explain failure more than cognitive skills. The modern school assumes an individualized approach, which takes into account the uniqueness of each student. Personalized pedagogical strategies, prevention of negative labeling, inclusive education, teacher training in the spirit of new paradigms, adapted educational resources, family and community involvement are essential to combat school failure. The transition from an education focused on standardization to one that is truly student-centered is a complex reform, but necessary for a modern and fair society.

The problem of school failure requires integrated solutions aimed at both reforming the educational system and combating outdated mentalities at the social level. Only through a multidimensional approach can education become truly inclusive and empowering, preparing each student for full development as an individual and as a responsible member of society.

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# MEN'S DREAMS. THE CASTLE-HOUSE AT THE END OF LIFE A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE PROJECTS FOR BUILDING A SECONDARY RESIDENCE AMONG INDIVIDUALS FROM THE LARGE URBAN SPACES OF ROMANIAN SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** *The following research investigated the desire of urban Romanians to build a secondary residence in rural areas. The aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and significance behind such a project, which does not seem to align with the dominant economic rationale. Drawing from the framework used to discuss secondary homes in the global West, the research highlighted a distinct Romanian pattern in these types of projects, where economic efficiency is, at best, secondary. In this context, "vacation homes" serve as secure retreats for the time when individuals exit active economic life. This type of project appears to be almost exclusively associated with the male gender and presents a specific ideal form that is remarkably similar among all interviewees: a relatively small, self-sufficient residence surrounded by a generous yard, located in a pre-mountainous area near a village, with a forest and water nearby. Simultaneously, women also seem to have a shared image of ideal living, but it is markedly different from that of men. The source of these ideas about ideal living is difficult to pinpoint, with the ideal home emerging as an asocial space, adjacent to society, yet not necessarily incorporating its current values or norms—the most likely candidate here being the grand narratives of Indo-European culture, present as a deep-set framework of values and beliefs for the Euro-Atlantic region.*

**Keywords:** vacation homes, secondary residences, life after retirement/withdrawal from society, self-sufficient citizen, social overload

*For a man's house is his castle, and each man's home is his safest refuge (Coke, 1633)*

## 1. Introduction

This study originates from a relatively simple observation: many people harbor dreams, images of ideal states, and complex desires whose realization is a costly and long-term process, yet they pursue these goals with varying degrees of intensity. One such desire that I have frequently encountered in discussions within my social circle is the dream of owning a vacation home, a secondary residence situated in a valued natural environment. Despite the fact that a vacation home or secondary residence is far from inexpensive, this goal was pursued even by individuals with relatively modest incomes, who adjusted their plans to achieve it as satisfactorily as possible. Indeed, the desire for a secondary residence is a global phenomenon that does not spare any continent or social system. Setting aside situations like Florida, the preferred retirement destination in the United States, secondary residences rank among the most coveted acquisitions worldwide, with their prevalence sharply increasing not only in most Global North states (Wind, 2019) but also in Russia (Lovell, 2003) and communist China (Hui and Yu, 2009).

Even though, subjectively, the idea of a vacation home or a place for "rest and retreat" is not foreign to me, observing those who firmly stated that one of their primary life goals was a secondary residence, often located far from their current home, led me to question how this desire was produced and why it is so powerful. There are several reasons why this desire puzzled me. Firstly, a vacation home (or even a retreat in the middle of nature) generally defies any economic calculation, profitability, or predictability - qualities so cherished by the modern world. If it cannot be integrated into the tourism circuit (as most projects do not aim for this), a vacation home is not an investment but rather a semi-abandoned property, a self-assumed "money pit." Secondly, some of those who most desired it lacked the experience of

building a residence, had no experience of life in the desired location, and did not even possess a vehicle to reach it<sup>1</sup>. Their dreams were purely cultural productions, with very few empirical or experiential elements to support them. These observations gave rise to the question that underpinned this study: “Why do people do this?” Why do they desire and even build a secondary, “vacation” home, even though it seems to bring a series of additional expenses and worries?

## **2. Secondary residences in the context of global modernity**

When discussing the types of housing that urban residents gravitate towards when they can afford this transition, three relatively distinct categories of “dreams” can be identified: urban living in low-density urban areas (residential neighborhoods, suburbs), rural living, which can be permanent or temporary, and vacation homes, residences located in naturally attractive areas, sometimes near tourist zones, where individuals spend their holidays. The phenomenon of secondary residences is complex and relatively dynamic, with a number of factors contributing to its conceptual transformation: new individual mobility—spatial or digital (Halfacree, 2011; Müller, 2011), migration to cities or other economic areas that depopulate rural areas, or conversely, the gentrification of rural areas in wealthy regions (Gallent, 2007), as well as counter-urbanization (Hall, 2004). These factors are also why some authors prefer a larger or different set of categories (Mowl et al., 2020; Ghorbanpour et al., 2023).

The literature on secondary homes is rich, with several perspectives dominating the discussions. First is the economic perspective, where the secondary/vacation home is discussed economically, as a means of wealth accumulation or, through renting, as a source of income (Paris, 2009), but also as an economic influence in tourist areas where vacation homeowners tend to spend much less than regular tourists (Boto-García and Baños, 2024) or disrupt the economic balance of small communities (Ericsson and Overvåg, 2024). A second perspective, related to the first, discusses the social and cultural effects of secondary homes, where the discussion revolves around gentrification and the destruction of (poor) community in the area, as well as cultural changes introduced by new ideas and behaviors (Gallent, 2014). Finally, a third perspective views the secondary home as a status symbol, a site of conspicuous consumption associated with a particular class, and a material element of social differentiation (Haldrup, 2009; Walters and Carr, 2019). If we discuss secondary residences purely as vacation homes, as acceptable “shelters” for spending short periods in remarkable natural areas, they appear to be modern forms that have replaced the bungalow as a rural dwelling form in America (Winter, 1980) or the log cabin, a weekend or holiday dwelling style that used to be quite widespread in the Nordic countries (Abram, 2012) as well as in the United States (Hoagland, 2018) among those who could afford this type of activity break.

As I mentioned, my interest stemmed from the observation that many people I knew wanted to build a rural secondary residence they intended to use during vacations or weekends. This fact led me to conceptualize the research in terms of the “vacation home.” In reality, the interviews placed the projects in a mixed, temporally fluid category between a vacation home for relaxation, a temporary weekend residence, and a possible permanent residence after retirement. In fact, in the web of desires and decisions navigated by those I spoke with, I found practically all the nuances associated in the literature with a secondary residence, except perhaps the aspect of a status symbol. In the categorization scheme I chose to use, the secondary residences pursued by these individuals clearly fall under rural, temporary, or permanent residences - thus excluding the association of the project with active economic life or with the vacation home as a construction with economic potential.

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<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, one of these individuals, a person with a middle income, has already built a house in a rural area and travels there by bus or by using friends' cars.

## **2.1 Local dimensions: The vacation home, between socialism and capitalism**

An important aspect of the study is that practically all my respondents lived under the socialist system for a long enough period to absorb and internalize certain values and norms—alongside older housing patterns inherited from parents or grandparents, which encapsulated the experience of life in the countryside, in rural areas. This was the result of aggressive industrialization processes and the explosive growth of the urban population during the socialist period, which relocated a large number of individuals from villages to “modern,” newly built neighborhoods without intermediate stages (Mitrică et al., 2016). For a time, the idea of a plot of land owned exclusively by the man or the family existed in socialist cities in the form of a house lot. The size and composition of a household in the city were different from those in the countryside, but the idea of owning space, a place separate from society where a different set of relationships and norms functioned, existed - and was commonly materialized in urban spaces as family houses. However, socialist ideas regarded this type of housing as an outdated form that needed to disappear, and for this purpose, traditional houses were demolished in large areas of cities, and blocks of flats were built in their place. However, living in a block of flats, even idealized ideologically, does not seem to have been an ideal situation for my respondents; most of the reasons given to justify the initiation of plans for a “vacation” home were related to the shortcomings of communal living: noise, odors, neighbors who do not respect others' privacy, overcrowding - and the need to constantly manage transient social relationships, the lack of private spaces for parking cars, etc. Confronted with these problems and having alternative modes of living available in their imaginary, men seem to have uniformly chosen to live in the pre-mountainous rural area, a safe, autonomous, and quiet space.

Returning to the question that initiated the study, “Why do people desire a vacation home?”, the possibility of providing an answer seemed linked to the partial description of the concept of the vacation home as it exists in the imaginary of those who wish to undertake this type of project. This ideal image is, in fact, the attractor, the element that motivates them to initiate and pursue the project's realization. Thus, the study focused on gathering a complete description of the image of vacation/ideal living, starting from the natural setting and ending with details related to activities and social relationships associated with the space of this residence. In what follows, I will present the methodological framework of the research, followed by the presentation and analysis of the data obtained, as well as a specification of the most important elements highlighted by the study.

## **3. "The dream of the vacation home" - study**

### **3.1 Objectives**

Specifically, the present research sought to obtain both the vocabulary of motives cited by respondents for initiating and/or pursuing the "vacation home" plan, as well as to delineate as precisely as possible its construction characteristics and the manner in which individuals foresee its use. The underlying idea is that analyzing these data might elucidate how this type of secondary dwelling exists within the social imaginary and why it holds such value for certain individuals.

### **3.2 Methodology**

The data were collected through in-depth qualitative interviews, beginning with exploratory interviews that examined the dimensions of motivation and the form of the "dream," as well as how this dream is accessed. These were followed by a series of structured interviews focused on these dimensions, aiming to achieve a comprehensive description and pursuing theoretical saturation. Respondents were selected based on their familiarity with the subject, specifically individuals who intended to or were in the process of constructing a "vacation home."

The study targeted individuals whose age naturally fell within what is known in the West as Generation X (1965-1980), following the criterion of having such plans. This generation was exposed, during their childhood or adolescence, to the norms and lifestyle of socialism, which, in line with socialization theories (Parsons, 1959), produced a specific internalized structure of norms and values. Their adult life occurred during Romania's transition to capitalism, where they could develop and even realize the vacation home project. In practice, the age of respondents at the fall of the socialist system ranged from 14 to 24 years, with all of them having lived in large urban areas, in apartment blocks, until that point. The research started from the hypothesis that two categories of respondents - men and women - might produce significantly different data, and it sought to identify as many respondents as possible from these categories. However, it turned out that very few women had this "dream", as their ideal living space did not include the concept of designing and building a "vacation home" or its equivalent. Ultimately, three interviews were conducted with women considering the construction or significant renovation of a residence, but their projects proved to be significantly different from those of men, and the data collected suggested common patterns for this category as well. Nonetheless, the description obtained for these patterns was clearly far from saturation and, at best, constitutes a starting point for future studies.

The interviews took place in the respondents' homes, with some interesting details also being provided by other family members, particularly partners. These contributions suggest that the final form of the men's projects, rationally pursued, is the result of a negotiation process with other significant family members with whom they cohabit. The final interview guide focused on aspects related to the project: motivation, construction process, general and specific aspects, activities and social aspects, general expectations about life at the end of the project, as well as other specific points. A significant segment of the interviews involved a projective investigation of the ideal image of a vacation home, a segment that reached saturation and produced the most interesting results of the study. The interviews lasted between one and two hours, were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded using QualCoder.

After completing the interview analysis, the most interesting result - the similar form of the ideal living projects - was tested in informal discussions with interlocutors from other Romanian cities (Brăila, Craiova, Târgoviște, Buzău) who matched the age and residence categories. Around 30 discussions confirmed the pattern of the ideal male dwelling, while women seemed to prefer an ideal urban residence in small houses or apartments located in relatively central, quiet areas - the consistency of this pattern, however, needing confirmation in a separate study.

### **3.3 Data Presentation and Analysis**

The study collected data to describe several dimensions of the "vacation home" phenomenon, from motivation to the description of the ideal situation, the ideal vacation home. However, the most significant data emerged during the analysis, rather than being anticipated: first, the selection of respondents indicated that plans to build a vacation home are relatively common among men but almost nonexistent among women; and second, much more importantly, the ideal image of living was described in extremely similar terms by all respondents, regardless of the rationally feasible form of their plans. The differences between the plan that an individual considers rationally achievable and the ideal image - which disregards norms, costs, labor, or family - are significant, while the ideal plans are, as mentioned, very similar.

#### **3.3.1 Initiating the Plan and Motivation**

First, if the "dream" of the vacation home is predominantly a male project, as emerged from the interview analysis, this dream does not exist as such. In interviews, the projects

associated by respondents with the vacation home were, in fact, projects of an ideal living space for the post-active life phase, for withdrawal from society. Men initiate this project for a variety of reasons, which gravitate around the idea of an autonomous, sometimes solitary life - an aspect less evident in the realistic plan but omnipresent in the ideal images. The motivation and ideal model of this living arrangement do not seem to stem from personal history or reportable events but rather from a common cultural mosaic of the respondents' group, otherwise relatively heterogeneous: two of them experienced rural life in their childhood, while the others did not; similarly, for two of them, the idea and appearance of the construction were inspired by observing individual houses in the United States and Austria, respectively, while the others did not identify a specific model. What seems common is that the plan is initiated around the age of 40, within a stable partnership/family, living in a large urban area, in an apartment block, and after the birth of the first child. I will now review the reasons cited by respondents for initiating the plan.

### **Autonomy and the countryside tomato**

A central reason for choosing this type of dwelling is considered to be the need for autonomy, independence from the resources provided by society, and life outside the major economic flows. In general, housing security, drinking water, electricity, and heating are the areas where respondents see the need for autonomy, and the ideas expressed include elements such as a guard dog, a weapon, photovoltaic panels, a well, and a water pump, as perhaps best summarized by T.: "The ideal house... On a hilltop or mountain, surrounded by forest, self-sufficient, with a wind generator, photovoltaic, photo-thermal, a well... Independent in every way! Not to depend on water, electricity, anything! Right?" (T., male, 51). Although one respondent mentioned the idea of hunting for food, "... I'll take a crossbow, a dog. I'll hunt in the woods..." (N., male, 42), the desired food independence is generally ensured by bringing food supplies from the city or maintaining good relations with the nearest village. Also, while home-grown food products are considered the healthiest, superior in taste and nutrients to those from the market, respondents do not consider a life as a farmer or gardener; their realistic aspirations are limited to a few fruit trees and a small vegetable garden, which must necessarily include tomatoes.

The natural tomato, without fertilizers, appears as a recurrent motif, perhaps related to nostalgia for childhood and the "good old days," and is inseparably associated with countryside life and must be cultivated. R., who has already built a house in a rural area, anthropomorphizes the tomato: "It never crossed my mind that I would end up talking to tomatoes in the field! Believe me... I talk to them, I sing to them... 'look how beautifully we groom them, and fix them on the stakes'" (R., female, 46), while T. is surprised by "the satisfaction, which I did not expect to be so great. Wow, you get a tomato seedling, of something, of anything... it's my tomato, man, planted by me, it thrills me" (T., male, 51).

### **Rejection of urban social space and return to nature**

Apart from autonomy (and, of course, the tomato), the next reason cited by all respondents was the desire to live in the midst of nature, seen as a zone of normalcy, "peace, sitting at night looking at the stars, the stars look like they're falling on you... and with those crickets singing..." (D., male, 50) far from the noise, congestion, and unavoidable, constant contact with "uncivilized" individuals. T., for example, felt the need for a quiet residence: "traffic is part of the equation, the quality of the public is another part... I also used to drink beer behind the block of flats, but I didn't sing, I didn't shout... In the rain, at three in the morning, four hooligans came with pieces of squeak<sup>1</sup>, and they laughed like idiots... they squeaked those pieces and laughed... They were also high... and for two years they worked with the drill continuously in that block... it drives you

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<sup>2</sup> Expanded polystyrene (EPS)

crazy. I came with the police, at 11, 12 at night" (T., male, 51), while A. rejects the entire urban space: "... Bucharest is full of upstarts. People born and raised in all corners of the world who came here to get a salary and think they can buy the moon and the stars. They live in rented apartments, they're broke, wear the same clothes from Monday to Friday, roll their eyes... and you can't stand them anymore!" (A., male, 44). At the same time, there are certain fears associated with returning to nature, to rural life, best expressed by G.: "[nature doesn't distance you] you reject yourself in response to the dialogue with space, you want calmness, the small DIY that calms... but your dependence on the tumult of a metropolis of three million inhabitants [...] [makes] that silence you were seeking... function as deafening noise" (G., male, 49).

### 3.3.2 Ideal living – surprisingly precise patterns and gender associations

The most significant finding of this study, alongside the gender specificity of these projects, is the remarkably similar shape of the ideal living space as described by all interviewees. After collecting factual data (What have you done? / What do you concretely wish to do?), or during an opportune moment in the interview, a section was included to gather a projective image of the ideal form of the project. This involved an open-ended question such as, "If you close your eyes and imagine yourself in front of your vacation home, what do you see?". Participants were encouraged to ignore any possible constraints (work, health, children) and to describe the ideal, optimal, "perfect" aspect of the dwelling. The primary difference between factual and projective responses relates to the location and form of the house, the degree of independence, and the presence of animals in the household. This image, combined with certain factual descriptions (the projects being essentially projective images brought into the realm of presumed feasibility by modifying/abandoning certain ideal traits), produced a similar description of the "dream" for all interviewees, a description that clearly exceeds the requirements of theoretical saturation. Thus, the image of the ideal dwelling for men of Generation X, with a family, living in urban apartment blocks in Bucharest, is as follows:

**Location.** The ideal house is located in a hilly or mountainous area, near a village, with a road accessible year-round. The house itself should have 2-3 medium-sized rooms, without a second floor, and be situated in the middle of a 3,000-square-meter yard. The yard should include or be bordered by a forest and a stream or a lake. Other commonly mentioned elements include a small to medium-sized orchard and garden, outbuildings for animals (chickens, cow), and a dog.

**Independence.** The desired level of independence in the ideal scenario is total. The house should be completely independent in terms of drinking water, food, electricity, etc., although none of the interviewees considered this to be realistically achievable. Ideal activities are described as a mix of household chores and relaxation, pursuing passions, small DIY projects, etc.

**The house is built by the man.** The house project is almost exclusively seen as a solitary, masculine endeavor. The idea of consulting friends or family is sometimes accepted, but the final decision belongs to the man. The construction of the house is seen as entirely the man's task - he must physically build everything he can, and what he cannot build himself, he pays for - materials or other builders.

**Time and activities – Project usage.** Once the project is completed and the house is habitable, men would like to live there with their wives or children—especially with their children or grandchildren: "If I live, I'll take my grandchildren to stay with me... and I'll take

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<sup>3</sup> From a constructivist perspective within a realistic framework, "vacation homes" are ideally envisioned to have 2-3 medium-sized rooms, surrounded by a yard ranging from 500 to 3000 square meters, a few outbuildings, a small orchard, and a small vegetable garden. Most people also include a dog and a few chickens or other animals, which, to a certain extent, suggests a permanent residence. The house would most likely be situated approximately 2-4 hours' drive from the city of residence.



them there all summer... I'll make them Spartans" (D., male, 50). Friends are also welcome but must work and help around the household, not just relax: "...come on, I'll put you to digging the garden, weeding tomatoes, collecting eggs" (N., male, 42). The aspect of the solitary masculine project is also highlighted by the fact that most respondents do not expect their wives or children to live with them - at least not permanently. The activities men would like to pursue after completing the project generally fall into the realm of relaxation, as G. projects: "... I see it as a place where I can listen to music, read, walk [...] small activities that mentally unwind me and involve some DIY [...] I see myself doing activities with my children who I would see there for quite a long time" (G., male, 49), but also working on property improvements or gardening.

**Connection to previous life.** The vacation home, understood as an ideal dwelling outside society, a retreat, involves, for most of the interviewees, an implicit severance of all weak social ties (Granovetter, 1973). In retreat, weak ties, specific to work relationships, are abandoned, and only ties with family and close friends are desired to be maintained: "[I'd stay with] family or alone, friends, whoever wants... whoever likes to stay and do what I do... First of all [...] family, [...] friends too, but if they come, they have to work... laughs" (D., male, 50). The social aspect is reduced to its utility, and the idea of establishing positive relationships with members of the nearest community (village) emerges, motivated by the need for resource exchange and mutual aid.

#### **4. Interpretation of data and discussions**

##### **4.1 "For a man's house is his castle, and each man's home is his safest refuge" (Coke, 1633) – Description of ideal living**

In the end, the data describing ideal living produce a somewhat unexpected image, not only through the consistency of the patterns but also through their form, a form relatively rarely encountered in reality. The ideal living situation for the men I spoke with is essentially a small "kingdom" sufficient for the nuclear family, with the man at its center. It is an independent domain that maintains only a minimal functional connection with the outside world, a safe space, autocratically ruled by its "absolute" creator, the man. This is his private space, where his individuality is present, evident in all aspects, where he does not have to follow externally imposed ideas or behaviors, does not have to change or adapt, but rather, he adapts the objective reality to his ideas. In this space, friends are welcome as long as they accept the authority of the "king," the wife is desired but not obliged to exist there, and children or grandchildren, always welcome, can come into contact with the man's values, norms, or beliefs, as D. stated: "If I live, I'll take my grandchildren to stay with me... and I'll take them there all summer... I'll make them Spartans."

Regardless of how this image was formed, it is a distinctly masculine "dream." The study participants represent a fairly homogeneous category: individuals born between 1965 and 1980, married, with children, who live(d) in urban apartment blocks. It is important to recall that the research selected only individuals, men or women, who were pursuing the project or had already built a vacation home, with other common characteristics emerging later. Here, the other surprising characteristic of these projects was highlighted, namely the perfect association (within the limits of the research) of this type of dream, of these patterns, with the male gender—even though the study sought to identify women with this desire as well. The few interviews with women revealed, as I mentioned, a potentially very different pattern of ideal living compared to men.

##### **4.2 The social production of reality – Patterns of shared ideas**

Up to this point, the research has highlighted a specific form of ideal living, with very similar characteristics for all my respondents, and, moreover, strongly associated with the male gender. This fact is somewhat unexpected, difficult to intuit or explain using common

“common sense,” and requires, I believe, a discussion about how such a nucleus of ideas can be uniformly produced among entire categories of the population.

The current perspective on the population of the human mind with complex ideas involves their acquisition through socialization within the social environment(s) in which the individual develops. Socialization entails a socio-cultural programming of the individual, who is born with only a relatively stable set of biological and psychological conditioning common to the human species (Wood and Eagly, 2012). The role of these innate traits in producing the adult personality is considered important by some researchers, such as Piaget (1954), while others (Vygotsky, 1962) see it only as a foundation, ultimately hidden by cultural programming.

For sociologists, interest in the phenomena of the production and distribution of ideas in society, of values and norms, is central and emphasized from the earliest elements of the modern sociology paradigm, in the writings of Durkheim when he discusses the concept of social facts or in Weber’s works when he describes, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1930), how a belief system, ideas distributed among members of a group, can shape the forms of an entire civilization. After the general socialization that lays the foundation for the formation of the individual as a group member, the final processes through which this common understanding of objective reality emerges are perhaps most convincingly discussed by Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) but also by Foucault (McIntyre, 2024).

#### **4.3 The Socialization of ideas of ideal masculine living**

Assuming that complex ideas are educated, acquired from the environment, what would be the most likely source of the image of ideal living, and why does it seem so precisely defined among those I spoke with? In relation to the research interest, to aid analysis, I considered it useful to separate the sources of ideas that construct an individual’s imaginary into structural and agential ideas—structural ideas being those proposed and imposed by the current social structure, while agential ideas are those acquired separately from this structure, representing different ways of justifying and doing things, sources of human autonomy (Morrison, 2005; Barker, 2005). This separation delineates the values and norms of the moment from those with a slower dynamic, transmitted diffusely, transgenerationally, and may suggest the place from which these images derive their power to sustain long-term behaviors, what they represent for the individual, and why they seem so desirable.

##### **4.3.1. Structural ideas**

Structural ideas are most readily identifiable as they are supported by formal laws or powerful organizations within the current social structure. Laws function as embodiments of social values and, by delineating the “correct” framework of behavior in specific situations and by indicating the associated penalties for non-compliance, allow the deduction of valuable or “good” actions. The effectiveness of this mechanism appears to be high in the case of everyday behaviors but less so in major decisions such as homicide (Dölling et al., 2009). A long series of analyses or philosophical discussions explore the relationship between laws and punishments, yet the practical reality remains that almost all formal norms and laws prescribe certain unpleasant, painful consequences for individuals who violate them (Beccaria, 1995; Hoskins and Duff, 2024). In the modern era, however, fear-based motivational mechanisms seem to have become just one of the levers of motivation. With the industrialization of society and the consistent ability to meet individuals’ vital needs, behaviors in modernity appear to be controlled by the desire to achieve higher status across various social arenas of life—and by the pleasure derived from this status (Galbraith, 1958). Here, the punitive mechanisms of the state give way to the forces of production, which, as Baudrillard explains in *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (1970), generate needs that can only be satisfied through a type of consumption detached from necessity, a status-driven, multi-dimensional, stratified

consumption motivated by the need for differentiation among members of society—a consumption that produces and communicates individuals' positions within various societal hierarchies.

Is the image of ideal dwelling produced by these structural mechanisms? Research suggests that it most likely is not, as the ideal dwelling, the house-as-castle, brackets the entire social structure. The ideal dwelling does not oppose the structure of modern (urban) life; it simply extracts itself from it, ignoring its punishments and rewards, disregarding its culturally produced hierarchies, bypassing consumption, and retreating into a 3,000 square meter capsule where a thin barbed wire fence separates significantly different modes of understanding reality.

#### 4.3.2. Agential ideas

The ideas that produce the ideal masculine dwelling, as highlighted by the study, are relatively simple. The individual, the man, carves out a portion of reality, transforming it through his own powers to secure independence, to help him produce everything necessary for survival on his own. To the extent that he succeeds and still has resources left, he exchanges these resources with other nearby individuals (village/community) for goods he cannot produce himself. What ideas could lead urban dwellers to believe that this is possible under such conditions? What could make them desire that way of life? Answering this question is not simple because modern societies—whether socialist-communist or capitalist, neoliberal—do not seem to support the ideal of the solitary, self-sufficient individual. Instead, they promote increasingly complete integration into the flows and hierarchies of the social organism. Even neoliberalism, which ostensibly supports the idea of the *self-made man*, generally reduces him to a *self-trained man*, a cheap way to produce efficient and satisfied workers ready to be utilized within its economic mechanisms (Cabanas and Illouz, 2019; Hardy, 2021; Rutar, 2023).

If recent social models do not seem to support these dreams, where can the patterns of ideal dwelling come from? The most likely answer here is ideas transmitted without structure, absorbed by the individual through mere living, through immersion in the ocean of meanings conveyed, rolled, decomposed, and recomposed in the living fabric of social spaces, in the lines of architecture, in symbols, in brief phrases, glances, gestures, and the taken-for-granted. This ocean is where the leviathans of humanity's great narratives—religions, hero stories, the tale of the American self-made man, but also fairy tales, heroes of myth or reality - live beneath the ephemeral surface of small forms. We are exposed from an early age to stories of Moses, Hercules, Sinbad, Aladdin, or Superman, of explorers of the frozen North, the American West, or the gold veins of Klondike, individuals who, through their own power and will, achieved impressive things: Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, or Jeff Bezos. Of course, these narratives are just that, stories: Alexander did not conquer Asia alone, and the American dream of the solitary individual who succeeds through his own work and intelligence is seductive but dismantled by any serious analysis (Crouzet, 1985; Hochschild, 1995; McNamee and Miller, 2014). Yet it remains seductive—so seductive that middle-aged urban men with little knowledge of the realities of solitary life on a plot of land are willing to spend significant sums just to get closer to it. The promises of millennia-old stories that constitute a shared Indo-European cultural background (Mallory and Adams, 2006), timeless patterns of valuable human states perceived almost instinctively as pleasurable, are like siren songs that convince men their sacrifices are justified.

Of course, the connection between the similar form of the ideal dwelling dream and humanity's narratives or childhood stories may be illusory; deeper determinations could produce both, as images of an ideal masculine life. The fact that Romanians imagine the ideal place in the mountains is a possible indicator of this, as few stories feature heroes living in a small mountain cabin. On the other hand, the dreamed, ideal dwelling is described by my interlocutors as a retreat dwelling at the end of their social activity period, which can be

interpreted as the final stage of the journey, the hero's final refuge, the place where he goes, still strong, to live out the last part of his life.

## 5. Conclusions

The study began with the observation that many individuals from urban environments pursue the construction of a "vacation" home, a secondary residence, even when they lack the necessary financial means and have no experience of rural life, attempting to uncover the reasons driving them to chase this "dream." Surprisingly, the results showed that the desire to build a secondary home is a specifically male dream and, moreover, takes a very similar form for all those I discussed with. The notion of the "vacation home," from which the study originated, also proved erroneous, as for Romanians, the secondary rural dwelling is a retreat home—a form of ideal dwelling on the edge but outside of society.

The study established that the set of conditions triggering the construction of a secondary home likely includes urban apartment living, the presence of a family and one or more children—characteristics common to all those pursuing this "dream." The study's most important findings were the similar form and masculine affinity, aspects that suggested the valuable importance of understanding, or at least discussing, how this common ideal form could have emerged.

Through analysis, the ideal dwelling appeared as a strongly and precisely present idea in the social imaginary while simultaneously being an asocial idea, an escape from society. In this way, the most likely sources of ideas capable of producing this type of "dream" seem to be the timeless set of norms and values embedded in the Indo-European social tapestry as the great stories of humanity.

In fact, the research generated more questions than it managed to clarify. Not even the initial question, "Why do people do this?" - why they pursue the dream of a rural home—received a satisfactory answer. To address this, an analysis of the values and beliefs related to ideal dwelling and the role of men in society would likely be necessary, elements transmitted through the threads of old beliefs, ubiquitously coded into aspects of contemporary culture. This conclusion justifies the continuation and expansion of the research, as these "dreams" are most likely an important indicator of individuals' real values, desires, and personal concepts of social "good"—background values that exist independently of the sociocultural programming of the moment. In this sense, the research should continue with the identification of more such ideal situations, projects, or long-term desires that can, upon analysis, construct a complex yet realistic picture of the values, beliefs, and emotions of significant categories of the population.

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## PRISON SAINTS AND THE CULTURAL WAR AGAINST THE ROMANIAN NATION. ROMANIAN CELESTIAL GEOPOLITICS

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**Abstract:** *Reality has many levels. Here, we deal with the less visible of the 'outer world' level of faith. Faith has power. Power and geography are Geopolitics. We deal specifically with some of its components: cultural war, Cancel Culture during communism, and saints of the Prisons. Exploration of this social and more-than-social reality benefits from studies on communism—as the pinnacle of "The System" – which feeds on liberty and the social role of the military saints—The Stratiotes and of the Icon.*

**Keywords:** communism, culture war, cancel culture, Saints of the Prisons

Honoring the saints of prisons is necessary for underpinning man, who has fallen and become bewildered by the collapsed age of consumerism from which he is just emerging, in full "green" poverty, but also by the national revival movement, too quickly threatened by personal passions. Honoring saints, especially martyrs from communist prisons, is an elementary gesture of strengthening the soul and moral hygiene.

We will discuss the prison saints, descendants of the Stratiotes, and military saints who still guard the altars today. Then, we will show that the geopolitics of the air, practiced by the great powers, has above it the geopolitics of the Heavens, which only the mystical eye—the greatest power—can see. The geopolitics of air without Heaven is only a factor of disorder, because good means the reflection of order from Heaven on earth. They are the source of our dignity, and without dignity, we impoverish through moral ignorance.

The moment is more necessary than ever, as Romania enters the biggest re-education process since the Pitesti phenomenon, along with the "Educated Romania"<sup>[1]</sup> agenda, which effectively strips young people cognitively, spiritually, and soulfully.

We will clarify the following terms: prison saints, culture war, Cancel Culture, holocaust of culture, "Romanian communism".

The great powers have had special commands for controlling the atmosphere and cyberspace for several years. It is no wonder that information defense is subordinated to air geopolitics. Here, the great powers have concluded that you cannot control the earth if you cannot control the air, and you cannot control the air if you do not control the information environment. This is *the rationalist approach* to reality. There is one more, metaphysical and mystical. Because space cannot be governed only rationally. Space can be dominated, destroyed, and regimented, but to be in harmony with the joints of the world, space must be integrated into a higher order in which we are talking about another category of fighters and another category of wars. These are cultural wars waged at the expense of the peoples, for the kneeling of the peoples and, with them, of the man himself, and the defenders are the "conscious minority", with self-awareness, somewhere between 10% and 20% of a population. Moreover, a population manifests itself as a nation if it can be mobilized toward the goal of working together, and those responsible for this dynamic unification are precisely these elites. Among them, some became martyrs and saints, in that they sacrificed themselves so that the Romanians would remain in the Church of Christ, that is, society would remain in its natural framework: a community of love, a community of destiny based on work and merit, *an organic society*.

There are heavenly geopolitics, for there is a heavenly hierarchy with points in the distribution of powers in human geography. The vectors of this geopolitics are the do-gooders in normal times; the martyrs in times of restriction; the lukewarm in normal times, and the horns and agents of apostasy in the difficult, apocalyptic hours.

The battle is fought so that the earth will have order, to be in order with God, and so that man does not forget that he must save himself to remain human. Evil does not believe in redemption and seeks to erase memory and force its reset through physical and symbolic violence.

The prison saints ensured our future by representing the concrete heavenly dimension of the defense of Romanian space. True, we must not forget (remembering is part of the social order). Otherwise, we will not only go out of time (fall out of time) but we will also go out from under their protection.

Was there a cultural war against Romanian culture? Yes, and it still exists. The war against the Romanian nation is part of a wider antichrist, against other nations, and finally, against man. In our country, this started with the burning of books considered undesirable by the evil empire of the Soviet Union in 1948. And with the wave of massive arrests, which also started in that year.

### **1. Culture war, cancell culture, cultural holocaust, prison saints**

What is **culture war**? Cultural war is an act of aggression by which a power tries to take control of the resources of any kind of another society by liquidating, distorting, and re-vectoring the civilization—the material order, the culture—the soul order of the targeted people. The purpose of the cultural war is to impose a culture of annihilation on the occupied people and to transform its society into a territory easily controlled from a military and economic point of view. It happens at all levels, but the most sensitive are those without models, those without a solid culture: the young and the mature who have not had solid cultural experiences and who have not had time to solidly anchor their "common sense".

The culture war is deadly in the short term, economically and morally degrading in the medium term, deadly in every way in the long term. As a rule, the culture of cancelation considers not only the cancelation of freedom of speech, but the very natural and normal possibility of expression, through ideologization and civil death. Ideologizing correlates with imprisonment and physical liquidation by beating, starvation, and shooting. Civil death implies the isolation of the tops from the rest of society and their decoupling from the demography of moral and professional competence. Its peak became, in the communist prisons, the saints and martyrs of the prisons.

**Cancel Culture** was the main instrument of the culture war and it meant in the 50s: the ritual execution of books and authors, public intoxication, civilian death and death in prisons, a whole series of purges, the use of force in social relations under the protection of Soviet troops, post-mortem sentences of the pillars of Romanian culture— Eminescu, Maiorescu, Iorga, Goga, the acquittal of the guilty, the transformation of Marxism into a religion, the occupation of institutions, the ideologization of the social space, the suffocation of the organic tradition of the growth of Romanian culture, in short: repression and misalignment—removing the Romanians from their axial landmarks—its reduction to a mass useful to the empire. The vector was the satanized political system of the Soviet type—Acad. Sorin Dumitrescu, *The International of the Komintern and the Soviet Empire*: Acad. Ilie Badescu.

In short, cancel culture as an instrument of the cultural war against the Romanian nation meant "the holocaust of Romanian culture" (Ungheanu, 1999, *passim*).

"Holocaust means complete extermination, usually by burning, a sacrifice that leaves only ashes. In a direct and figurative sense, Romanian culture endured the treatment of a holocaust after the Second World War. It was thrown into the furnaces and prisons of an intolerant political ideology to leave the land of a "new" culture free. After 1944, thanks to this



imported ideology, all Romanian life was divided into two: the «past» and the «new» life, which was built up through the demolition, destruction, and holocaust of this past. The «past» was black and had to be destroyed, the «future» was bright and had to be built. All the Romanian values of the past were thrown, with non-existent or insignificant exceptions, to the «mass grave» of the holocaust programed against Romanian culture. They meant «the past» and an almost religious fury punished those who tried to save or maintain the values of the plagued «past», increasing the proportions of the sacrifice."<sup>[2]</sup>

From this holocaust, however, saints emerged. In this terrible fire, the strongest spirits were forged that the Romanian nation gave after the martyrs on the Danube line from the time of the Roman emperors.

**Saints of the prisons**—the most competent demographic professionally, but especially morally, were liquidated by the Soviets in Romania between 1944-1964, amounting to about 2 million people. Here comes the first batch of approximately 15,000 *assumed* students, sacrificing for the cause of the nation and Christ from the communist prisons, in the most inhumane circumstances, who, until the last moment, confessed their adherence to the two landmarks. Hundreds of thousands more priests, peasants, soldiers, teachers, and young people followed—those who had the work ethic, understood the times best, and gave direction to society. They made the ultimate sacrifice, they gave their lives for the good—for the community of love, which is the nation and the Church, although many of them could have gone abroad.

**The Saints of the Prisons** are the descendants of the founding military saints of the faith, the so-called "Stratiotes" (military dignitaries turned saints), practically constituting a re-establishment of the Church through their supreme sacrifice. Both *defeated the system* "pretending to be a sight" - an open model of salvation through suffering: "to be made a sight, meant to seek at all costs to make a sight/an appearance / an icon from one's own body in sacrificial state, as a reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ on the Cross."<sup>[3]</sup> They are the mystical reaction to evil, they fought the battle in Heaven for us, but also on earth, with the cross on their chests, many of them fighting with weapons in hand against the evil embodied by communism.

**The sight-sacrifice** (*jertfa priveriște*) looks acad. Sorin Dumitrescu brought the Roman Empire to its knees, the prototype of The System, penetrated by the same "jealous Satanism of the powers of darkness." (Dumitrescu, 2017: 38-39)

Their saving function for the nation is to recognize them, let us remember the sight of their beheading; otherwise, their power over us will be halved, it will be only by their vigil, not by ours. Only by expanding this vision and experience of sacrifice can we have the "unseen victory" in this "fierce war against the demons of the air." (Dumitrescu, 2017: 38)

The mode of "operation" of the Saints of the Prisons was as follows: warning, pardoning, and banning (Dumitrescu: 40). Warning: man cannot overcome alone - the exhortation to faith, victory can only be in Christ. Forgiveness—not because the security guards, militiamen, and the Soviet agency do not deserve it, but because revenge means entering the logic of evil, the law of retribution, which Christ defeated! The prohibition of the executioner to redeem himself, marking him with the mark of Cain, is the real weapon by which the evil of idiotization by ideology can be defeated, so that they live, if living is called being "struggling and fugitive on earth."<sup>[4]</sup>

## 2. Historical Context

Cancel Culture began in Romania immediately after August 23, 1944, a first culminating moment being Decree-Law 364 of May 4, 1945, signed by the King by which everything that meant communication "will be carried out in agreement with the Allied (Soviet) High Command" - the article 16 of the Armistice Convention, although the war was over. From May 4, *any works* that contravened the interests of the Soviet Union began to be removed from kiosks, bookstores, and libraries and were banned from publication. Moreover,

this law considered that the time frame in question began in 1917! The entries regarding the Union with Bessarabia, the importance of the Great Union, the disappointing situation in the USSR, and the national dignity of the Romanians, etc., were to be deleted. Those who opposed were going to prison, and they did! Thus, the entire interwar Romanian culture was put under the sign of cancelation because it could not be pleasing to Soviet interests (being qualified as "bourgeois", "fascist", "reactionary", "legionary", etc.). The USSR manages a triple blow: it lowers the prestige of the king, who is obliged to sign the Decree Law, it shows the Anglo-Americans that the Romanians have made the decision, it liquidates the Romanian elites and the organic culture of the country. By 1946, there were already 2000 banned titles and authors (Baltasiu and Bulumac, 2014: 114).

The culture war continued through the arrests of 1946, when some of the most capable government specialists were arrested.

This was followed by 1948—the massive act of banning the freedom of the written word, along with the first massive wave of arrests - when the most capable of the students were arrested in one night (about 15000)<sup>[5]</sup>. During the years of Bolshevik tyranny, the arrests included 2 million people—one out of nine Romanians being arrested, of which 15% were liquidated by shooting, torture, and various extermination techniques by the Soviet agency in Romania under the name of Securitate (established in 1948) (Baltasiu and Bulumac, 2014: 116-117).

Cancel culture gained momentum in June 1948, with the appearance of "Publications Prohibited Until May 1, 1948", which listed 8,000 titles, to which another 2,000 were added later<sup>[6]</sup>. Note that the banned titles also concerned the authors, who were to be arrested and liquidated, in the best case sentenced to civic death, if they were still alive in 1948, if not, only the works were to be locked up. Ten thousand banned personalities/works are indeed the backbone of a nation. For the most part, this moved to Heaven, with the martyrdom of the living authors until 1948. It must be stated that just as the living authors were thrown into prisons, so most of their works were burned, not only banned. "The extermination of historians was, according to all signs, a special preoccupation of the political regime established in Bucharest in 1944 with the help of occupation tanks." (Ungheanu: 27). It was enough to have dealt with the history of the Romanians in prison. Gh. Brătianu, C.C. Giurescu, V. Papacostea, Sauciu-Săveanu were arrested and some of them, like Gh. Brătianu, were liquidated (1953).

**Collectivization** from 1949 to 1962. It resulted not only in the forced amalgamation of lands but also in the destruction of the peasant ethos, the liquidation of the healthiest social layers, and the most anti-Bolshevik social structure. It was the most extensive social engineering operation in Romania after 1944 (until today's "Educated Romania"), carried out by intimidation, often by criminal means, which directly affected 12 million peasants (Baltasiu and Bulumac: 114).

**Closure of churches and monasteries.** By 1960, 63 out of 162 monasteries were closed and turned into collective farms or demolished, with 20% of the Orthodox priestly body being imprisoned between 1944 and 1964 (Baltasiu and Bulumac: 115-116).

**The ethnic foreign character of the Communist party (PMR/PCdR) in Romania,** the leadership of the government and the Security during the liquidation of the elites and of the most industrious Romanians justify the term "war against the Romanian nation" applied to the Soviet occupation after 1944. In 1944, Romania had the smallest number of communists compared to the population in Europe—0.006%, compared to France, with 0.73% or Hungary, with 0.3% (Baltasiu and Bulumac: 111). This certifies that the Romanians did not adhere to communism and clarifies the notion of "Romanian [produced] communism" as irrelevant and manipulative.

### 3. Conclusion

The types of books and authors included in the index lasted until 1989, most of which were resumed by the new regime after 2013. Today, we live in fear. Fear of p(l)endemics, war, and poverty. Away from each other. Because we forgot love (Christian love). The opposite of fear is sacrifice. The closest model of sacrifice is the Saints of Prisons. With their help, we will be able to restore the country as a community-of-love and, therefore, a nation with a destiny, not at the will of the winds. The problem, today, is that this sight-sacrifice as a collective testimony, the consciousness of the martyrdom of the Prison Saints, tends to be obliterated by the *re-education of the entire youth* on an unprecedented scale, a much larger process than the Pitesti Phenomenon, which was the most aggressive form of re-education during communism (1949-1952). And then, only the vigil of the generations who still remember them will remain, and the vigil of the saints, from Heaven. The Saints of the prisons must be a model for sobriety—the unity of thought, done through constant prayer, the war of the mind for the peace of the heart. The disaster of educated Romania - the biggest process of brainwashing and inversion of values, of dehumanization that Romania has ever experienced—can only be excited by following exactly the Christian teaching: "this nation of demons can only come out with prayer and with fasting." (Matthew 17, 21). How many of us are still fasting?

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<sup>[1]</sup> Declaratively, all good. DC News, 5 dec. 2018, "Ce este "România Educată". Iohannis, explicații: De ce mă ocup eu de așa ceva", <https://www.dcnews.ro/klaus-iohannis-despre-proiectul-romania-educata-este-mult-asteptat-626902.html>

<sup>[2]</sup> „Holocaust înseamnă exterminare integrală, de obicei prin ardere, un sacrificiu în urma căruia rămâne doar cenușa. În sens direct, și în sens figurat, cultura română a suportat, după cel de-al doilea război mondial, tratamentul unui holocaust. Ea a fost aruncată în cuptoarele și închisorile unei ideologii politice intolerante, pentru a lăsa liber terenul unei «noi» culturi. După 1944, grație acestei ideologii de import, toată viața românească se împărțea în două: în «trecut» și în viața «nouă», care se edifica prin demolarea, prin distrugerea, prin holocaustul acestui trecut. "Trecutul" era negru și trebuia distrus, "viitorul" era luminos și trebuia construit. Toate valorile românești ale trecutului au fost aruncate, cu inexistente sau neînsemnate excepții, la «groapa comună» a holocaustului programat împotriva culturii române. Ele însemnau «trecutul» și o furie aproape religioasă pedepsea pe cine încerca să salveze sau să mențină valorile năpăstuitului «trecut», sporind proporțiile sacrificiului." Idem, p.25

<sup>[3]</sup> „să fii făcut privesște, însemna a căuta cu orice preț să faci o vedere / o arătare / o icoană din propriul trup în stare de jertfă, ca o reeditare a răstignirii lui Hristos pe Cruce." Sorin Dumitrescu, „Noi și icoana", p.18.

<sup>[4]</sup> „zbuciumat și fugar pe pământ". Ibidem.

<sup>[5]</sup> „14-15 mai 1948. Cele mai mari arestări din Istoria României. Noaptea Sfântului Bartolomeu în variantă comunistă...", în Mărturisitorii, 14 mai 2014, <https://www.marturisitorii.ro/2014/05/14/14-15-mai-1948-cele-mai-mari-arestari-din-istoria-romaniei-noaptea-sfantului-bartolomeu-in-varianta-comunista-video-cu-parintele-justin/>

<sup>[6]</sup> Ion Cristoiu, 1945-1950: Paranoia arestării cărților", in *Historia*, f.a., <https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/1945-1950-paranoia-arestarii-cartilor-584972.html>

## MODERATE RATIONALITY

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**Abstract.** *The present approach intends to explore, analyze and propose fundamental research approaches and hypotheses in the field of psychosociology, namely in the research of social change and its consequences at the individual human level. By researching the bibliography related to the consequences of major social developments (the pre-modernity of community solids, the modernity of rational social solids and the postmodernity of social dynamics) and of the paradigm shifts in the field of socio-human sciences, by analyzing the theories of social change and the transition from institutionalist, structuralist definitions of social facts, to interactionist, processual, fluid ones, it is possible to arrive at the formulation of at least one hypothesis of the type of modeled and socially limited reason in postmodernity. The dimensions and instances of this shaping are the education system, consumer culture, and entertainment culture. The analysis of the aims and results of the education systems, the ability of the entertainment culture to extract the human person from the confrontation with superior models of life or action, the consumerist skills that influence and define more and more of the mental operations of contemporary man – support, at a theoretical level, the possibility of defining a new style of human reason. This – proposed to be labelled as limited or moderate reason – is meant to be sufficiently awake to maintain the functioning of rational social systems, yet passive enough not to see their limits and defects.*

**Keywords:** limited rationality, bounded rationality, postmodernism, consumer society

### 1. Modeled rational capacity

Rational capacity is the measure of the modern human. The rationality of everyday life is the condition for the transition from the communities pre-modernity to urban-capitalist-industrialized-democratic modernity. Max Weber systematically investigates and describes this process of gradual `disenchantment` of the world (Weber, 1998: 130), through which mystery, tradition, emotion, or affectivity (or, according to Ferdinand Tönnies, organic or essential will – 2016: 133-146) are replaced by intellect, rational calculation, contract, exchange, and money. Weber argues that capitalism, bureaucracy, and the legal state emerge and are maintained through rationalization. The correspondence of society's rationalization at the individual level is the transition to reflective will, that is, the acquisition of the condition of a `rational person`, a `reasonable being` who uses knowledge to gain greater control and a better position in the social world (Oxford Dictionary, 471). What kind of knowledge is this about? Knowledge includes revealed knowledge, knowledge transmitted through tradition, and knowledge confirmed through subjective-affective experiences. However, this is not the recommended type; approved knowledge is systematized, generated, and administered through state institutions. Schools – or the education system – and state-organized research are the almost exclusive sources of knowledge and, consequently, the way one can achieve social success.

The first stage of modernization quickly reached its limit of progress: instead of increasing human autonomy, the rational order limited it by losing sight of its purposes and turning means into ends ("the error of utilitarianism", the confusion of ends with means). It was expected that humans imprisoned in the iron cage of bureaucracy, industrial production lines, and civic duties would tend toward re-liberation, even if this meant a `regression` into communities (as happened in Romanian socialism). This would have occurred when human reason interrogated formal rationality or, in Weberian terms, when real rationality (reason related to values, oriented toward goals rather than means) jeopardized formal rationality

(the calculation of means and procedures, the calibration of means with goals and consequences). For this to be prevented or resolved, reason must be limited, moderated: sufficiently awake to maintain the functioning of rational social systems, yet passive enough not to see their limits and defects.

In the organizational theory proposed by Herbert A. Simon (1982), a similar concept emerges: *bounded rationality* leads us to settle for a satisfactory solution when certain cognitive limitations hinder our purely rational goal of reaching the optimal solution. However, this concept is different from the one we are considering here: rationality is limited when it reaches only the value of its own rationality, it is limited only to the pursuit of the optimal solution, without considering the articulation of this solution with others – perhaps non-rational, but important for the full balance of the individual, as much morally, as spiritually, biologically, or rationally being.

To maintain the balance of moderate – or bounded, but from our own perspective – rationality, modernity employs tools for continuously modeling and adjusting rational capacity: individualization (individual thinking is considered superior to group thinking precisely because the latter incorporates values, hierarchies, supra-individual motives, sometimes even superhuman ones, into the process), formalization (through the preeminence of procedures, algorithms of thinking), institutional validation of thought products (what is attested as knowledge and reason), dehumanization (transition to extended reason with the support of machines, calculation techniques), and so on.

Almost three generations ago, Georg Simmel (1950) could still perceive the abnormality of metropolitan life and the human type, the most advanced modernity of the moment. He observed that this is not a ‘middle social type’, in the sense of defining the average as normal. This primarily occurs because of a certain abnormality of the urban society itself, one that lacks solidarity, sociability, and spirituality. Metropolitan life is highly rationalized and achieved psychologically through a very intense nervous life of individuals and the predominance of intellect – as our most adaptable force – over sensitivity and emotions. The rationality of the economic type is linked to the domination of intellect: every quality and particularity is objectified and reduced to quantifiability in monetary terms. Another characteristic that deviates from the average of non-metropolitan societies is the accuracy of relationships, the translation of the world into numerical models, and the pursuit, at any cost, of precision (in determining equality and inequalities, in establishing meetings and conventions, etc.). This becomes possible precisely because of the calculable nature of money, which is the most efficient social vehicle. Accuracy, punctuality, and calculability, without which urban life would collapse into chaos, are not only meant to regulate external relations; they must determine the contents of life and exclude irrational tendencies and impulses that seek to shape life from within, instead of accepting a general and precisely schematized form from outside

The accuracy and precision of life's form manifest at the individual level through the incapacity for subjective reaction: blasé, as a specific trait of the metropolitan environment, consists of insensitivity towards things, their significance, and the differences between them, stemming from exhaustion caused by violent nervous demands. It represents the faithful subjective reflex of the internalization of the monetary economy, whereby money becomes the most efficient instrument of leveling, irreparably robbing things of their substance, individuality, specific, and incomparable value.

In Simmel's theory, we find the directions of reason's development in postmodernity: ignoring sensitivity and feelings leads to cold, detached thinking, detached from one's own experiences and inner life; individuals think objectively, including in what involves them, and are encouraged to self-objectify, self-quantify, and self-calculate. Precision excludes bold hypotheses, fundamental questions, the possibility of intuition, and the plurality of symbolic meanings associated with facts, things, or persons. George Ritzer (2010), half a century after Simmel, notes the imposition of principles that Simmel considered eccentric at the level of

globalized society; the contemporary world is organized and operates on the principles of fast-food restaurants, namely efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through non-human technologies.

Whole domains of human experience are excluded by this restrictive definition of reason: spirituality, solidarity, sacrifice and selflessness, morality, faith, attachment, and everything related to the possibility of transcending or deepening sensory experience or reflexive exercise beyond the interests or desires of the here and now. They must be kept outside through the perpetual exercise of moderate rationality<sup>1</sup>. This action can come to equate to anthropogenesis, with the modification of the human itself (which is also assumed in the theories of trans or posthumanism).

## **2. Education: A social laboratory for rational modeling**

In the 19th century, the child becomes a center of interest – not only within the family, but especially within society. They are the object of emotional, as well as economic, educational, and existential investment. In the new social order, they represent not only the future but also a guarantee for fulfilling already established future plans. The evolution of society must. Children will become social individuals, and the battle between the family environment and that of `social services` begins over the control of their education. They are the stake of progress, and the perpetually constructing society must be tailored to them. In fact, they must respond to the `imperatives` of the new order, from which an exaggerated attachment to communal values could divert them. They no longer belong solely to the family, as they represent the future of society; they are the producers, citizens, and soldiers of tomorrow (Aries, Duby, 1997: 127). During the French Revolution, Georges Jacques Danton said that all children "belong to the Republic before belonging to their parents", and Bonaparte insisted that "the law should take children under its protection from birth, participate in their education, prepare them for a profession, regulate how and under what conditions they can marry, travel, choose a career."

The functions of state education, of the school, are designed in the spirit of fostering the moderate rationality of future citizens. According to the American pedagogist and philosopher John Dewey (1966; apud. Hatos, 2006: 59-60), the school in liberal democratic societies (such as American society, primarily referenced) has three major functions: a) the integrative function, which refers to integrating children into adult roles (occupational, political, familial, George Herbert Mead distinguishes other functions of the school, both manifest and latent. The manifest functions of the school are as follows: 1) transmission of knowledge and 2) allocation of status. Its latent functions consist of 1) the transmission of dominant culture; 2) the promotion of social and political integration (translated as adherence

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<sup>1</sup> The thinking of man, as well as the physiology of perception, consist of the succession of two stages, namely assumption (we think at or imagine the reality) and confirmation (we know, following the confrontation with experience, empirical data, etc.). Human knowledge is only an approximation of subjective reality; nevertheless, we consider this approximation to be the truth. From a phenomenological point of view, this approximation is a belief; this belief or conviction can also appear without justification. The birth of doctrines, which can spread through the mass media to a vast number of followers, is an example of the proliferation of such a belief, which denies all the facts that can contradict it. An example is the reflex theory and the research of conditioned learning, according to which man is born as a blank page and everything he becomes is the result of his "conditioning". Thus, alternative "new man" projects are stakes for modern societies. This is visible in the field of scientific knowledge, where "the dominant opinion among scientists tends to consider more important those sciences which correspond to the point of view of a degraded and massed humanity, alienated from nature, which only believes in commercial values, being domesticated, incapable of any strong feeling and uninterested in tradition" (Lorenz, 2006:103). Scientific reductionism (which refers to the usual model of knowledge in physics, where reality is related to the ultimate unit of the atom and where the abstraction is so great that the objects of knowledge are named according to the operations through which the information about them can be obtained), quantification, and statistics dominate the disciplines that relate to organic systems with a high degree of integration, claim to be able to acquire knowledge outside of experiment or measurement, and accept subjectivity as one of the most significant phenomena of social and natural life. This erroneous orientation can be explained by the ideological pressure of consensus when faced with indoctrination.

to the dominant ideologies of society); 3) the maintenance of social control and its assurance in the future; 4) the promotion of social change. Today, especially in decentralized systems, the school is open to new influences, such as those represented by 'affirmative action groups', which promote ideologies of non-discrimination, non-violence, multiculturalism, sexual emancipation, etc. These operate primarily at the local level but also have political pressure groups or lobbying at the level of governments or international organizations (such as the UN, UNICEF, or IMF). In terms of permeability or response to such pressures, the centralization of a state's education system may either allow for rapid and efficient changes in the school curriculum (if these groups manage to ideologically penetrate the government of the state) or may block or slow down these changes if they only manifest at the local level.

Finally, according to other thinkers, the purpose of school is "simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same level that does not pose difficulties or dangers for the government, to distill and cultivate a standardized type of citizen, to create social consensus and to eliminate originality. This is the purpose in the United States (...) and this is the purpose anywhere else" (H. L. Mencken, 1924, cited in Gatto, 2018: 21).

Thus, the goals of schooling have been redefined in European and North American education and have been generalized through reform projects of national systems by the World Bank, primarily, and by some networks of NGOs and international organizations.

The objective of this process of global, uniformizing education reform is to shape generations of citizens suitable for the needs of the society projected by current centers of power. According to analysts of the phenomenon on an international scale, cited by Mircea Platon (2020), the causes of this process stem from the neoliberalism of the mentioned financial bodies (primarily the World Bank and IMF, leaders in the 1980s-90s of the ideological line known as 'The Washington Consensus', promoters of SAP/Structural Adjustment Program – aimed at promoting minimal state, privatization of public services, opening national markets, etc.). As a strategic part of the structural change mechanism, education – with all its components – is also redefined. Programs, textbooks, retraining of teachers, grading and examination systems, as well as school administration, evaluation, and financing are changed. Education as instruction for culture, considered elitist, is destroyed and replaced with a system of 'delivering education services'.

Regarding Romania, the 2000-2001 World Bank Report shows that "the country's political elites have engaged, with foreign funds and expertise, in an unprecedented process of education reform compared to countries in Europe and Central Asia" (apud. *ibidem*: 198). The Institute of Educational Sciences (ISE) promoted the model of education for the computerized society, in which the curriculum takes into account 'general abilities', as well as the mental and practical capacities of children. The framework plans were changed starting from 1992, and then the school programs were modified, shifting from those focused on what the student needs to learn to those centered on the 'competencies' they need to acquire. The reform was planned to unfold through 'contamination', akin to an epidemic – and these are the very terms used by its authors (*ibidem*: 309).

The transition from culture to competence has been – and still is – strongly advocated. The Romanian school system has to abandon the 'cult of genius', to no longer refer to geniuses. In fact, education experts from after 2000 claim there is no longer a need for geniuses, but for normal individuals, socially integrated, adapted to the 'mediocrity of the times'. A culture of mediocrity emerges, in which normalcy only means average, algorithms, predictable behaviors, simple personalities. Such an expert with recognized authority, a member of European education evaluation bodies, expressed dissatisfaction with the 'romantic glorification of genius' in Romanian pre-university education: "Genius (...) is clearly confined to the romantic imaginary of a vaguely paranoid and antisocial creator. The model is undoubtedly the image of Eminescu, the genius par excellence of Romanian textbooks, perhaps even of the entire pre-university education in Romania." Genius is not a valid educational model because, on top of being 'vaguely paranoid and antisocial', it is

predominantly masculine (gender equality is severely affected), maladjusted, undemocratic, authoritarian, and charismatic. In Romanian society, those who are ingenious are respected after education; a good professional "is ingenious, capable of complex heuristics, a genius in his profession. As such, the success of an endeavor is no longer predictable; simple problems do not have simple solutions. Finally, there is no longer any difference between a simple and a complicated problem because solutions must always be reinvented; ingenuity must always be tested." However, this should not be the path; instead, the pursuit of algorithms, procedures, methodologies, and bureaucracies that dictate to `professionals`, step by step, what needs to be done should be followed; what is not provided for in the procedure does not exist! The school system must shift away from the cult of geniuses and contest performance towards the democratic recognition of mediocrity. "The school must rehabilitate normality, value the average, well-done work, and not exceptionalism. We do not demand mentalities to change before forms change, as such a thing is impossible; we demand precisely that forms change, which can be done through transformations in curriculum frameworks and pedagogical training, so that this harmful cult of exceptionalism and genius disappears from the classrooms" (Reisz, 2010). Compulsory general education will ensure students have the necessary competencies for `linking to high school curriculum, as well as daily activities (checking bills, financial calculations, applied geometry in daily life, basic statistics, etc.); there will be a focus on adaptability to the labor market, "flexibility, attractiveness, accessibility, curriculum digitalization."

The school, whose leadership becomes `school management`, is no longer just a place of instruction, no longer tied to cultural tradition like *paideuma*; increasingly, it becomes a space for `civic action` or `crime fighting`. The National Anti-Drug Strategy 2005-2012 included the campaign *Yes to Arts! No to Drugs!*, through which the play *Anytime, with pleasure!* was conceived and performed in front of students from the sixth to twelfth grades. Deviant behaviors, vulgar language, the abusive family composed of drunkards or madmen were portrayed as art, precisely to combat what they represented. Campaigns for children's sexual education promote the sexualization of children, and anti-violence campaigns propose new violent scenarios.

The expected consequence on children is their diversion from learning towards social issues; as students, they must adopt "the mindset of an entrepreneur, who is not a great problem solver, but an opportunity discoverer" (Mircea Miclea, Minister of Education between 2004-2005). They need to demonstrate skills in building a project from a financial perspective, in terms of human and material resources, profitability, and `managing` their own educational, professional, and social careers. In the framework document elaborated by the Ministry of Education (Ecatarina Andronescu) and the Institute of Educational Sciences `Education Unites Us. Vision of the Future of Education in Romania`, it is stated: `First and foremost, education has significant implications for the economic prosperity of each individual, each community, each nation. (...) education has gradually become one of the largest businesses worldwide, and the private sector has gradually taken over a large part of the responsibility for lifelong education`; and further: "The success of the school is measured by how each child, reaching maturity, finds themselves in the best version of themselves at that moment and implicitly answers the question 'what kind of person am I, where do I excel in the globalized society, how do I remain excellent, and how can I become even better?'" (MEN, 2019, *ibidem*: 176).

Within the continuous reform of the Romanian education system (reform, continuous alignment `to date` of educational content, methods, and tools becomes part of the learning process), the role of the teacher is redefined. A 2000 report by the World Bank, the creditor of the reform of the Romanian education system, noted, among the obstacles encountered, "a very strong current of conservative educational ideas hostile to reform", largely supported by the traditionalist teaching staff: "An aging professional body is less receptive to the introduction of curriculum and teaching reforms, and the large segment composed of mothers



with families is also less inclined to leave to teach elsewhere” (ibidem: 292). ‘Strategic re-education’ of teachers (which, along with strategies for re-educating parents, forms the basis of accelerated social planning action – that is, within the duration of a single generation – of a homogeneous, controllable society) is ideologically and logistically supported by Romanian and international financial, administrative, and non-governmental organizations and is carried out through networks of NGOs (such as CEDU), Teacher Training Centers (which have taken on the mission of “transmitting the methodology and philosophy of reform and the use of new textbooks” to teachers).

Additionally, the program *Teacher As an Change Agent*, funded by Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein, aims to create a teaching body that unconditionally applies the new provisions: “The teacher, as an agent of change, is constantly concerned with major challenges, under the sign of applying the new Education Law (...) (he/she) is endowed with an entrepreneurial mindset, can restore hope and encourage action, as evidenced by the publication of articles in specialized journals”; school inspectors are “trained in the culture of democratic schooling, whose ‘guidelines’ are interculturality, transnational mobility, and school cooperation” (ibidem: 289). The SuperTeach conferences, which involve investors, IT specialists, TV celebrities, motivational speakers, etc., in debates on the teaching professional profile, outline similar directives: the school must become “friendly, digital, and train future specialists”, not an outdated system that emphasizes theory and resists change. “More important than the knowledge that students must acquire in the classroom are the relationships that teachers establish with these students. Teaching methods focus on expressing feelings, promoting an open attitude in relation to children, and encouraging them to talk about what they feel, as well as on the concept of a creative school” (ibidem: 281).

Education, emphasizing procedure and devaluing solution, stimulating sequential thinking and completely ignoring the integrity of judgment, spatially and temporally limiting children physically, intellectually, and spiritually, is unfortunately today a great psychosocial laboratory for the rational diminution of humanity.

### 3. Regression in entertainment

On George Ritzer's something-nothing spectrum (2010b), the category of non-persons appears; they are individuals without social distinction, interchangeable, indistinguishable, unbounded by a specific space (mobile) and a specific time (ephemeral); lacking personal histories, origins, or destinations; pure selves, abstractions. Milan Kundera stated that the tragedy of modern life is the “incredible lightness of being”, the ability of humans to pass through spaces and times, through the lives of others or even through their own life without leaving traces (cited in Bauman, 2000: 113).

In Plato's view, the manner in which conversation was conducted had the strongest influence on the ideas expressed or the cultural content of the conversation; the method or means greatly influenced the content. Therefore, the Socratic method is a cultural creation of antiquity and of the agora; while breaking news, daily news (decontextualized information, circulated over long distances, becoming irrelevant) constitutes the content of today's culture. Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase “the medium is the message”, and from this perspective, cultural contents and messages have fundamentally changed at least twice: once with the literacy of European populations and secondly with the advent of telecommunications.

The city is the space of entertainment. After 1350, urbanity and civility, the art of living specific to urban life, are defined in Western societies as “a set of mental attitudes that, for two centuries, slowly detached from rusticity, without overcoming traditional values” (Le Goff, 1999: 152). This evolution of mentality leads to the specification of an ethos, a worldview specific to urban life. The most obvious expressions of this ethos are as follows:

a) increased food consumption (bread is better and yet less present in food expenses, in which expenses for meat, fish, and other luxury foods are increasingly prevalent);

b) the institutionalization of prostitution (the mitigation of the gravity of bodily sin by 'clear-headed' theologians, after purgatory was established in Catholic doctrine at the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries);

c) the valorization of material gain (the canonization of some merchants); the moral barrier no longer separates the rich from the poor, but now lies between those who work for the republic and the others ("It is better to act in vain than to do nothing"; "To know how to make money is a beautiful thing and a great skill" – Paolo da Certaldo);

d) the emergence of secular education (which now occurs in the vernacular language and involves practical readings, fast and legible writing – mercantile scriptura –, arithmetic, and modern languages); in practical judgment, reason, logical deduction, accounting, and control are imposed (ibidem: 152-159).

Starting from the 16th century, Europe gradually entered the process of literacy for its populations – at least those in Northern and Western societies. The literacy rate increased from the 16th and 17th centuries onwards, but not as a linear and continuous progression, rather experiencing setbacks due to periods of war, poverty, diseases, or waves of immigrants from rural areas or the deterioration of the school network. Generally, in public documents of the time (civil or parish registers), men are proven to be more literate than women, which is natural, considering that male activity involves more activities outside the home, interactions with strangers, or with public authorities. Additionally, there are differences in literacy due to differences in social status and occupation: clergy, nobles, and big merchants are more literate than skilled craftsmen or than farmers, shepherds, fishermen, or day laborers (Chartier, 1995).

Medieval European culture, consolidated in urban environments, is thus indebted to these trends outlined by the social proliferation of the bourgeoisie but, equally importantly, to Christianity. After a period (12th-13th centuries) of affirmation of an anti-monastic urban culture (opposed to the rural structure of parish organization), urban monasteries attempt (as scientists will do six centuries later) to respond to the needs determined by urban growth. From the 13th century, the Church becomes an ally of the city, inaugurating orders of mendicant monks, new centers of urban-specific apostolate. Their efforts aim at adapting traditional education which, later on, will lead to the emergence of new urban schools, where clerics invested only with minor orders (to retain the advantages of belonging to the church, but also to take advantage of the freedoms required by the teaching profession – the professionalization of education) will teach "students who pay them for new intellectual techniques that appeal to dialectic, to rationes (reasons), and are educated through discussion (that *disputatio*, the foundation of a scientific method, scholasticism). Thus, a new worker appears on the urban scene, a new professional, a merchant of words (as his enemies say) alongside the merchant of goods, who at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, grouped into new guilds or universities" (Le Goff, 2002: 567); as a result of this process, there will even be manifestations of challenging scholastic or ecclesiastical authority, i.e., heresies. At the end of the 12th century, Étienne de Tournai, abbot of Sainte-Geneviève, placed in an ideal position to observe scholarly effervescence, indignantly remarks: "They publicly dispute, violating sacred constitutions, the mysteries of divinity, of the incarnation of the Word. [...] The inseparable Trinity is cut and chopped into pieces at the crossroads. As many doctors, so many errors, as many auditors, so many scandals, as many public squares, so many blasphemies" (idem). Nothing is absolutely serious or grave anymore; ideas can be challenged and values can be mocked.

Of course, urban culture develops significantly in its popular dimension: it is comedic, satirical, parodic, aligning itself with the same oppositional line. The individual emancipates themselves (from family, from heritage – because wealth is increasingly mobile, expressed more and more in money, from local culture), becomes educable, meaning modifiable. John Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire (1694-1778) coined the term 'tabula rasa' regarding the child's

soul. Man is influenceable and influenced, open and receptive, and acquires a better and better understanding of urban norms, of good manners.

Education does not hinder amusement and ridicule, but rather fosters them. Literacy is generally more widespread than writing skills. Its social-scale consequences consist of the emergence of new practices: individualization (no longer needing the help of community leaders, individuals who represented a community culturally, such as priests or lords), the individual's intimacy with written or read text, withdrawal from the group, new forms of piety (resulting from personal interpretation of religious texts), new ways of connecting with others and authorities (not directly, face-to-face, but mediated, through petitions, letters, written complaints, etc.). Thus, new forms of sociability are born, and many direct connections of individuals with reality are replaced by indirect connections (through written text): "Greater or lesser familiarity with writing determines, therefore, greater or lesser emancipation from the traditional forms of existence that intimately bind the individual to the respective community, which incorporates them into a similar collective, which condemns them to dependence on a series of indispensable mediators, interpreters, and readers of the divine Word or of the sovereign's decrees" (Chartier, *ibid.*: 145). A new form of conversation is generalized, "a conversation with nobody and, in fact, with everybody" (Postman, 2016: 30).

Writing, which involves a more elaborate process of instruction, only experiences progress between 1600 and 1800. In many situations, writing is a formula for mediating social relationships rejected by the masses, being associated with official acts and representatives of authorities; on the contrary, communities maintain their trust in the oral proclamation of the law. Even Johannes Gutenberg's invention, the printing press (in the mid-15th century), did not receive much appreciation in the following periods. The resistance to the spread of writing was twofold: on one hand, from ordinary people, who rejected written culture as an instrument of domination that would disrupt the traditional community; on the other hand, from intellectuals, who sought to limit the masses' access to knowledge and to preserve this access as a class privilege.

In the New World, colonization was carried out with the lesson of reading learned: "from its beginnings until the 19th century, America was dominated by the printed word and by a rhetoric based on the printed word (...). America was founded by intellectuals" (*ibid.*: 67), and the Puritan seriousness is a consequence and a testimony of a culture already matured through the systematization of written and read knowledge. However, in the mid-19th century, knowledge and communication, human experience, separate from space and time with the emergence of the telegraph and the increasing speed of transportation. Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872) patented, in 1840, a new mode of communication, so abbreviated that it contains only fragments of communication, but can cover thousands of kilometers in a second. Skeptical, philosopher Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) intuited this conversion of decreasing quantity into one of declining quality: "We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. (...) We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer to the new; but perhaps the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough" (cited in the same source: 98). Indeed, the new hypertransmission medium detaches information from its meanings and promotes irrelevance, impotence, incoherence. Four years after the opening of the first telegraph line, "the Associated Press news agency was established, and with it, the news from nowhere, addressed to no one in particular, began to spread across the nation" in a wave of informational oversaturation (*ibid.*: 101).

Communication is a new instrument for stripping things, facts, and people of meaning and importance. Not only does the mode of communication become unbalanced, but also the modes of action; action supported by information is not only not stimulated but even hindered, as information no longer supports action, its irrelevance transferring into actional impotence. Fractured time and attention (Mumford), the language of headlines and slogans,

and, finally, the proliferation of images as representations of reality have transformed the world into an object, separate from subject, fragmented in turn into a kaleidoscopic universe.

The kaleidoscope is a good metaphor for the new perception – “diverse and dynamic. Pseudoreality (false reality) is reality corrected to be televised and is called by Neil Postman the ‘peek-a-boo world’ (ibid: 114), of surprises that succeed each other in an attempt to keep the viewer awake enough to watch the images, but not awake enough to leave them. Entertainment is the new content of telecommunications, a ‘supra-ideology’ of television, the ongoing assumption that what is shown to us is for our amusement or pleasure. Education is entertainment, medicine is a spectacle, and justice or politics are other forms of entertainment in which the goal is to attract and involve people as spectators. Even religion continues its ‘popularization’ by televising mystery and ‘presenting’ the sacred. What cannot be presented must be left behind – what Marcel Gauchet called “the exit from religion” (2006).

From having the possibility of amusement to adopting it as a way of life is a value path that the European man traverses. With the onset of the post-moralistic era in the 1950s, the devaluation of duty, selflessness, sacrifice is inaugurated: “we no longer recognize the obligation to attach ourselves to anything other than ourselves” (Lipovetsky, 1996: 20), in fact, to our objectified self, much more accessible than the intimate self. Just as rational man is measurable in his objectified self, rational happiness is material: “Through the intellectual scheme of the natural harmony of interests, liberal economic thinking has rehabilitated selfish passions and private vices as instruments of general prosperity” (ibidem: 33).

The end of models, of superiority, of judgmental ideas – of ‘ought to’ – and the definition of well-being, of prosperity as the ideal way of life are the coordinates of the post-ethical revolution, of postmodernity, which does not suppress desires but exacerbates them. The show, entertainment, or communication become the material from which the new morality is fabricated; from the old values, only the painless ones remain, which reconcile work with relaxation, fun with the search for meaning, virtue with self-interest, and the future with the present. The ultimate duty, associated with individual responsibility, is “happiness if I want it”. Post-moralism is expressed through 1) objects (materialism), 2) psychologism (self-love/self-care), and 3) information. The narcissistic imperative consists of the correct concerns for sports, hygiene, bodily and behavioral aesthetics, diet, an ‘optimal management of the self, subordinated to the value of “looking/feeling better” (in terms of youthfulness, health, agility, entertainment, sex) (ibidem: 62-67).

Fun stops human reason before it reaches an understanding of the meanings it can achieve, diverts it, and destabilizes it. Today, it is one of the important dimensions of limiting and discrediting reason.

#### **4. Consumption as a way of ‘floating’**

Fun suspends the utility of reason. Consumption recovers it, but only as a tool of comparison and as a certification of easy decision-making: choice and calculation, market operations, are now recommended and applied in other areas of life as well. Life partners, jobs, housing, children, or God are increasingly evaluated similarly to consumer products in the ubiquitous stores of contemporary society.

The necessity that preceded and conditioned consumption in premodernity has turned into desire and ostentation in the modern society of abundance; in postmodernity, this is an individual choice, an internalized consumption stimulated by created desires and needs, as well as considerations of normative interests (what is healthy, ecological, altruistic, etc.); desire replaces craving<sup>1</sup>.

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1 According to Harvie Ferguson (1996), desire “ties consumption to self-expression and the notions of taste and discrimination. The individual expresses themselves through their possessions. However, for advanced capitalist society, dedicated to the continuous expansion of production, this is a very psychologically limiting framework and ultimately allows for the development of a quite different psychic economy. Desire replaces craving as the motivational force of consumption” (quoted in Bauman, 2000: 72).

According to the sociologist and philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky (2007), the consumer society has asserted itself, during the change discussed by moralists, within three distinct stages:

1) The first stage begins at the end of the 19th century and lasts until the end of World War II; it is characterized by the rapid modernization of the industrial and commercial spheres; both mass marketing and the modern consumer were invented during this time; social behavior is marked by `seduction-consumption`, `entertainment-consumption`;

2) The second stage witnesses the spread of ostentatious consumption, rather than consumption behavior determined by the correct diagnosis of needs and necessities; advertising reaches enormous proportions (already by 1960, an American family was targeted by 1500 advertising messages daily), and materialistic values, present-day values (comfort, abundance, pleasure) invade daily life;

3) The third and final stage, which began in the late 1970s, sees the unfolding of a new individualistic revolution: `lives` become privatized, individuals emancipate themselves from collective institutions (family, church, neighborhood), and consumption, in turn, becomes `intimate` or hyper-individualized, with its motivation predominantly determined by personal, emotional factors.

The events of May '68 (the protest movements of young people in Western and Central European societies) are an effect, not a cause, of these socio-economic developments. This generational rupture leads to the establishment of a morality of the individual-as-king, whose sociocultural demands must be fulfilled: legal adulthood at 18, simplification of divorce procedures, and liberalization of family life, including the legalization of abortion. The decline of tradition and traditional morality is hastened by the sudden emergence of a huge `middle class` of bureaucrats and executives, people lacking the values of work ethic, family, or religion. The convergence of left-wing and right-wing ideologies led, by the 1990s, to the emergence of `libertarian liberalism`, an ideology dominated by the newly created political value of human rights ("not the rights of the real citizen, balanced by duties, but abstract rights elevated to the level of absolutes" – Sevilla, 2009: 14). The consequence of the widespread adoption of this ethics and its integration into educational strategies is the generalization of relativism, the degradation of morality, the subjugation of traditional values to the individual's free will, and the adoption of tolerance as an excuse for absolute indifference. Tolerance, contrary to its announcement, presupposes the annulment of differences (all except those determined by material means) and the establishment of mandatory equality. This idea constitutes the framework of moral (or even legal) obligations; in fact, a form of moral correctness (Sevilla), meaning a morality revised and heavily amended by political correctness.

In the book *The Choice of Hercules: Pleasure, Duty, and the Good Life in the 21st Century* (2009), A.C. Grayling, a philosophy professor in the Anglo-Saxon academic world, examines the optimal model of life in the contemporary world, or, from a complementary perspective, the possible ethics of current civilization. The myth of Hercules' choice is invoked as a pretext for meditation: tempted in two (contrary) directions, that of tranquility, of an easy life, and that of toil and suffering, Hercules chooses the hard and narrow path (which few can endure), the path of virtue. The reward is only his good name, something that will exist after the end of his earthly career, to which he may not necessarily have direct access, the only certainty or guarantee of which is purely moral. The choice of virtue has been well received in historical and cultural contexts: antiquity, Christianity, even the founding fathers of modern United States made it the safest way to save humanity. In A.C. Grayling's analysis, a nuance of this interpretation occurs, however, with the Enlightenment. In Handel's oratorio, which musically transposes the discussed myth, Pleasure, associated with beauty and love, has some of the best verses and arias dedicated to it; Virtue, on the other hand, although victorious, is recommended with less conviction (Grayling, 2009: 23). Similarly, the author suggests that this should also be the case in social life: pleasure should be sought as an end in itself. An

intelligent ethic aims at character education, and as such, the primary target should be the cultivation of reflection, intuition, taste, and tolerance (values of consumerist postethics). The project of contemporary `virtues` aims at achieving a society where prohibitions and permissions are no longer necessary, where values are no longer absolute, and judgment is increasingly diluted individual responsibility. The goal of this (post)ethics is human prosperity, and its definition presupposes the resolution of two problems or desires: 1) first, ensuring prosperity for all (shelter, warmth, food, companionship, health, freedom, security); 2) and then, recognizing and tolerating the diversity of needs and desires (ibidem: 87-88). Prosperity is validated through consumption, therefore consumption is the supreme form of self-affirmation of the free individual.

With the shift from a supply-based economy to a demand-based one, the consumer becomes more important in social equilibrium than the producer. The *homo consumans*, the "shifted, mobile, and flexible turbo-consumer", open to experiences, informed, and disloyal, is the subject of social change. Evolved, they seek not only physical satisfaction but also psychological fulfillment, inner harmony, personal fulfillment, and in this regard, they seek new spiritualities, guides to happiness, personal development, etc. The consumerist ethos reorganizes all human behaviors, including those unrelated to the exchange of goods (family, religion, leisure time, culture, politics, etc.). Postmodernism proposes, for this purpose, a new way of "commercializing lifestyles, consumption practices expressing a new relationship between the individual and things, others, and oneself" (Lipovetsky, 2006: 18). Consumption is the new expression of human `freedom`. "The model of the neo-consumer is not the manipulated and hypnotized individual, but the mobile individual, the individual in constant motion who acquires things in the hope, often deceived, of taking possession of their own life" (ibidem: 59); self-realization (the objective variant of the person) is achieved through new experiences, and the hedonistic attraction of eternal beginnings leads to the repetition of one's own beginnings, in `regressive` consumption, in infantilization.

And yet, reason, like the consumers freedom, which a) has more and more options and freedom of choice, but b) more and more of his life is integrated into the logic and commercial system, is drastically limited. It is not easy to choose what to buy. Consumption is a race without a finish line; no prize is satisfying enough, and desire becomes an end in itself.

"In a consumer society, everything is a matter of choice, except the obligation to choose – an obligation that turns into dependence and therefore is no longer perceived as an obligation. (...) If buying means scanning the array of possibilities, examining, touching, feeling, manipulating the displayed items, comparing their prices with the contents of our wallet or the credit limit of our credit card, putting some of them in the cart and some back on the shelf - then we buy as much outside the stores as we do inside them; we buy on the streets and at home, at work and on vacation, awake and in dreams. Whatever we do and whatever name we attach to our activity, it is a way of shopping, a modeled activity similar to purchasing. The code in which our life policy is written derives from shopping practice." (Bauman, 2000: 70) – and thus, this `life policy` becomes a variant of consumption.

The philosophy of life best adapted to the universal consumption model is detachment. The `cool` mode is the existence of one `free from feelings`, intimacy, community; it is social detachment, tolerance, and indifference. Cool people live in a "world of casual sex, divorce as commonplace, and non-possessive relationships. (...) Cool is a lifestyle with low expectations compensated by shopping. Personal taste is elevated to a complete ethos – you are what you like and, therefore, what you buy. (Dick Pountain, David Robins, cited in Bauman, 2001: 39).

Detachment, objectification, comparative judgment of the living world according to the abstract-commercial model, and many other habits that can be discovered in the obsessive practice of hyperconsumption are ways of rational limitation and diminishment. Small but infinitely numerous reasonings, simple calculations, quick and satisfactory solutions, immediate material, and palpable rewards of reasonable decisions occupy our minds and

lives. Too many questions, too much lucidity can lead to actions that would remove the rational human from the planned social circuit of postmodernity.

The proposal and interpretation of the hypothesis of moderated rationality do not aim to provide an answer or explanation; its intentionally designed role is to serve as a stimulus for social thought among the public and as a platform for honest psychosocial reflection for specialists in the field of social sciences and humanities. It is a question that, even if it may seem forced, is no more dangerous than silence.

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## EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC OPINION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA REGARDING THE ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION 2003-2024

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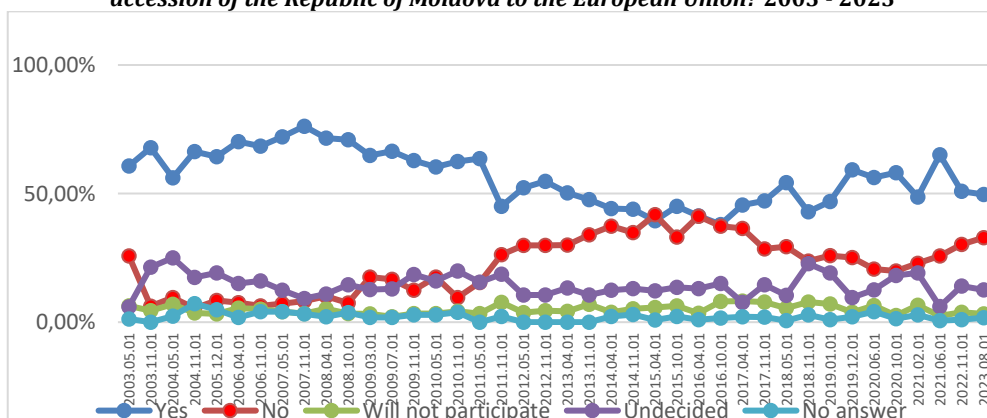
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**Abstract:** *The Barometer of Public Opinion in the Republic of Moldova, constantly conducted for more than two decades by the Institute for Public Policy in Chisinau, gives us an overview of the evolution of voting intentions in a referendum on Moldova's accession to the European Union. The data from these polls are worth looking at from the perspective of the evolution of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union over the years, but also in terms of the major geopolitical events of recent decades. Internal political developments and the way they have marked the support of Moldovan citizens for EU membership should not be left aside either.*

**Keywords:** Republic of Moldova, European Union, accession, geopolitics, opinion polls

At the end of 2024 in the Republic of Moldova a referendum will be held in which citizens will have to answer the question "Do you agree with the country's accession to the European Union?" The initiative belongs to President Maia Sandu, and the referendum will be held in parallel with the elections for president. Beyond the interpretations given to the timing, it is worth looking at how the attitude of Moldovan citizens towards EU membership has evolved over time. The Institute for Public Policy in Chişinău (IPP) conducts twice a year an extensive survey on attitudes towards various issues (Institute for Public Policy, „Barometer of Public Opinion” 2003-2023). Since 2003, the question "In the event of a referendum on Moldova's accession to the European Union, how would you vote?" has been asked on a regular basis. (fig. 1). The data collected by IPP show a turbulent evolution of pro-European sentiment in Moldova over the last 20 years and somewhat counter-intuitively. At first glance it seems that the pro-European inclination of Moldovan citizens increases when pro-Russian parties are in power and decreases when the country is governed by pro-European parties. In order to shed some light on the fluctuations of this graph, I will try to present its evolution taking into account domestic and foreign political events that have been likely to affect the pro-European sentiment in the Republic of Moldova. After almost 30 years of relations between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, an algorithm of "rapprochement" has taken shape in the context of the balance between the EU and Russia in the former Soviet space. Each Russian intervention is followed by an EU action, which in turn generates a next Russian intervention.

**Fig. 1 Evolution of the answer to the question *How will you vote in a referendum regarding the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union? 2003 - 2023***





### **1. The beginning of European Union - Republic of Moldova relations**

Direct relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union began in November 1993 when the President of Chisinau Mircea Snegur sent a letter to the European Council and the European Commission requesting the opening of official relations. On 28 November 1994, the EU-Moldova Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed with the aim of "establishing a regular political dialogue [...] to strengthen the rapprochement between the Community and the Republic of Moldova and to support the political and economic changes taking place in the country". On 2 October 1995 the Interim Agreement on trade between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union was signed (Racheru, 2020:30).

At the same time Mircea Snegur signed on 21 December 1991 the Alma-Ata Protocol establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Chisinau Parliament did not ratify Moldova's accession to the Commonwealth of Independent States until 26 April 1994, after the elections in February 1994, which were won by the pro-Russian Democratic-Agrar Party of the ex-Soviet nomenklatura in the second and third echelons of power (Cașu, 2011).

Until 2001, no significant progress had been made in EU-Moldova relations. At the end of 2001, the European Commission published the Country Strategy for Moldova 2002-2006, which stated that: "The EU's economic and trade relations with Moldova are at a minimal level. The Republic of Moldova has limited trade and investment potential for the EU. But the EU's objective is to help Moldova overcome the current economic crisis by diversifying export markets and increasing exports to non-CIS countries... Another objective of the EU is to assist Moldova in the fight against criminal phenomena, corruption in the public and private sectors."(European Union External Action, 2004-2006)

On 25 November 2003, the Communist President of the Republic of Moldova Vladimir Voronin rejected the Kozak Plan, which envisaged the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict through federalization with 3 subjects (Moldova, Transnistria and Gagauzia) and the conclusion of an agreement for the presence of Russian troops in Transnistria for 20 years (Basiul, 2016). Talks were extremely advanced, President Putin was expected in Chisinau on 25 November to sign this agreement, but at the last moment, after consultations with the US and the EU, President Voronin gave up on signing this agreement. In 2004, Brussels launched the European Neighbourhood Policy, a programme that included Moldova with the aim of "spreading stability, security and prosperity within the EU to neighbouring countries [...], through a format that is distinct from EU membership"(European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, 2007-2013).

In 2005, the EU-Moldova Action Plan was agreed upon, a document in which the following priorities were included: support for efforts to find a viable solution to the Transnistrian conflict, political stability and the enforcement of democratic norms and the rule of law, the organization of parliamentary elections in 2005 in accordance with European standards, respect for freedom of the press and free expression, social measures (poverty reduction), improvement of the investment climate, strengthening of the state's administrative and judicial instruments, ensuring an effective customs control system (to prevent trafficking of any kind, illegal migration)(European Commission, 2008).

The European Commission's Communication on the implementation of the tasks set out in the EU-Moldova Action Plan agreed in 2005 noted that in the period January-December 2008, "Moldova has been a partner that has made substantial progress in adopting reforms. Overall, Moldova has made progress in most areas of the ENP Action Plan. Important progress has been made in reforming the judiciary [...] positive cooperation with the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) [...] increased cooperation with the EU on regional and international issues". The document also noted that it "does not represent an overall assessment of the political and economic situation in the Republic of Moldova"(Commission Staff Working Paper, 2008).

Since 2003, officials in Chisinau have had a pro-European foreign policy discourse, with President Voronin claiming that "Moldova's accession to the EU is one of the strategic priorities of foreign policy". The PCRM government also adopted in 2003 the first internal document detailing the European course of the Moldovan state - the Concept of European Integration of the Republic of Moldova. In 2003-2004, the Communist authorities also created institutional structures responsible for the European integration of the Republic of Moldova: the Parliamentary Commission for European Integration, the Department for European Integration within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subdivisions for European integration in all ministries were created, the diplomatic mission of the Republic of Moldova to the EU was opened (and in response, the European Union Delegation was opened in Chisinau)(Institute for Public Policy, 2006).

In 2006, the Chisinau authorities, in partnership with civil society, drafted the first document that formally defined a European path for the Republic of Moldova - the European Strategy of the Republic of Moldova. The document aimed to "prepare the country for future accession to the EU" <sup>122</sup> and was structured according to the cooperation objectives proposed by Brussels in the EU-Moldova Action Plan. Moldova's bilateral relations with the EU, although formally advanced from one stage of cooperation to the next, have been permanently affected in the informal framework by the perception of political leaders and civic activists in Chisinau that the EU has never offered a clear path towards European integration.

The dynamic start of the Republic of Moldova-EU relationship is reflected in the data collected by IPP, between 2003-2009 support for EU membership was extremely high, consistently above 65%, with a peak of 76% at the end of 2007, after Romania's accession to the EU. At the same time the percentage of those who would have voted against EU membership remained consistently below 10%.

## **2. Pro-European Coalition 2009 - 2016**

On 6 April 2009, protesters in Chisinau occupied the presidential and parliamentary buildings demanding a repeat of the 5 April parliamentary elections won by the communists. The repression by the security forces was extremely harsh, with acts of torture of those arrested. Although the Communist authorities in Chisinau accused Romania of organising the protests, a subsequent investigation revealed that the organisers were from Russia (Timpul, 2010). Repeat elections in July 2009 brought to power the Alliance for European Integration made up of 4 parties (PLDM, PL, PD and AMN). The new government in Chişinău has adopted a policy of accelerated rapprochement with the European Union.

In May 2009, the European Union included the Republic of Moldova, along with 5 other post-Soviet states (Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan), in the European Neighbourhood Policy of the Eastern Partnership. The aim of the Eastern Partnership institutional project was to strengthen the political association and economic integration with the European Union of the six post-Soviet states in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus.

The declared pro-European government in Chisinau - Alliance for European Integration (AIE) - formed on 25 September 2009, decided on 13 November 2009 to open negotiations with the European Union for an Association Agreement. The dialogue between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union included three levels of negotiations: the framework document of the Association Agreement, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and the visa liberalisation regime. The technical negotiations on the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union were conducted swiftly and were concluded on all three tracks in 2013. An important aspect of the negotiations was the Republic of Moldova's insistence that the European Union offer a clear prospect of membership by mentioning the possibility of candidate status in the agreement. Despite all the efforts made, Chisinau did not succeed in obtaining from Brussels a guarantee of

Moldova's future political integration into the European Union by stipulating in the text of the Association Agreement a possible future candidate state status.

The next geopolitical shock in the region was the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine in February 2014, which gave a new impetus to the relationship between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. On 28 April 2014, the Council of the European Union amended the European Union Regulation on the abolition of the visa requirement for short-stay travel for citizens of the Republic of Moldova holding a biometric passport in the Schengen area. After fulfilling a number of conditions required by the EU, such as the adoption of the much-publicised law on ensuring equality, the Republic of Moldova was the first Eastern Partnership state to meet all the criteria of the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation.

On 27 June 2014, in Brussels, together with Ukraine and Georgia, the Republic of Moldova signed the Association Agreement with the European Union. The Parliament of the Republic of Moldova ratified the Association Agreement on 2 July 2014. The Association Agreement officially entered into force on 1 January 2016, after ratification by all EU countries. From the time of the start of negotiations until the signing of the Association Agreement, the Republic of Moldova has gone through several difficult institutional reforms, making a number of reforms and legislative changes that have brought the Republic of Moldova closer to the institutional rigours of the European Union. The Association Agreement replaced the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, raising Moldova's institutional relationship with the European Union to a higher level. Unlike the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, the Association Agreement was a more complex document, whose objective was to modernise the country.

The Republic of Moldova suffered an acute period of political instability between 2009-2014. The results of the July 2009 repeat parliamentary elections were not very different from those of April: Party of Communists 60 seats, Liberal Democratic Party 18 seats, Liberal Party 15 seats, Democratic Party 12 seats, Our Moldova Alliance 11 seats. A coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Democratic Party and the Our Moldova Alliance was in power, but no president was elected. Parliament's failure to elect a new president led to early parliamentary elections in November 2010 which brought only minor changes to the previous configuration: Party of Communists 42 seats, Liberal Democratic Party 32 seats, Liberal Party 12 seats, Democratic Party 15 seats. For 2 years until 2012, the parliament failed to elect a president either, and it was only in March 2012 that the independent Nicolae Timofti was elected for a 4-year term. Clashes within the pro-European ruling coalition have had a negative impact on pro-European sentiment in Moldova. Support for eventual EU membership has fallen steadily since 2011, to below 50%.

### **3. Domestic political instability 2014 - 2019**

The effects of the Russian invasion of Crimea on the Republic of Moldova were felt in late 2014 and early 2015, when it was revealed that the Moldovan banking system had been embezzled (including the former Prime Minister Vlad Filat), which has unbalanced the precarious finances of the government in Chisinau. On top of this, a large-scale money laundering operation coordinated by Moscow in Chisinau has also come to light, destroying the last shred of confidence in Moldova's banking system. The political effects have been the break-up of the Alliance for European Integration and the emergence of a joint opposition of Russophile and pro-European parties against the Democratic Party and its financier Vladimir Plahotniuc.

The November 2014 parliamentary elections resulted in a parliament in which a new anti-European party, the Party of Socialists, has emerged from the Party of Communists. The structure of the 2014-2019 parliament was as follows: Socialist Party - 25 seats, Liberal Democratic Party - 23 seats, Communist Party - 21 seats, Democratic Party - 19 seats, Liberal Party - 13 seats. During this period, pro-European governments followed one another with

unusual speed even for the Republic of Moldova: Iurie Leanca (May 2013 - February 2015) (Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party), Chiril Gaburici (February - July 2015) (Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party), Valeriu Streleț (July - October 2015) (Liberal Democratic Party, Democratic Party, Liberal Party), Pavel Filip (January 2016 - June 2019) (Democratic Party, Liberal Party, independents)

By signing the Association Agreement with the European Union in the summer of 2014, the Republic of Moldova made several commitments in its relationship with the EU. In the first year of implementation of the Association Agreement, Moldova experienced a political crisis and a major banking fraud. As a result, the pro-European political parties in government fell drastically in the electorate's preferences, with the negative image of these parties having a direct reflection on the EU's popularity among the population. According to the Barometer of Public Opinion (BOP) data, the EU fell in public preference from 67% in July 2009 to 40% in March 2015. After the banking crisis, the EU suspended budget support to Moldova.

In particular, the 2015-2017 period shows an increase in the intention to vote against the Republic of Moldova's accession to the EU, up to 41%, at the same level as the intention to vote in favour of EU accession, mainly due to the electoral campaign of socialist Igor Dodon, who has been betting on a reorientation of the Republic of Moldova towards Russia. This campaign contained a number of anti-EU messages, in antithesis to the pro-European campaign run by Maia Sandu at the end of 2016. However, the election of Igor Dodon as president did not lead to a break in relations with the European Union or a cancellation of the documents already signed.

#### **4. Pro-European comeback**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 22 February 2022 triggered a new rapprochement of the former Soviet space with the European Union. On 28 February 2022 Ukraine applied for EU membership, followed on 3 March 2022 by the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. On 5 May 2022 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for macro-financial assistance to Moldova, its integration into the European single market and increased sectoral cooperation, expressing concern about the emergence of attacks in Transnistria and calling on the European Commission and the European Council to grant Moldova the status of candidate country for accession to the European Union (European Parliament, 2022).

On 12 May 2022, the Government of the Republic of Moldova submitted to the European Commission the reply to the questionnaire for granting the status of candidate country for accession. On 18 May 2022 the President of the Republic of Moldova Maia Sandu gave a speech in the European Parliament in which she said that her country is facing problems caused by corruption and economic problems that can only be overcome with the help of the European Union. Maia Sandu stressed that Chisinau wants to join the EU while maintaining the peace process with Transnistria and the neutrality status of the Republic of Moldova. Maia Sandu also called for Moldova's application for EU membership to be considered on an individual basis, which would mean rejecting the creation of a Ukraine - Moldova - Georgia accession package (Sandu, 2022).

French President Emmanuel Macron said on 9 May 2022 that the process of Ukraine's accession to the European Union could take several decades and proposed as an alternative Ukraine's accession to a "European Political Community", a structure not yet defined, but which could be joined by countries that share the values and objectives of the European Union, for example Great Britain and Ukraine (implicitly the offer is also open to the Republic of Moldova). President Macron's idea was supported by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (RFE/RL, 2022). The EU membership candidacy of Ukraine and Moldova is also questioned by officials from Austria (Euractiv, 2022) and the Netherlands (Politico, 2022).

On 17 June 2022, the European Commission recommended granting the Republic of Moldova the status of candidate country for accession (European Commission, 2022). In its

opinion, the European Commission calls on the Republic of Moldova to implement a set of reforms that are a condition for opening the accession negotiation chapters: justice reform, the fight against corruption and organised crime, public administration and public finance reform. The European Commission states that a special status for the Transnistrian region is being considered to resolve the Transnistrian conflict. The European Council of 23-24 June 2023 endorsed the European Commission's view on candidate status for the Republic of Moldova and announced that the next steps will be determined once the list of reforms has been fully implemented.

The return of support for EU membership can be seen after 2019 when the percentage of people who voted in favour of membership rose to 60%, while the percentage of people who voted against membership fell to 19%. This increase coincided with the electoral campaign in the February 2019 parliamentary elections when there was a reconfiguration of the Moldovan Parliament: Party of Socialists 35 seats, Party of Action and Solidarity/ Platform for Dignity and Truth 26 seats, Democratic Party 30 seats, Shor Party 7 seats, independents 3 seats. Another election campaign that brought the issue of EU membership to people's attention was the presidential campaign at the end of 2020, won by Maia Sandu over Igor Dodon. The governmental crisis in early 2021 led to early parliamentary elections and in July 2021 a new Parliament was elected with the following composition: the Action and Solidarity Party 63 seats, the Party of Socialists/Party of Communists 32 seats, the Shor Party 6 seats. This election campaign brought back the vote in favour of accession to the European Union to 65%, an overtaking of the 60% threshold that has not happened for ten years.

## 5. Conclusions

The key foreign policy moments that influenced the voting intention in favour of Moldova's accession to the European Union could be summarized as follows: 2003 - rejection of Moldova's federalization under the umbrella of the Russian Federation; 2007 - Romania's accession to the European Union; 2008 - invasion of Georgia by the Russian Federation; 2014 - invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation; 2022 - resumption of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Each of these moments has had an impact on the support of Moldovan citizens for EU membership.

In particular, the violent interventions of the Russian Federation in the countries of the former Soviet space (2008 Georgia, 2014 Ukraine, 2022 Ukraine) have had the effect of accelerating Moldova's rapprochement with the European Union. Some of the events in the Republic of Moldova that have an impact on its relations with the European Union originated in the Russian Federation (violent protests in April 2009, collapse of the banking system in 2014-2015). The emergence of an avowedly pro-Russian and anti-European party (the Party of Socialists) and its anti-European propaganda during the various electoral cycles from 2014-2020 led to a massive increase in voting intentions against EU membership. However, the resumption of the accession process in the context of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine after 2022 has brought voting intentions in favour of EU membership back to over 60%.

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## TECHNOCRACY AND THE SO-CALLED SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

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**Abstract:** *The contention of the present paper is to show that Shosanna Zuboff's Surveillance Capitalism misses the object of its critique. The so-called new phenomenon of surveillance capitalism is blamed on neoliberal politics and not on the development of what Jacques Ellul called la technique or the Anglo-Saxon translation thereof the technological society or the technological system. Some hints could have led her in the right direction, as she mentions the Durkheimian notion of the wish to live efficiently. As the French sociologist Jacques Ellul pointed out, the technique is not a neutral instrument. It is a universe of means, a way to be in the world, and also a recipe for efficiency. It is a system that searches for efficiency and, during this process, transforms everything. Surveillance capitalism and the loss of liberty are the products thereof. This is the main drive behind the whole process, leaving Neoliberalism aside.*

**Keywords:** surveillance capitalism, technocracy, freedom, Zuboff, Ellul

### 1. Introduction

In Shoshana Zuboff's book *Surveillance Capitalism*, the reader is confronted with the new political, economic, and social reality that the apparently new form of capitalism puts forward and that modifies the way people live and also that modifies the power relations that exist in society. Surveillance capitalism is not something located in the West but has spread to the entire world. This capitalism has, according to Zuboff, some distinctive features that set it apart from industrial or financial capitalism. Its main source of existence and wealth is human behavior. It is a new force, one that brings new dangers, which are not easy to recognize or to acknowledge since they are, by definition, new. This is something that leaves society completely unprepared for those dangers or bad consequences. It is an unprecedented rogue force, driven by new economic imperatives, a force that disregards social norms and nullifies the human rights associated with human autonomy – freedom. Basically, it destroys the basis for a democratic society. The author affirms that in face of this new danger humanity is confronted with new categories are needed to understand this new and menacing phenomenon of that surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2023: 26). To understand this unknown and mysterious enemy, one must hunt after the puppeteer, not the puppet. The confusion between surveillance capitalism and the technologies or the techniques it uses must be avoided. Surveillance capitalism is an action not a technology, according to the author. It is a logic of action that permeates technology and puts it to work (Zuboff 2023: 27). According to this view technology is innocent. The surveillance capitalist would like us to believe that their undemocratic and totalitarian practices are unavoidable consequences of their technologies (for example sharing illegal obtained data from the behavioral surplus with the intelligence community). The conviction of Zuboff is that technology is good, an instrument that is misused by the greedy surveillance capitalist.

A quick look at Jacques Ellul's works on technique or the technical system or at Bertrand Russel's works about the scientific organization of society would lead to a different view of things and of the innocence of technology. Anticipating, a look at Ellul's sociology works on technique would dispel the idea that surveillance capitalism is truly a new phenomenon and that technique is a neutral thing that can be used for good or for evil just like a usual instrument. Ellul highlighted the fact, just as later Habermas did, that in the modern world, plus-value stems not only from the efforts of the workers but also from machines (Habermas, 2020: 80-81), that technique is a system whose dynamism and development produces subservience. For Friederich Jünger, capitalism is a technique, a system that is born

out of a certain way to handle money. That science and technology are not friends of democracy can be found in the writings of the Frankfurt School member Erich Fromm, too. Technique/technology, this much is true, does not exist in a void. It does not exist alone, isolate from economy, politics. Technologies are always means, not goals in themselves, and they are subordinated to economic goals and aims. The logic of the surveillance capitalism cannot be reduced to the artificial/mechanical intelligence used by it. The economical imperatives that are underlying it are, to Zuboff, the puppeteers (Zuboff 2023: 28). In fact, surveillance capitalism works according to the technocratic slogan: Science discovers/invents – Industry applies – Man conforms himself. Moreover, modern science is by its nature technocratic, and it is driven by an impulse or will to power (Russell 2009). What modern science and technology are doing and their origin were described by the English logician and philosopher just mentioned. He acknowledges their technocratic quality and that they are based solely on the will to power, which will render them cruel (Russell, 2009: 195). The Scientific Outlook was published so man can see how a technocratic society would look like. A taste from the same poison it can be also found in the Impact of Science on Society wherein Russell describes how such a society would work, a society where people have no power and where in school children are being conditioned to think that snow is black. Of course, anyone who might disagree will be punished.

According to Russell, Knowledge has two sources. One is love; the other one is the quest for power. This source is clearly linked to technology, with the wish to induce in something the changes one wants. Because of the success recorded by modern science (that is technology since modern science is its servant), the only wellspring of scientific and technological activity is the lust/will/quest for power. “Thus, science has more and more substituted power-knowledge for love-knowledge, and as this substitution becomes completed science tends to become more and more sadistic.” (Russell 2009: 198). This has consequences and changes the way truth is seen. Truth is increasingly seen in a purely pragmatic and instrumental way. The value of science lies in technology, in the power of transforming the world and ourselves. The wielding of this power and its use on the world and society – on humanity itself – is possible when one gives up asking metaphysical questions; mindlessness seems to be a kind of prerequisite for the scientific worldview but also a necessity. Individuals should not be able to raise questions that question technocracy and the use of technology. This view Russell has dubbed “the governmental view of truth or a governmental way of considering society”. The same view is expressed in other words by F. Jünger. The German thinker sees that during the age of technological progress, the relationship between science and technology changed. Science ceased to be an uninterested search for truth. The scientist had become a functionary in the industry, a functionary of the laboratory, of the scientific organization of society. Sciences had become auxiliaries to technology (Jünger, 2010: 100). Instead of dubbing the aims and goals of technological progress efficiency, he names it savage exploitation: Raubau, Ausbeutung. But modern technology is no restrained to the exploitation of nature. It aims at something higher: humanity and the state. It aims at replacing the state and, thus, man with a technical organization, an organization which is built exclusively on a technical-mechanical, causal way of thinking (even if it incorporates some kind of teleology like cybernetics does).

## 2. Surveillance capitalism

Understanding surveillance capitalism – the stated aim of the book, discerning its laws or *Gesetzlichkeit* – lies at the heart of Zuboff’s preoccupation with it. Understanding this phenomenon opens an old can of worms. The problem is deeper than an economic system set up by greedy individuals. It opens the deeper and older question about man and society (Zuboff 2023: 29). As Jürgen Habermas once found out, a feature of a society overwhelmed by technological development, is the *Entpolitisierung der Masse der Bevölkerung* - the depoliticization of the great mass of the population – justified by the promotion of a



technocratic consciousness. One of the more popular expressions of this view is the seemingly popular conviction that politicians do nothing or that they are incompetent and, instead of political debate as the basis for political/social life, one should run things based on decisions taken by (unelected) experts, technocrats. The spreading of this attitude in society means that the categories of the technocratic thought – what Habermas names as *zweckrationales Handeln* and *adaptives Verhalten* – permeate and form the day-to-day life of the people, of both the institutions, and individuals alike. It means that the technological and scientific models of thought won power and imposed themselves there (Habermas 2020: 91). This leads to the denial of difference between praxis and technique/technology, that is to the evacuation of the normal, moral way of feeling and doing things based on the cultural heritage, mores, habits, moral judgments, etc. One of the main components that is and will be lost in this process is the production of a society in which unjust domination will no longer be the case (*Herstellung einer von Herrschaft freien Kommunikation*). In plainer terms, the technocratic attitude is interested in extending the technical power to all aspects of society.

The German thinker saw already in the sixties that technological development will go beyond the institutional frames wherein it took place and that it produces a technocratic attitude whose target was the transformation of society. “Andere haben es aber al seine technische Aufgabe verstanden: sie wollen die Gesellschaft dadurch, dass sie sie nach dem Muster selbstgeregelter Systeme zweckrationalen Handelns und adaptives Verhalten rekonstruieren, in derselben Weise unter Kontrolle bringen wie die Natur.” “(Other understood their task as something technical: they wat to reconstruct society after the model of self-regulating behavior and adaptive behavior and to bring it under control in the same way humanity did to nature”) (Habermas, 2020: 96). Habermas acknowledges the fact that there are projects/plans that intend to rebuild society based on a cybernetic model and to control it just like man controls nature; he mentions the name of Hermann Kahn. These ideas were not reserved to the Western scientists in sixties. Socialist thinkers had the same idea. Such an enterprise, thinks Habermas, would lead to the elimination of the most important and essential dimension of becoming human, dimension that is mediated in normal and free discourse. Such ideas have come to pass, one proponent of this cybernetic model of society being Karl W. Deutsch. An important observation from Haberman is that emancipation from hunger and effort does not mean emancipation from bondage and humiliation.

The main claim of surveillance capitalism pertains to human behavior, practically demanding something like exclusive property rights over it despite the claims of the people involved in the process of reaping the data and, thus, exploited. Human experience is the main prime matter of surveillance capitalism. Along the necessary date for making a program work or necessary to the improvement thereof, there is something like a supplemental behavioral value/data that becomes the target of the greed of this new economic system. This so-called behavioral surplus is then considered to be the intellectual property of the company and is, thus, introduced in the circuit of advanced fabrication processes dubbed automatic intelligence. Those acquired behavioral data become a new kind of product namely a predictive product (Zuboff 2023:20).

Those products are deemed to predict what a person will do in the present, sooner, and later. A new market or markets come to be, markets that one might call predictive behavioral markets! The opening and exploitation of those markets had rendered the new surveillance capitalism very wealthy. To further this, the surveillance capitalists have discovered that they must intervene on the playfield in order to shape our behavior and to direct it to obtain profitable outcomes; this of course, is not new, it is propaganda. For the companies caught in the web of this new form of economy, the main thrust behind technological development is no longer knowledge, the automation of the flows of information but rather power. Our behavior must become automated, so it might become more predictive, eliminating risks for investment. According to the author, here is one of the main features of the surveillance capitalism. Profit-making is important, but something worse has displaced it:

the shift from profit to power and the attempt to transform people's behavior into a machinal one. One could say, people are driving (or are being herded) toward becoming machines. To further more gain made necessary the subordination of the means of production to increasingly complicated and comprehensive means of behavioral modification. A new kind of power is thereby born, a power dubbed by the author as instrumentarian, which consists in manipulating people's behavior, feelings, etc. toward others' ends through the medium made of networked smart devices, spaces, institutions, etc. The whole society finds itself in the middle of the process of intensifying the behavior modification means. According to the American author, this contradicts the initial dream or utopia of a digital era that promised a better free, and equal future for all.

The digital connection, or the digital world is not a gate toward a better, equal, and free society. It is a mean subordinated to other peoples' commercial ends. This surveillance capitalism is feeding off every aspect of human experience, or, in the terms of Friedrich Jünger, it is built upon *Ausbeutung und Raubau*, on savage exploitation (of nature, including human nature), on consumption of the prima mater it is exerted on. Google is supposed to have invented this new kind of capitalism, followed along with Facebook or Microsoft, etc. This development was huge helped even by the events of 11 September 2001 and the legislation that came along, legislation that promoted generalized surveillance. And in the uncharted territories of the internet there was little resistance or no hindrances from the part of the authorities or competitors. According to Zuboff the authorities have adopted the same new aptitudes/attitudes of the new kind of capitalism. Surveillance capitalism has become the way of most of the enterprises that do online business, work: surveillance and extracting behavioral surplus, making it proprietary for the firm. But this business model has expanded and is no longer restricted to the online world. This new capitalism is not based on reciprocity between the consumers and the surveillance capitalist – the one who now held power on people's life. No reciprocity from the surveillance capitalists' side, but only promises that work as hooks that catch or attract pray – our own personal experiences, aspirations, etc. The customers of surveillance capitalism are no customers at all.

Mankind and its inner life are the object of the appropriation and alienation. The true customers are the enterprises that must gain from the transaction of the future behavioral markets, not us. Since the internet has become central to social life, surveillance has been generalized and people pay for their own dominance by an outside force. Commerce - central to human activities nowadays – becomes the vehicle for generalized and intimate surveillance. The asymmetry of power is huge. The forces that exert surveillance know everything or almost everything about the people and possess a power that the knowledge has. Meanwhile, the public doesn't know anything about the surveillance capitalism, or about its structures and way of proceedings. Surveillance capitalism gathers new knowledge incessantly, but this knowledge is reserved are for the surveillance capitalists, not for the large public (Zuboff 2023: 23). Without the dependence on internet, things would not go so smoothly for this new system of oligarchical power. This affects negatively the wish or need that humans feel to lead an effective/efficient life. This dominance and dependency on the internet leads people to gaslight themselves, to rationalize the situation.

The economic imperatives are the bad guys according to the view espoused by Zuboff. They nullify democratic structure, rights of personal autonomy and the good things that older, industrial capitalism had achieved. Henry Ford comes as a hero in this narrative and his understanding that a new, better, and humane economic and social order, based on capitalism, should produce new way of understanding and perceiving the needs of the people and to satisfy them; a new economic model was needed to translate these practices in profit. Ford understood society needed a new social compact. The approach of Zuboff to the problems posed by the surveillance capitalism – or surveillance society is optimistic. In her view, surveillance capitalism was not generated by zealous technocrats, but by a mutation that learned to exploit the historical condition that surrounds it. As already stated, the book is

intended to set up and formulate the analytical concepts and the hermeneutical frame that would allow people to bring order into an array of very different and multiple phenomena that, at the first glance, do not show an ordering principle. Exploiting and confiscating the most intimate and personal experiences of individuals is a serious matter.

The stakes of this enterprise of understanding what surveillance capitalism is are very high since it is about the future of mankind, about the fundamental right to a life and a future that takes place on the basis of moral autonomy, on the right to freely imagine and project one's life, to intend it and to build it up.

Surveillance capitalism express itself in a networked, ubiquitous, computational infrastructure, a fundamental antidemocratic view on society and social relationships. This is a new historical creation, contends Zuboff. It should not be taken to be a totalitarian one. This infrastructure or the society to which it tends should not be confused with totalitarianism, although it is deeply antidemocratic. Totalitarianism is, according to this view, the taking in possession of the entire real of the state, a project of total possession, while the instrumentarianism is something different. The differences between those two should not be ignored. Not the state is the focus of this new instrumentarianism, but the market. The market becomes a realm of total certainty, an undertaking made possible by the existence of the digital medium (Zuboff 20123: 33). Since the market seems to be the central point of surveillance capitalism, one can't think of it as totalitarianism, according to Zuboff.

### 3. Rationalization of Society

What does *zweckrationales Handeln* phrase mean? Action oriented towards a rational goal? It means more than that. And it is cognate to the process of *Rationalisierung* (rationalization) – the expansion of rational decisions based on rational criteria in all areas of life. *Rationalisierung*/rationalization is an expression introduced by Max Weber to describe the way the capitalist economy worked. It was meant to characterize the bureaucratic dominance/dominion/rule and its expansion to the whole of society. Its roots lie in the process of industrialization of society. It spilled over from the original realm and exported to all areas of life (Habermas, 2020: 48). It also means that standards of instrumental action gradually became crucial for the realm of social and moral action. In its original domain, rational decision denoted either the way the existing means are organized, though in the other domains it refers to the way one chooses between alternatives. When talking about rationalizing society one talks about the institutionalization of the technical and scientific progress and the patterns of thought and feeling they induce.

The extension of this new criteria in society, the influence of technique and science led to the transformation of the existing institutions whereby the old forms of legitimacy are displaced, and nullified. This process might be called secularization or disenchantment of images, symbols, myths, other narratives, etc. that had until then oriented human life and action. Technique as such is dominion over nature and man. Herbert Marcuse's interpretation of rationalization goes in this direction. Not reason is the problem, but the process of imposing through rationalization of an unacknowledged form of domination. This kind of rationality is bound to the right selection of strategies, correct application of technologies and purposeful construction of systems. Those are not accessible to reflection or to rational reconstruction, being taken out of the context of common interest, reserved only for a few. This type of reason and rationality pertains only to relations that are accessible to a possible technical dominance/disposal. They demand a type of action and dominance over society and nature – therefore on man. Rationalization of society, or relationships, of institution mean the institutionalization of a kind of dominion and control that is not acknowledged (Habermas, 2020: 59).

Technique is not neutral. Something, a certain kind of interest is present in every apparatus that man builds. The legitimation of this domination can be seen in the extraordinary productivity and power over nature and things that the systems bring about,

and the fact that it produces a pleasurable and comfortable life. And this form of organizing society and forms of production is presented as the only form possible to achieve the wanted results. Technique is through itself self-propaganda and through the dissemination of its results in society, rationality becomes a weapon that makes critique impossible. As Jacques Ellul says, technique convinces through the results it produces, thus, producing a new relation of dependence between man and technique, a dependence that creates the inner adhesion of mankind to it. Marcuse's critique seems right. Technique gives at hand the legitimation of curtailing human freedom. Let's think only about programmable money and the abolition of cash. Convenience is one of the masks under which this is proposed. Appealing to technical imperative maintains dominance and inequality in society, a dominance that belongs to the technique itself and to the instrumental reason. The dominance that technique create and perpetuates belong to itself, not to a class. Technique is, among others, the search for efficiency, collection of means (a historical totality as Marcuse described it) and a way to be in the world, for which everything is or can become an instrument for creating more efficiency and for expanding the dominance of the technical system, even if this does take place under concrete situation, in societies and economic systems that depend on technique for their existence. "Zweckrationales Handeln ist seiner Struktur nach die Ausübung von Kontrolle" – ("Goal-orientated action is according to its structure the same as exerting control") (Habermas, 2020: 49). The technique is also what A. Toynbee named organization and James Burnham managerial action (Ellul, 2008: 9). It is the technique applied to economic, social, or administrative life. It leads to standardization and rationalization and now is encompassing the whole world. The ideal that underwrites this process is the mechanization of the domain upon it is applied, even of life itself. Technique is the best means by which someone can achieve a task (Ellul, 2008: 90).

Shortly, the instrumentarian power Zhuboff talks is not new. It is bound to the *zweckrationalen und instrumentalen Handeln* or an expression thereof; what she does not say is that modern science and technique have produced a profound change in what technique is. Since science and technique have become technoscience and reason is used to ascertain the products of research and technical operations, the development of technology went only in one direction: the search for efficiency. One looks not for the relative means to achieve something but for the most efficient. In this process, the less efficient means are abandoned (Ellul, 2008: 18-19). This new articulation of society and technoscience leads to the transformation of the justification frame within which human life occurs; even the type of motivation or goal of actions is changed. Since science and technology produce results, other considerations are left behind. According to Marcuse - and Habermas - the fact that capitalist structures are still alive and well is because they are legitimating themselves with this argument: the efficiency of technique and science in producing the known results that enable mankind to conquer nature, progress, and enjoy a convenient life, only these structures being able to do this. This is possible only because of the inherent rationality of technique and science is a rationality of dominance and control (Habermas, 2020: 53).

Habermas does not entirely agree with Marcuse, since Marcuse's ideas would imply that we should give up the way we do science and technology. He still acknowledges that we cannot give them up, even though they are power-thinking, will-to-power. This view is somewhat espoused by Ellul and his idea of an ethics based on power renunciation, which is inherently individualistic as opposed to the technological system that is a collective kind of being. The inherent totalitarian and despotic attitude of technique and science does not represent the hidden interests of a class at first. It is bound to an interest of humanity, which is an interest of emancipation, of not living under duress and at the whims of external nature (Habermas, 2020: 55). In practice, nevertheless, a minority - the technocracy - will claim to represent or to embed this so-called general emancipation interest; this minority will use this claim to impose its will on humanity - just like the communist parties have done when they came to power.

Technique has become a historical totality, a universe of means. It has become an enveloping reality that mediates between man and the world, man, and himself, etc. It is more than the expansion of the *Rationalisierung* process to the whole of society. The historical development of the technique affects and modifies the way man understands himself and the world by adopting the point of view of the *Sub-Systems des zweckrationalen Handelns*. As seen, technique is the best mean to achieve a task but also a force that promotes the mechanization of everything it touches. In a sense, it universalizes the machine – an embedment of the inner workings of technology. A technique imposes a rule, a way to use/do something. A car can be used for its purpose, but also for killing people; this use is an abuse and it does not correspond to the rule of using it. The technique or its products are not to be adapted to man. Man must adapt himself to it. A good example of this power of technology is the way humans had to adapt to public transportation, as Friedrich Jünger found out: The individual has to adapt to the requirements of its mechanical (technical) structure: “So zwingt der Mechanik des Verkehrs, die von dem Techniker kontrolliert wird,, auch den Menschen sich mechanisch zu bewegen und sich dem Automatismus des Verkehrsvorschrift anzupassen. Für die Laune und Willkür der Bewegung ist hier sowenig Raum wie den freien Gang” (“In this way the, the mechanical structure of transportation system, which is controlled by the technician, compels the human being to move itself mechanically. There is no place for the individuality of movement or free walk.”) (Jünger, 2010: 132); one can think of an elevator whose operating buttons are not inside being instead operated from outside by a person/computer. The behavior of the people and their thought become more and more dependent on the organization of society that binds and subordinates their life to technology.

#### **4. Technique and social change**

That technology is something that a society completely change has been shown by Lynn White jr. in his *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford: 1964). According to him, the introduction of the stirrup in the cavalry has led to immense social changes, basically to the birth of feudalism. The stirrup had changed the way a horseman fought by making it possible to not be restricted in his way of fighting. A more effective way of attack was made possible by the introduction of the stirrup. The horseman could now rest his lance positioned betwixt the upper arm and the body and he could deliver a blow that combined his body strength with the horses. This feat was not possible before the introduction of the stirrup (an invention that spread from China/Central Asia to Europe). The fighter and the horse became a single, coordinated fighting unit, which could instill a kind of violence never seen before. Now the hand of the horseman was guiding through his weapon a force that was not only his. Mounted shock combat without any preparatory steps was now available (White jr., 1964: 2). This revolution had its seeds in the eighth century in the Frankish army, which for a time was comprised most of foot soldiers. The equipment needed was not cheap, to say the least, and Charles Martell had to confiscate Church lands and allot them or sell them to make possible the transformation of his army. Since not many people could afford to have horse, etc., only a small percentage of them became fighters on horses. A new class was born and with it, feudalism. Maintaining warhorses was expensive. The seized properties were allotted to followers who had the duty to serve the sovereign on horseback, the failure to do so would have led to the forfeiture of the endowment. Allegiance to a leader was fused with the granting of a benefice and the combination of those two factors has led to the apparition of feudalism, although proto-feudal elements were also elsewhere to be found. The need for cavalry had led the early Carolingians to reorganize their territories along what we know today as feudal lines. This reorganization of society was necessary to support mounted fighters in much larger numbers than before. This created a special group, an aristocracy of specialized warriors (White jr., 1964: 13). To develop and use this technology, service had to become a matter of class that become both the governing and the fighting elite, status that became hereditary (White jr., 1964: 30-31). The key to the medieval institution was the duty toward the

king/sovereign. During this process of reorganizing society, the older Germanic conviction that each freeman was a soldier was destroyed. Being a knight was a full-time occupation implying a long technical training and preparation. Essential to it was the apprenticeship. A cosmopolitan class of self-conscious warrior emerged, centered around their own traditions and mores, which also promoted a kind of individualism. The knight had a highly individualized emotional life (White jr., 1964: 32). The knighthood created a philosophy of history focused on the great deeds of warriors and, thus, on great personalities. The mounted fighting aristocracy had developed with in time patterns of thought and feeling corresponding to and stemming from their occupation and the technology of shock combat. An entire world and society were caused by adopting a new kind of warfare technology based on the stirrup and the saddle.

A good example of what a new technique might produce social and spiritual change can be found in the agricultural revolution in Northern Europe that took place between the sixth and the ninth centuries. Another change in man's attitude was produced by the adoption of the heavy plow. The plow was, according to Whit, the first application of a non-human power to agriculture. The heavy plough was an improvement in comparison to the earlier forms thereof, which was digging-sticks dragged by a pair of oxen. They did not turn over the soil, leaving an undisturbed wedge of soil between the furrows. This was not a tool very well adapted to Northern Europe. It made it possible to work more productively the soil due to its structure. It made cross-plowing obsolete, saving peasant's work and animal power. It changed the shape of the fields and made it possible to exploit deeper, rich, dense, and alluvial bottomlands that would give better crops than light soils. It also drained the soil besides saving peasant's work. It made it possible the accumulation of surplus food, which is the basis of population growth, specialization, etc. (White jr., 1964: 44). It also changed group dynamics, since few people had eight pair of oxen. The field had to be reorganized into large open fields and the way they were assigned to the peasant who owned the plow and the oxen – a cooperative team made from more families. Each peasant could plough only some small soil parcels scattered over the arable area of the village and this could not have been done alone. Thus, change occurred in the social/political structure. A powerful council of peasants came to the fore deciding how these lands could be managed. This plough demanded a certain density of population and since it was not operable by a single family another group and work organization. The introduction of this tool had met some psychological resistance since it had to abolish some property rights and redefine them (White jr., 1964: 54). Certain property rights pertaining to some of the arable strips had to be abolished. This development took place in the seventh century in Frankish lands and changed the attitude of the peasant and of modern man toward nature. In theory, until then, each family held an allotment that was supposed to be enough for the whole family. The introduction of the heavy plow and the increase of productivity affected that. Though peasants paid rent in a form or another, the default assumption was subsistence farming. This changed. The allotment of land changed only in Northern Europe. In theory, the members of a plow team had a portion of arable land allotted in conformity to their performance with the plow. The standard for land distributing has ceased to be the need of a family being replaced by the power/ability of the power-engine, of a tool to till the earth. The relationship of man to nature changed. Man has ceased to be a part of it, now it became its exploiter (White jr., 1964: 56). Nature and man drifted apart, man becoming the master. Another development occurred with the discovery of the horse-power, the replacement of the ox with the horse, and others could be added such as the technology of crop rotations, the invention of the modern harness for horses, watermills, new sources of energy, etc., and the invention of the clock, especially of the mechanical clock. The clock entailed the basis of the coming technological age: repletion, quantitative relations, the possibility of measurement, fact quantitatively measurable, relationships that can be mathematically predictable. A new metaphor/model of the world, the universe, God, and man came into being. The aforementioned technical development has changed Europe and

then the world. Without technology, new sources of energy, another form of economy based on these sources and opening new energy sources, the development we now know would have existed. Conquest, slavery, and exploitation have and will always exist. Something different had set Europe or Northern Europe apart from the rest of the world and induced the development that we see in modern life and technique. One impulse that drive this whole edifice is the lust of perpetual motion, of a source of power at man's disposal and not a source of energy depending on the whims of nature or the circumstances. The universe began to be thought as a huge reservoir of energies/resources that can be tapped and used by humanity according to its plans (Whyte jr., 1964: 134).

### 5. Conclusion

The point of what has been said is simple. The problem is not the new surveillance capitalism but the techniques themselves. They are not neutral tools that can be handled like mere instruments but something more that affects the way people feel and think and the way society is built. Knowledge, technical or otherwise, creates hierarchies and the people who possess it and make use of it will hold the reins of society and will disregard the right of the others. Technology implies exerting power and the search for efficiency. There are nor rights of the underlings in a technocracy'. As already noted by Zuboff, the aim of the so called surveillance capitalism is to control and modify behavior (in her view, in order to gain more profits) and this attitude is a technocratic one. As Jacques Ellul puts it in is réflexion of technique: „Elle apprend a refaire entièrement la vie et son cadre parce qu'ils étaient mal faits. Comme l'hérédité est pleine d'aléas, elle supprimera l'hérédité pour voir les hommes qu'il faut avoir pour le service idéal. L'homme idéal deviendra très bientôt une simple opération technique” (“The technique will re-made life in its entirety and the frame wherein life takes place because those were bad made. Because heredity is full of hazards, technique will abolish it to have the humans needed for ideal service. The ideal human being will become in the near future a simple technical operation.”) (Ellul 2008, 131). Surveillance capitalism or surveillance society is the living embodiment of what B. Russell named the governmental view of truth/society, a means by which society will be reorganized and constrained by technology to serve a technocratic pseudo-elite.

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## MIGRATION, WAYS TO DEAL WITH IT AND CAUSES

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**Abstract:** *International migration is a phenomenon that demonstrates its complexity through its manifestations at political, economic, social, demographic level. It is considered lately an opportunity for economic growth and development, but also a threat due to misinformation and prejudice or incomplete vision. Reflecting on the causes of migration means being able to correctly address international migration and being able to correctly distinguish between migrants (immigrants and emigrants) and refugees who have a special status and to whom special protection laws apply, such as subsidiary protection or humanitarian protection. The purpose of this article is to show that a correct approach to migration facilitates the management of this phenomenon at national and international level.*

**Keywords:** migration, opportunity, causes, migrants, refugees

### 1. Introduction

Most of the time, in contemporary society, social realities are reflected in the daily life of individuals, creating personal perspectives or the desire to place themselves together with other individuals in pro or con camps. One such contemporary reality is the movement, considered unprecedented, of people from one place to another, either within the country of origin or outside the states of origin. This has not remained without consequences at the societal level, but has required increased attention from both governments and non-governmental organizations or even individuals themselves. Moreover, this migratory phenomenon has encompassed one by one both the reality of the family and of the labor markets, educational markets or investment markets.

The society of the twenty-first century is characterized by global instability at the following levels: health, social, cultural, economic, demographic, religious. The establishment of globalization has favored the free movement of goods, services and people, which has brought to the fore a complex reality of the modern world - migration. The problem related to migration has become more pronounced and diversified in the context of the rapid increase in the number of people who have chosen or been forced to leave their residence to move to another place in their country of origin or abroad, the essence of this phenomenon being reduced "to the same fact: the disappearance for a period (which can become definitive) of an individual in space" (Constantinescu: 278). The displacement of the population, especially beyond the borders of the native country, has intensified the concerns of specialists in the field, in the sense of efficiently managing the effects created by the citizens involved in this dynamic movement.

It is a certainty that human movements in a national or international context are an integral part of a complex phenomenon, that of migration. Both internal and international migration involve people who leave their country of origin (emigrants) and people who arrive in a host society (immigrants). Migration is not an isolated fact nor a recent reality, it has been experienced since prehistoric times "people began to move from Africa, to Asia and Europe, by 40,000 BC. and finally in the Americas" (Yen & Cheong, 2023). McNeill (McNeill, William H ), based on historical documentation of human migration, discovered four types of migration: radical migration due to the systematic exercise of force, conquest of one population by another, infiltration and exploitation, or slavery. If we take into account the reality of



contemporary migration, it is very similar to exploitation and we can also recognize the component of infiltration, so prehistoric migration is partly similar to migration in the societies of today's world.

„The movement of people from one territory to another, from one geographical area to another and from one continent to another, has not represented, in past centuries, an immortal impediment, despite the size of the distances and natural barriers, as long as they have been able to benefit from the means of transport existing in each historical era" (Otovescu, 38). Moving outside the country's borders has been facilitated by the advancement of means of transport, means of communication, technology and industries. Moreover, the global vision has increased international cooperation between the states of the European Union or between them and third countries, located outside the European space. This is how international treaties, collaboration protocols, common action strategies, pacts and international legislation emerged.

The effectiveness of the implementation of these joint actions, however, is questionable, given the financial, technological, logistical or human resources required. At the level of the human factor, the approach to the issue of migration can be quite challenging due to the negative perception of the manifestation of this phenomenon or due to the particular experiences experienced in relations with migrants. The action of the press has profound influences, especially since it promotes shocking headlines or apocalyptic images related to migrants. Uninspired actions to stop international migration by erecting fences or building walls have intensified the negative view of migration.

Migration must be seen as an opportunity that can be seized to benefit the host country, as well as the country of origin or the migrant himself. In today's world, economic, social, cultural aspects cannot be addressed without taking into account the migration of people.

It is true that most developing countries are facing a phenomenon of population aging, urbanization, a decrease in the birth rate, a decrease in life expectancy, but it is precisely migration that could offer them a positive impact through opportunities in favor of rapid development and desired economic growth.

Such an approach to migration provides a clear vision of the fact that it is inevitable, but at the same time, it is necessary and desired. However, there are still concerns about isolated manifestations of human rights violations, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, exclusion. These concerns need to gradually improve, as policies increasingly focused on migration will highlight its positive valences not only at the declarative level, but also at the factual level.

The negative attitude towards migrants starts from misconceptions about the number of migrants, from misinformation about their social and economic status, from debates held in the media space that focus on the negative aspects of migration (job theft, brain migration, overload of social or health assistance).

As an opportunity, and analyzing its positive aspects, migration brings considerable benefits by increasing resources, developing innovation and entrepreneurship. These aspects are visible manifestations in both the home and host states.

On the other hand, high-skilled migrants contribute to economic growth through entrepreneurial activities, investments, exchanges on the international market from which both parties benefit. This is also the direction that Hillary Clinton promoted in 2016, as a response to Donald Trump's approach to a tough migration policy (she was even talking about building a wall at the border). The Democratic candidate advocated "a much more balanced and evidence-based debate on migration in which the real facts are presented and discussed openly" (IOM, 2014).

The approach of international immigrants has changed recently because the emotional dimension of the human factor has begun to empathize with families or people forced to emigrate due to wars, persecutions or natural disasters. However, the pressure at

the borders of some states raises emerging problems that lead to concern among the local population and diversifies the demographic, legislative and cultural issues.

### **1. Problem statement**

Climate change, political tensions, social disparities, demographic declines have generated effects that are difficult to manage worldwide. One of these effects is the intensification of migration internationale. Ca can be managed effectively, migration must first be properly understood and treated responsibly, without being used as a political tool in power games. The tensions in relation to migration start both from a negative understanding, influenced by the way the press is presented in relation to political influences, but also by the major differences "that exist between the countries of the contemporary world, in terms of the level of efficiency of economic activity and material endowment" (Otovescu, 314-315). What will be demonstrated in this study is that the issue of migration should not be approached as an enemy to be stopped or eliminated, but as a reality that must be presented correctly in order to be managed efficiently in a collaborative context and respecting fundamental human rights.

### **Research Questions**

A first question that lends itself to this study is whether approaching a restrictive migration policy is an effective and long-term solution in managing this expanding phenomenon. Are the sealing of borders, the erection of fences, the tightening of border crossing conditions, the multiplication of conditions for obtaining residence documents in accordance with international rights and freedoms? Are these actions reflected in international policies on the global approach to migration? On the other hand, the question regarding the completely different approach to migration is considered a justified question. Is the collaborative action of the states involved in the migration phenomenon effective? Is it useful to facilitate the procedures for admission and obtaining residence documents?

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to highlight the appropriate approach to the migration phenomenon in order to be managed efficiently, coherently and constructively. Due to its causes and various forms of manifestation, migration must be analyzed correctly, using official sources (UNHCR, UN DESA, EUROSTAT, WORLD BANK, IOM, WMR, OECD), in order to create appropriate support mechanisms, effective policies and international collaborations.

### **Research methods**

The research used in this approach is predominantly quantitative (explanation by the causal relationship between the total number of migrants worldwide, voluntary migrants, total number of refugees, study of the general trend of population evolution in migratory environments by referring to statistical data regarding indicators such as the total number of migrants, the number of forced immigrants) and the secondary analysis of the data applied directly to the quantified data that are already Collected.

The study focused on secondary analysis, as a method of sociological research, having as a source of data, the indicators provided by the Ministry of National Education, the Index of Integration of Immigrants in Romania, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, newspapers and specialized magazines.

The relations between migrants and society in the modern era have a complex structure due to social phenomena that arise unabated in various forms (economic imbalances, political tensions, wars, poverty, earthquakes, floods, drought, famine).

Global demographic growth driven by economic and industrial developments, as well as due to the spread of the media, has changed people's perspective on living standards. It has become a priority not only for citizens of underdeveloped countries, but also for those of

expanding or underdeveloped countries, which has led to an increase in international migration.

Being aware of the importance of the economic impact, we can understand the challenge posed by the migration of people, but it cannot be reduced to this aspect because its facets are multiple and also involve climatic, demographic, political, educational factors.

1. Causes of international migration

Humanity is facing a worrying number of conflicts and disasters that require urgent collaborative action aimed at reducing the risk of disasters, consolidating peace, ensuring respect for human rights and preventing displacement. At the same time, the states of the world must fight for "maximizing the positive effects, thus giving rise to special policies in the field of migration, supported by adequate institutional support." (Otovescu, Motoi, Frăsie, Otovescu, p.63).

According to the IOM (2024), the number of people living in a country other than the one in which they were born is 281 million (about 3.6% of the world's population), 128 million more than in 1990 and about three times higher than in 1970.

**Table 1. International migrants since 1970**

Year	Number of international migrants	Migrants as a % of the world's population
1970	84 460 125	2.3
1975	90 368 010	2.2
1980	101 983 149	2.3
1985	113 206 691	2.3
1990	152 986 157	2.9
1995	161 289 976	2.8
2000	173 230 585	2.8
2005	191 446 828	2.9
2010	220 983 187	3.2
2015	247 958 644	3.4
2020	280 598 105	3.6

Source: *World Migration Report, 2024*

The study of the specialized literature highlights the fact that international migration has various causes, closely related to the factors that generate them.

The political causes manifested by violence, persecution, restriction of expression in terms of political ideology lead to conflicts and implicitly to migration. This is the case of political immigrants seeking asylum on the territory of other states.

In 2021, twelve EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia) asked the European Commission for subsidies for the erection of physical barriers (following the model of Belarus' neighbouring countries) at the borders with third countries under the pretext of defending the EU 's interest"Physical barriers appear to be an effective border protection measure that serves the interest of the entire European Union, not just frontline member states" (Newsweek, 2021). In this context, one can speak of symbols of an aggressive, inhumane, ineffective and uninspired rejection by political leaders who have tried to use migration as a tool for political purposes. Of course, the EU has not approved such a subsidy, especially since the fundamental principles of the EU are based on respect for human rights. Such actions have proven to be ineffective because they have only increased illegal migration.

In order to benefit from refugee status, immigrants must meet certain conditions under the law. If they do not meet these conditions, asylum seekers may benefit from subsidiary protection, according to Law 122/2006, Article 26, or humanitarian protection, according to the same law.

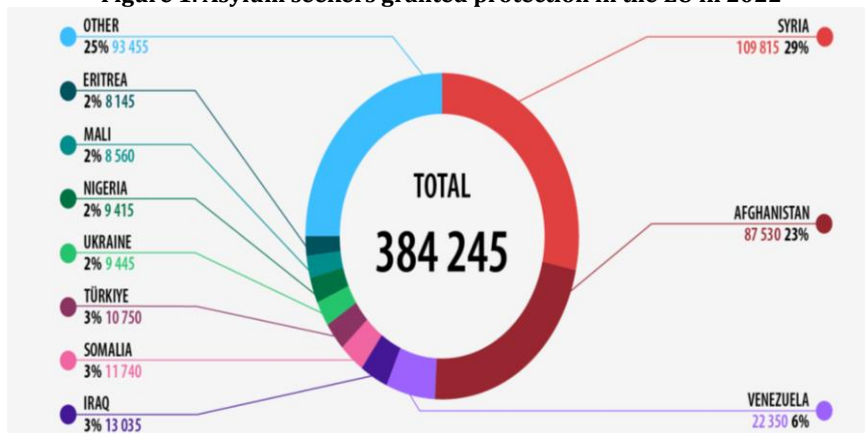
**Table no. 2. Decisions on asylum seekers at EU level in 2021, 2022, 2022**

YEAR	Number of persons under EU protection				Annual growth rate
	Total number	Refugees	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection	
2021	267 360	50%	30%	19%	-5%
2022	384 245	44%	31%	25%	40%
2023	409 485	43%	35%	22%	7%

Sursa: Eurostat

According to Eurostat, Germany, France, Italy, Spain have together granted protection to 73% of applicants at EU level. The main citizens benefiting from the status of protected persons are: Syrians, Afghans and Venezuelans.

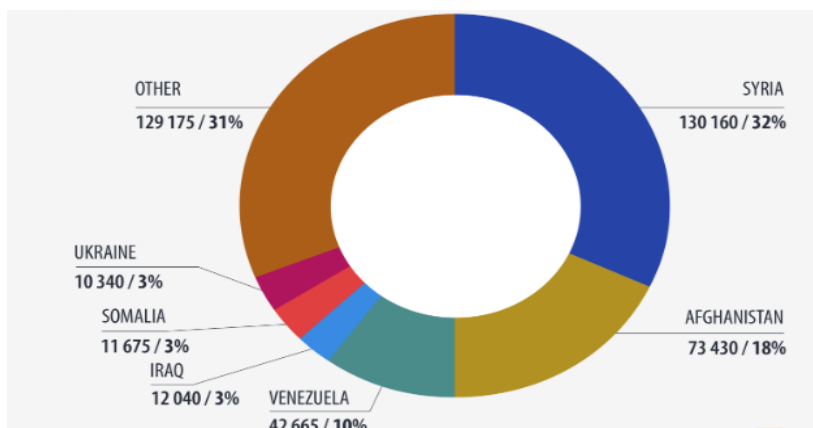
**Figure 1. Asylum seekers granted protection in the EU in 2022**



Source: Eurostat

In 2023, citizens of Syria, Afghanistan and Venezuela were also the main beneficiaries of protected citizen status, following their asylum application.

**Figure 2. Asylum seekers offered protection by the EU in 2023**

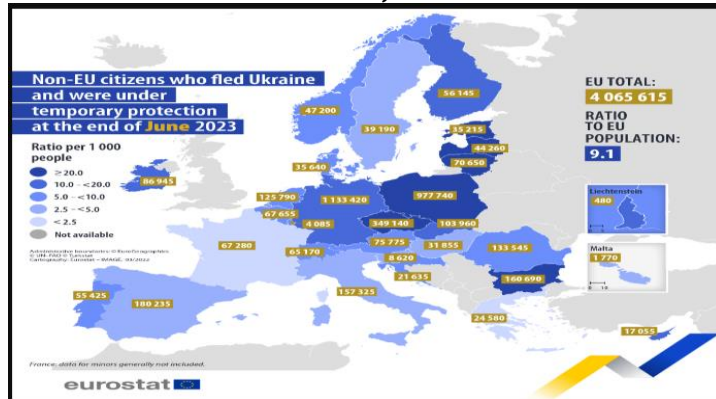


Source: Eurostat

As regards beneficiaries of temporary protection, Eurostat estimates that as of 30 June 2023, almost 4.07 million non-EU citizens who left Ukraine following the Russian

invasion (24 February 2022) were granted temporary protected person status in EU countries. The temporary protection was granted on the basis of the article on temporary protection implemented by the Council of Europe. The largest number of Ukrainians were hosted by Germany (1,133,420 people, representing 28 of the total), Poland (977,740, representing 24 of the total) and the Czech Republic (349,140, representing 9 of the total).

**Figure 3. Non-EU citizens who have fled Ukraine and are under temporary protection, at the end of June 2023**

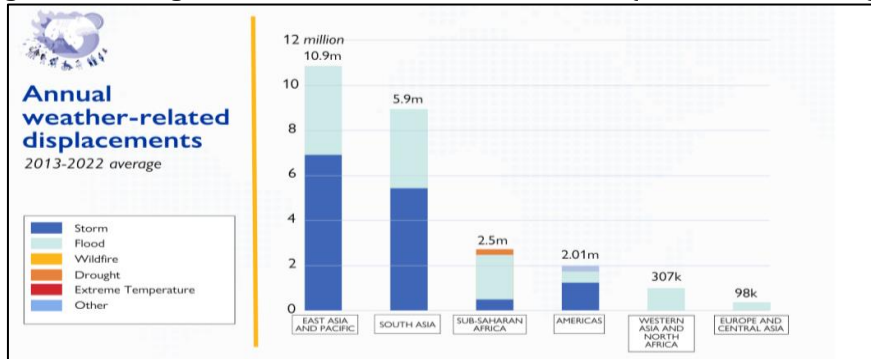


Source: Eurostat

As of 30 June 2023, Ukrainian citizens accounted for more than 98% of all beneficiaries of temporary protection in the EU. Of these, 46.6% were women, 34.4% children and 19.0% men.

Climatic causes that generate population movements are closely related to environmental factors. For example, in 2023, Cyclone Freddy wreaked havoc in Southeast Africa, earthquakes caused disasters in Turkey and Syria, Cyclone Mocha shook the Indian Ocean. Migration caused by environmental factors is a controversial topic that focuses the interest of politicians, non-governmental organizations, academia, given the large number of people who have been forced to leave due to natural disasters. It is certain, given the magnitude of the global movement of people, that a better understanding of migration caused by storms, droughts, floods, extreme temperatures, earthquakes is needed, especially since in the last 10 years displacements are about twice as high as those caused by conflicts, 31.8 million in 2022 (Climate Change and Human Mobility, 2023).

**Figure 4. Annual global weather-related travel, in millions (2013- 2022 on average)**



Source: IOM

Environmental migrants are an oppressive reality, Italy being one of the states facing a major challenge in this regard, in the province of Lampedusa (7000 people arrived in 48 hours), declared in crisis (G4 Media.ro, 2023), by Mayor Filippo Maninno.

In September 2023, the impressive flood of migrants coming to the island of Lampedusa generated extreme concern, so much so that Prime Minister Georgia Meloni approached as a measure similar to "walls" by increasing the detention period in the case of illegal migrants to 18 months, "This means – and I send this very clear message to the whole of Africa – that if you rely on traffickers to break Italian law, when you arrive in Italy you must know that you will be arrested and then repatriated" (The Guardian 2023).

In 2023, more than 127,000 people (Italian Government Presidency of the Council of Ministers, 2023), arrived on the territory of Italy (double the previous year), most of them from Tunisia, where Julia Meloni and Ursula Von der Leyen signed the controversial agreement to stop migration. A crisis solution is also considered the deposit of about 5000 euros proposed for people who are waiting for the asylum decision.

**Figure 5. People lying on the ground in Lampedusa waiting to board a ship that will transfer them to Sicily**



📷 People lie on the ground in Lampedusa waiting to board a ship that will transfer them to Sicily. Photograph: Roberto Salomone/The Guardian

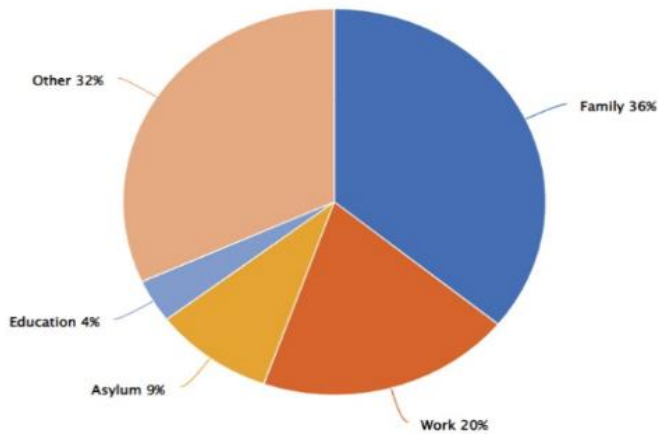
Source: *The Guardian*: 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2023

These aggressive actions have not proven their effectiveness because the number of migrants has increased again, fleeing for much more serious reasons than the regime established on the small island.

Economic causes are determined by the factors of attraction that underlie the individual decision to migrate without having any connection with imposing or fleeing due to dangers. Therefore, people migrate in search of a better life, to overcome their social, intellectual or cultural condition. We are talking, in this case, about immigrants for family reunification, for studies or for work.

In this context, the desire of young people to migrate for studies is born for various reasons, with social, political, economic, demographic, occupational and, last but not least, educational implications and taking into account the following fact: "the more people have a profession with a higher social prestige, the greater the social trust" (Constantinescu, 2004: 246).

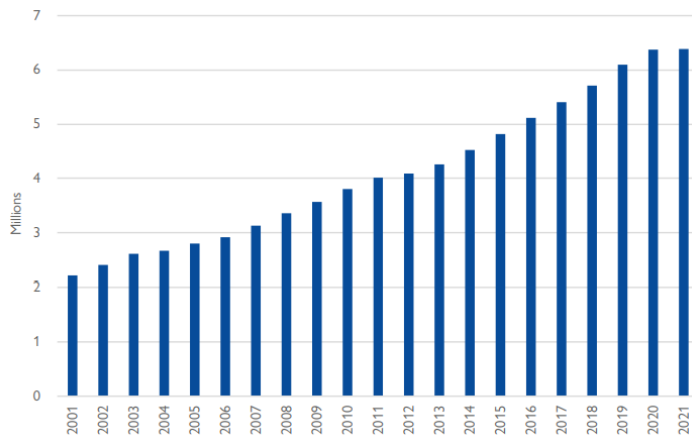
**Figure 6. Weight of reasons for residence permits**



Source: Eurostat

According to UNESCO, from 2001 to 2021, the number of international students increased significantly, globally from 2.2 million students to 6.39 million.

**Figure 7. International Students Globally, 2001- 2021**



Source: UNESCO, Institute of Statistics (accessed: 20.05.2024)

Implicitly, immigrants who become highly skilled bring added value to both the countries of origin (by sending remittances) and the host countries (by covering the shortage of specialists). Thus, human capital positively influences the financial aspects that prevail among those who have chosen migration as an opportunity to overcome their social condition.

### Conclusions

Migration is such an obvious reality nowadays that its various forms of manifestation still surprise the responsible institutions and challenge them to adopt migration policies that are open and in line with global migration. The aggressive approach against migration has not proven its effectiveness, moreover, the pragmatic approach being minimized by the gestures and statements of people who empathized not with "migrants", but with their peers in extreme situations. Moreover, the isolated anti-migration demonstrations in England, in

August 2024 that were on the way să se extindă, au fost înăbușite de majoritatea populației care a militat pentru stabilitate, protecție și respectarea drepturilor omului.

Against the background of global instability, at political, demographic, economic, social level, it is estimated that migration will increase, which will require a collaborative, coherent and concrete approach for the efficient management of the phenomenon, not one without positive effects. States must adapt migration laws so as to manage migration situations efficiently, not to declare a crisis, being caught unprepared.

Although there are many challenges related to the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, its existence is a huge step towards integral management through the involvement of the whole of society. The positive vision towards migrants, the elimination of prejudices regarding them, the approach of an empathetic attitude, the correct information and the granting of real chances of integration will lead to a much more efficient management of migration, the manifestation of which will be much more natural and with positive implications for both the states of origin and the host, and of the migrants themselves.

A real and concrete image of international migration, isolated from inappropriate political influences and the negative image caused by the media, leads to an efficient management of the population involved in the migration phenomenon.

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## BETWEEN ROOTS AND WINGS: THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF YOUNG ROMANIANS WHO CHOOSE TO LEAVE

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the phenomenon of migration of young Romanians, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities they face in their search for a better future abroad. In the context of globalization, more and more young Romanians choose to leave their native country for economic, educational and personal reasons. However, the migration process is not without difficulties, including adapting to new cultures, social isolation and professional obstacles. On the other hand, the international experience offers young Romanians significant opportunities for personal and professional development, access to quality education and personal economic growth. Migration also contributes to cultural diversity and innovation in host countries, and returning to Romania with skills and experience can support the country's socio-economic development. The article highlights the importance of adopting policies that maximize the benefits of migration, harnessing the potential of young people, both in the context of their return to the country and in supporting those who decide to stay abroad. Thus, Romania can turn the challenges of migration into opportunities for national progress.*

**Keywords:** youth migration, opportunities, challenges, personal development, Romanian diaspora.

### Introduction

Youth migration in Romania is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, with significant implications for the society, economy and culture of both the country of origin and the country of destination. In the context of globalization and increased access to international information and opportunities, more and more young Romanians are choosing to leave their native country in search of a better life. The phenomenon is influenced by a multitude of factors, ranging from economic and social aspects, to the desire for self-realization and experimentation with other cultures.

This article aims to explore both the challenges and opportunities faced by young Romanians who choose to emigrate. We will analyze the reasons behind their decision to leave, the impact that this exodus has on Romania, as well as how these migration experiences shape the identity and perspectives of young people.

In order to fully understand the phenomenon of migration of young Romanians, it is essential to identify and discuss the main reasons that lead them to leave Romania. Among the most common reasons are:

1. *Economic opportunities:* The lack of high-paying jobs and career prospects in Romania leads many young people to look for better opportunities abroad. Higher salaries and more favorable working conditions in Western countries are a strong magnet for young Romanians, especially those with higher education.

2. *Access to quality education:* Another significant reason is the desire to benefit from a better education system. Many universities abroad offer study programs that are better suited to the global labor market, with networking opportunities and international internships that are not as easy to access in Romania.

3. *Low quality of life:* The quality of life in Romania, perceived in terms of public services, infrastructure, health and safety, is another determining factor. Many young people want to live in a more stable and safe environment, with access to quality health services and a well-developed infrastructure.

4. *Desire for exploration and self-realization:* In addition to economic and educational reasons, there is also a strong impulse to explore the world and live new experiences. Many

young people want to break away from the constraints of the family environment and develop in an international context, where they can learn new languages, cultures and life perspectives.

Although migration offers numerous opportunities, it also comes with a set of *significant challenges* that can affect young Romanians on a personal, professional and cultural level.

- *Adapting to a new cultural environment*: Young Romanians who emigrate often face challenges related to adapting to the new cultural and social norms in the host countries. Differences in language, customs and mentalities can be major barriers to their integration into a new community. This can lead to a sense of alienation and difficulties in establishing authentic social relationships.

- *Isolation and homesickness*: Far from family and friends, young migrants face often with feelings of isolation and homesickness. This phenomenon, known as "*homesickness*", can affect their emotional and mental state, impacting their ability to adapt and perform in the new environment.

- *Difficulties in recognising qualifications and professional experience*: In some cases, Young migrants face difficulties in having their studies and professional qualifications recognised by the authorities of the host countries. This can limit their access to jobs corresponding to their training and lead to an under-utilisation of skills.

- *Economic pressures and the cost of living*: Although many Western countries offer higher salaries, the cost life in these places is often much higher than in Romania. Young migrants face significant economic pressures, including high housing, health insurance and transport costs.

- *Discrimination and stereotypes*: Another important obstacle is discrimination based on nationality, which can affect the chances of young Romanians to integrate into the labor market or the local community. Negative stereotypes about Romanians, often amplified by the media, can create barriers to their personal and professional development.

Despite the challenges, migration can provide young Romanians with a number of *valuable opportunities*, which can have a positive impact on their lives in the long term.

Experience of living and working in another country can contribute significantly to the personal and professional development of young Romanians. They have the opportunity to learn new languages, improve their intercultural competences and expand their network of professional contacts internationally.

Many countries offer excellent opportunities for continuing education and training, which can open up doors to successful international careers. Young Romanians who choose to study abroad can benefit from quality education programs, access to top academic resources, and innovative research opportunities.

Quality education is a fundamental pillar of personal and professional development, and access to top-notch educational programs, advanced academic resources, and innovative research opportunities play an essential role in shaping generations capable of contributing significantly to the progress of society. In an increasingly globalized and competitive world, educational institutions that offer such opportunities are becoming attractive destinations for young people from all over the world, including Romanian students.

Quality curricula are defined by a well-structured, up-to-date and relevant curriculum that reflects the needs of the labour market and society. These programs are designed to develop both students' theoretical knowledge and practical skills, preparing them for challenges in their areas of interest. An essential feature of quality education programs is the active involvement of students in the learning process, through interactive teaching methods, case studies, simulations and practical projects. In addition, these programs are often delivered by professors with international expertise, who bring global and innovative perspectives to the classroom. Through international academic partnerships, students have

access to a wide network of professional contacts, internships and internships, which give them real and valuable experience in their chosen field.

Another crucial aspect of quality education is access to top-notch academic resources. These include well-equipped libraries, extensive academic databases, modern laboratories, and state-of-the-art technologies. In a digital age, access to online resources such as scientific journals, e-books, and online courses (MOOCs) is essential for deepening knowledge and conducting advanced research.

Educational institutions that provide students with such resources not only give them the opportunity to learn from trusted sources, but also to stay up-to-date with the latest findings and trends in their fields of study. This is an essential component for training well-informed and competitive professionals in the global labour market.

Research is the engine of innovation and progress, and opportunities to participate in innovative research projects are a significant advantage for students. Top-notch educational institutions provide students with access to advanced laboratories and research facilities, where they can work alongside experts in various fields to develop new technologies, discover solutions to current problems, and contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge. These possibilities are often facilitated through research grants, scholarships, and partnerships with industries and other reputable academic institutions. Participating in innovative research not only allows students to develop their research and critical thinking skills, but also provides them with a platform to publish their work and participate in international conferences, which helps to increase their visibility and reputation in the global academic community.

Quality curricula, access to top-notch academic resources, and innovative research opportunities are fundamental elements for successful higher education. They not only prepare students for successful careers but also provide them with the tools to become leaders and innovators in their fields. In an ever-changing world, these components of education are essential for the formation of generations capable of responding to the challenges of the future and contributing to the sustainable development of society.

Better paid employment opportunities abroad allow young people to improve the economic situation. They can save money, invest in their education or that of their children and send remittances to Romania, thus helping to support families left at home.

Young migrants contribute to cultural diversity and innovation in host countries. Through bringing new perspectives and ideas, they can play an important role in the development and revitalization of local communities.

A positive aspect of migration is the potential to return to Romania with skills, valuable knowledge and experience gained abroad. This phenomenon, known as "*circular migration*", can contribute to Romania's socio-economic development, by integrating these resources into the local economy and society. The term "*circular migration*" was introduced and popularized in the field of international migration in the early 2000s, although the idea existed by default in previous studies related to temporary or seasonal migration. The concept has been developed and developed in particular within the framework of European and international migration policies, as a way to manage migration flows and maximise benefits for both parties involved.

The important role in conceptualizing and popularizing the term was played by international organizations such as *the International Organization for Migration (IOM)* and *the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*. These organisations have promoted circular migration as a potential 'win-win' model, where migrants can benefit from economic opportunities, while host countries meet their temporary labour needs, and countries of origin can benefit from remittances and the return of migrants with new skills and knowledge.

The European Commission has also played a significant role in adopting and promoting this concept in the context of migration and development policies, encouraging

initiatives to facilitate circular migration between European Union member countries and third countries. Circular migration is a key concept in contemporary migration studies, bringing into discussion an alternative to permanent migration, with advantages for migrants and the societies involved. Although the term has been popularized relatively recently, it represents a natural evolution of the understanding of migratory movements, reflecting the complex dynamics of human mobility in the era of globalization. Circular migration is a concept within migration studies that refers to the repeated and temporary movement of migrants between two or more locations, usually between the country of origin and one or more countries of destination. This form of migration is characterized by bidirectional or multidirectional migratory flows, where individuals or groups migrate, work or study abroad for a period of time, then return to their country of origin, but retain the possibility of leaving again. It differs from permanent migration in that it does not involve permanent resettlement, but a continuous process of relocation that can take years or even decades. This type of migration has advantages for both countries of origin and destination, as it allows the circulation of skills, knowledge and financial resources.

The migration of young Romanians has a significant impact on Romania, both positively and negatively. On the one hand, the massive emigration of young people can lead to a decrease in the skilled workforce, thus affecting the country's economic development. On the other hand, remittances sent by young emigrants contribute to the support of families in Romania and to the economic stability of many rural communities.

The emigration of educated and qualified young people has led to a labor shortage in certain economic sectors in Romania, such as health, IT and engineering. This limits the country's ability to develop and attract foreign investment.

Youth migration reduces the number of students and graduates who choose to continue their careers in Romania, which can negatively affect higher education and research institutions in the country. It also increases the risk of "*brain drain*", the loss of brains, through which the most talented and educated young people choose to leave the country permanently.

Despite the challenges, remittances sent by young emigrants play a crucial role in the Romanian economy. These sums of money contribute to increasing the standard of living of the families remaining in Romania and support local consumption.

Youth migration contributes to a continuous process of redefining national and cultural identity in Romania. Through their international experiences, they bring new perspectives and ideas that can positively influence social and cultural changes in the country.

#### *Case Studies and Personal Perspectives*

To better illustrate the challenges and opportunities of migration, it is useful to look at some case studies and personal perspectives of young Romanians who have chosen to leave.

1. **Maria N., 28 years old, medical graduate:** Maria emigrated to Germany to continue her career as a doctor. Although she faced initial difficulties in learning German and adapting to the new medical system, she was able to integrate and advance quickly in her career. Her international experience provided her with research and specialization opportunities that she would not have been able to access in Romania.

2. **Andrei B., 25 years old, IT specialist:** Andrei left for the UK immediately after completing his university studies in Romania. Although he enjoyed professional success and a considerably higher salary, the longing for family and friends determined him to return to Romania after a few years. However, his experience abroad opened important doors for him in the IT industry in Romania.

3. **Ioana S., 30 years old, entrepreneur:** Ioana emigrated to the Netherlands to develop her business in a more stable and friendly environment for entrepreneurship. Although she initially encountered bureaucratic and cultural difficulties, she managed to expand her business internationally, benefiting from a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem and a solid support network.

### **Conclusions**

The migration of young Romanians is a complex phenomenon, influenced by a multitude of economic, social and cultural factors. Although their departure can create difficulties internally, it also offers important opportunities for both emigrants and host countries and Romania. It is essential that the Romanian authorities develop policies that harness the potential of these young people, both in terms of attracting them back to the country and in supporting those who choose to stay abroad. Only through a balanced and strategic approach can Romania transform the challenges of migration into opportunities for national development.

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## HIV AIDS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LABOUR MARKET IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *HIV-AIDS continues to represent an obstacle hindering the professional advancement of the HIV-positive person. We are still witnessing a slight tendency of Romanian employers to inform themselves about the problems caused by HIV-AIDS on the labour market. Even so, the stigmatization of HIV-AIDS at work remains critical for Romania. In most countries, although policy measures and action strategies are in place to combat the epidemic, labour law, discrimination and stigma based on HIV status in the workplace remain a sensitive area that is difficult to control. At the legislative level, Romania has regulated the medical examination upon employment by which a person is medically fit or not to carry out an activity in the labour field. Thus, any person goes through the stages of this control based on the certificate issued by the family doctor. Certain professional fields are still conditional in our country on HIV testing. So on the basis of a positive HIV test a person may be refused a job. In Romania, HIV testing at employment is required in the case of certain fields, especially in those where there is a greater risk of virus transmission or where the health status of the employee may affect the safety of others. The lack of clear mechanisms to sanction these forms of abuse leads to a perpetuation of this unwanted phenomenon, that of exclusion, dismissal or abuse both by the employer and by co-workers.*

**Keywords:** inclusion, labour market, professional training, legislative limitations, dismissal

### **1. HIV-AIDS, school and socio-professional inclusion. General considerations**

Medical advances in the treatment of HIV-AIDS have reduced disease progression and significantly extended life expectancy with the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). Today people affected by HIV-AIDS are becoming more and more responsible in influencing their physical, psychological and social condition (Millard, Elliott&Girdler, 2013, p.103). Many young people affected by this disease are denied the opportunity to learn about what HIV-AIDS really means due to the interruption of schooling. The stigma associated with HIV remains today, and some teachers become reluctant to address this sensitive issue that is still considered taboo. HIV prevention education is often a complicated process and the results are not always predictable. Even so, there is no doubt that preventive education brings gratifying results (Aggleton, Yankah & Crewe 2011: 496-497).

The effects of HIV infection on children and youth are felt primarily through illness and repeated hospitalizations that can impact school performance. The educational level of children can be influenced by two directions: the child's illness, or the existence of HIV infection in the parents (Zinyemba, Pavlova, & Groot, 2019: 36-37). Children affected by HIV-AIDS have lower school performance compared to children from the same community but who do not experience the fear of illness and death due to HIV infection (Guo, Li & Sherr, 2012: 1007). Difficulties in schooling and the risk of dropping out are more pronounced in poor or developing countries. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV-AIDS epidemic has a visible impact on education, especially since most of the children affected by HIV or AIDS, although they are of an age when they can go to school, they live in countries or regions where education is not compulsory, and school fees can be a burden for the family which is often also affected by HIV-AIDS alongside the child (Pufall et. all, 2014: 136-1137).

The children or young people infected by HIV or suffering from AIDS is most often not directly responsible for the stigma they carry. They primarily need to benefit from social protection measures. The child needs family and community support to overcome the crisis situations generated by the disease. The need for education must be met by schooling as much as possible within mainstream education. It is recommended that the orientation of HIV-

positive children to special education be postponed if there is no visible deterioration of the health status. Educational exclusion sooner or later generates depression, self-isolation, feelings of uselessness, which subsequently require interventions by multidisciplinary teams dedicated to the management of HIV infection (Ignat, 2006: 35-37). The moral complexity of these problems shows that globally there are children and young people affected by HIV-AIDS who do not have access to treatment, education and who are at risk of family abandonment, and in some cases they can become victims the streets following the death of parents due to the impossibility of institutionalization (Loue & Pike, 2007: 206). Relationships within the family have been shown to influence the school progress of the HIV-positive child. Conflicting family relationships can lead to educational failure. Education remains a priority for the HIV-positive child or adolescent as they can learn how to manage their medical condition in crisis situations. Not infrequently during emergency situations, children affected by AIDS end up being poorly cared for within the family (UNICEF, 2007: 14). By far, discrimination remains an essential factor for young people living with HIV and who end up giving up day-time education in favor of distance education or in special classes that, although understimulating the intellect of the HIV-positive young person, he no longer experiences harassment from his peers. The hysteria caused by the existence of the cohort of HIV-positive young people of the 1990s in Romanian schools caused many school principals to put pressure on the sick child or his family not to come to classes and to give up attending school (Human Rights, 2006, pp.15-18). The professional and vocational orientation in the current trends provides at least a theoretical framework that ensures equal opportunities in the direction of the professional development of young people (Balanuță, 2008: 220). Counselling and career guidance should be able to offer opportunities for social integration for all disadvantaged categories (Jigău, 2001, p.9). The psycho-social implications of HIV infection are often more pressing than the medical ones. The most visible effects are manifested by low self-confidence, stigmatization, isolation, school dropout or job loss (Vameșu, 2004: 6). According to law 584/2002 that regulates the HIV-AIDS issues in Romania, people affected by this disease, in addition to specific social protection measures, can benefit from either professional guidance or retirement following a specialized medical examination.

## **2. Accessibility of HIV-positive people on the labour market**

The professional integration of HIV-positive people remains one of the most common problems that manifests itself through stereotypes, discrimination and labelling (Bălău, 2018). HIV-positive people can be classified as disabled upon request according to law 448 of 2006. The labour market is currently faced with a lack of knowledge of the cognitive-professional capacity of people with disabilities in terms of active participation in an occupational field. Most of the time, the lack of appropriate professional orientation and the use of purely medical criteria raise barriers that limit active participation in socio-professional life, implicitly employment (Ministry of Labour, 2015: 23). The person affected by HIV-AIDS ends up suffering a series of losses and one of them is reflected in the professional life by the risk of losing the job (Hoffman, 1997: 165). Many HIV-positive people find that they have to adjust their workplace demands. Newly created situations can be the right context for discrimination and harassment (Fesko, 2001: 235-236). The economic and social impact generated by the existence of an employee affected by HIV-AIDS on the company and on colleagues is felt through decreased productivity, frequent absenteeism, conflicts and accidents due to the inappropriate use of work equipment (Bakuwa & Mamman, 2012: 2918).

Disclosure of the diagnosis in the professional environment may affect the social life of people affected by HIV-AIDS especially in small communities. The lack of alternatives with an inclusive role may lead to the creation of a dependency on the social protection system (Sicrea & Andrioni, 2021: 9). Therefore, HIV-AIDS arrives to be seen as a much more serious medical condition, and people affected by this disease often end up being catalogued as dangerous in the professional environment or in society as a whole. All this gives rise to

prejudices that under the impulse of panic and stress may lead to dismissals of HIV-positive people (D'Cruz, 2003: 131). However, the need to develop certain programs in the professional environment targeted at HIV-AIDS can contribute to changing the attitudes of other employees regarding people living with HIV (PLHIV). Thus, work security can be greatly improved through internal regulations that limit the stigmatization and discrimination of employees who are affected by this disease. The existence of such policies also favors the preservation of the confidentiality of the diagnosis by respecting the right to privacy (Bakuwa, 2010: 3). In Europe, in the fight against AIDS there is at least at the declarative level a priority regarding the development of strategies and campaigns for the education of the population (Altenstetter, 1994: 420). The World Labour Organization (ILO) recommends that labour inspectors provide support in the work environment so that problems related to HIV-AIDS can be prevented in the work context through information programs and the recording of incidents with a risk of illness at work (International Labour Organization, 2006: 22-25).

HIV-AIDS ends up negatively influencing the labour market by the fact that PLHIV end up being more and more difficult to be employed when the diagnosis is known. Many employers justify this practice on account of increased costs due to repeated sick leave. All this leads to a discrepancy between available human resources and labour market requirements. The decrease in labour productivity translates into a low volume of taxes and fees collected at the local or state budgets. All this may manifest itself in the form of an increase in employers' labour costs, social and health insurance, a decrease in company profits and the need for professional retraining, a fact that can put pressure on both the social protection system and the medical services (International Organization of Labour, 2007, p.43). People affected by HIV-AIDS often face difficulties and challenges in the labour market due to stigma, discrimination, physical and psychological effects of the disease. Often insufficient knowledge about the way the disease is transmitted can lead to behaviours that increase vulnerability to the disease. The unrestricted availability of commercial sex for migrants traveling for work further increases this risk. Single male migrants may often have relationships with multiple partners, which may increase the risk of HIV transmission. The culture developed around risky sexual behaviours such as long-distance sex can increase the risk of HIV transmission (Saggurti et. al, 2008: 128-129). This risks to lead to social ostracism and negatively affect career and employment options. The protection of the rights of workers who are infected with HIV or have AIDS differs from one country to another. Prevention and counselling can help strengthen employees' knowledge of HIV-AIDS policies and work relationships among employees regardless of their HIV status. Certain sectors, companies or organizations are starting to develop support programs for HIV-positive workers, including counselling, emotional support and access to information on forms of support.

### **3. Methodology**

The article has three main components:

**a) The theoretical section** addresses general aspects regarding the education, training and socio-professional inclusion of HIV-positive people in Romania

**b) The practical, applied section** aims to analyse the impact of the disclosure of the HIV-AIDS diagnosis in the professional environment.

**c) Conclusions**

### **4. Research methodology. Data analysis and interpretation**

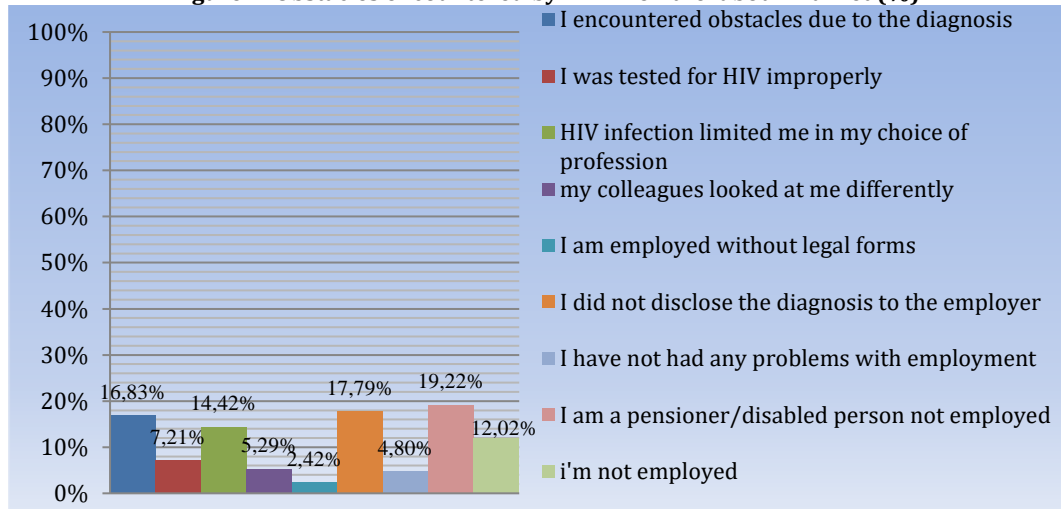
The research was carried out nationally between February 1, 2022 and July 7, 2023 through a sociological survey based on a self-administered online questionnaire. The people participating in the study were part of the seropositive adult population in Romania. The initial research aimed at several dimensions of analysis, comprehensively addressing the HIV-AIDS phenomenon in Romania.



The present study aims to analyse the professional dimension of the disease and is based on the research question: "How does HIV infection influence the professional path of the person affected by this disease?"

In the context of HIV infection, it is important to emphasize that in most European countries there are laws and regulations that should protect the rights of HIV-positive people by sanctioning any form of discrimination on health grounds. According to the European Charter of Human Rights, Article 15, *every person has the right to freely exercise an occupation*. At the level of our country, the right to work is guaranteed by the constitution through article 41, paragraph 1, which states that the right to work and the choice of a profession must be done in full freedom (Constitution of Romania, art. 41).

**Figure 1: Obstacles encountered by PLHIV on the labour market (%)**



Source: generated by the author

Even if there are issues that are far from being solved we witness a timid tendency on the part of some employers to get informed about the problems caused by HIV-AIDS in the labour market, the stigma associated with the workplace continues to be a critical part. Despite the fact that most countries have adopted policy measures and action plans to combat the epidemic, specific legislation against discrimination and stigma based on HIV status in the workplace is either lacking or difficult to enforce. According to Romanian legislation by order number 761 of 2001, the medical examination upon employment certifies whether or not a person is medically fit to carry out an activity in the labour field. Thus, any person goes through the stages of this control based on the certificate issued by the family doctor, where the candidate's general state of health is specified. Based on the information provided by the family doctor, the occupational medicine doctor can propose a series of additional investigations.

According to Romanian labour legislation, there are certain professional fields in which the HIV test can be recommended by the occupational medicine doctor. Testing should not condition a person to work in a field. However, there are several areas such as the health sector where HIV infection can be considered an occupational disease.

On the other hand, in other fields, a certain health condition may be considered necessary to comply with the working conditions and to ensure the safety of the employee. An example of this is that of truck drivers, who work long hours and require good health to be able to drive safely. In such cases, employment of persons in the AIDS stage may be avoided, as it may endanger their health and safety and that of those around them. It is important to

emphasize that, in general, HIV testing should not lead to the limitation of PLHIV from employment.

In Romania, HIV testing at employment is required in the case of certain fields, especially in those where there is a greater risk of transmission of the virus or where the health status of the employee may affect the safety of others. In the case of the pharmaceutical industry, testing is recommended because personnel may come into contact with chemical or biological substances that pose a health risk, including HIV infection, and testing is required to ensure a safe work environment. In the situation of staff in hairdressing, barbering, massage, cosmetic establishments, testing is carried out due to the possibility of exposure to blood or other body fluids, which can increase the risk of HIV transmission. Testing in this situation is to protect staff and customers.

Healthcare workers interact directly with patients, including those who may be infected with HIV. Therefore, testing is essential to prevent the spread of infection in hospital or health care settings.

Commercial vehicle drivers may be exposed to various risks on the road and have long working hours, which requires good health. HIV testing may be required to ensure that employees are able to drive safely and handle the specific requirements of the job. It is important to mention that in Romania, HIV testing at employment must be in accordance with the legal provisions on the protection of personal data and with the respect of employees' rights, including the right to confidentiality and non-discrimination on the basis of health status.

Taking into account these aspects, approximately 7% of PLHIV people interviewed stated that they were tested for HIV infection in an abusive manner at the time of employment without their consent being asked. We must mention that HIV testing is done under certain conditions after the beneficiary is informed and counselled about a possible positive HIV test. The existence of abusive testing practices without informing the beneficiary are punishable by law when reported. Many times the positive HIV test goes directly to the employer who, based on the results, rejects the candidate who previously appeared for the interview. This practice of some occupational medicine offices is illegal and must be sanctioned as such. The result of a possible positive HIV test must be communicated only to the beneficiary directly without informing the employer. Informing the employer about the status of seropositivity is done only with the consent of the affected person.

More than 16% of the subjects stated that they experienced problems from the part of their employer due to the medical diagnosis. Employers often refuse to hire HIV-positive people under the pretext of protecting other employees. For fear of sanctions or subsequent complaints, many employers require additional evidence of education, training or professional experience just to be able to legally disqualify an HIV-positive person, even if there were no such requirements in the original job advertisement. In order not to be rejected, almost 18% of PLHIV hid information about their health status when they wanted to be hired in order not to be disqualified from the position they are applying for. This practice, although not illegal, is quite difficult to put into practice because PLHIV must prove that they are medically fit without declaring the diagnosis at occupational medicine offices, something difficult to achieve due to the existing information in the centralized system through health cards.

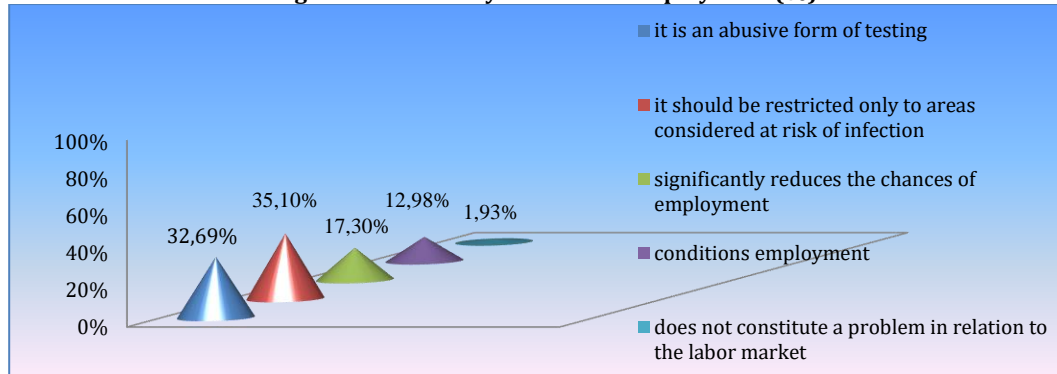
Because of the obstacles encountered on the labour market, most PLHIV persons stated that they are currently not employed because they benefit from the social protection measures offered by the Romanian state. Thus, more than 19% of subjects currently have the status of pensioner or person with disabilities

A little over 14% of PLHIV stated that they are currently not employed and do not benefit from any form of social protection. These aspects do nothing but accentuate the financial dependence on the family further increasing the risk of social exclusion and poverty.

The limitation in choosing a profession represented the cause of non-integration in the labour field for approximately 12% of the subjects. The latter felt wronged that they could not pursue qualifications in the desired field.

In a variable proportion between 2 and 5% PLHIV have experienced discrimination from co-workers or had to work without legal forms.

**Figure 2: Mandatory HIV test on employment (%)**



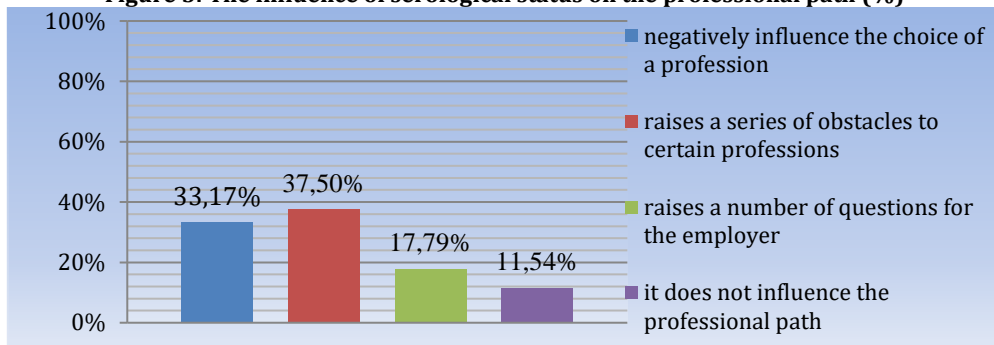
Source: generated by the author

Testing for HIV infection at the time of hiring remains the main cause of discrimination in the workplace. There are several important legal and ethical principles to consider when discussing mandatory HIV testing. These principles include autonomy, freedom, privacy, confidentiality. Autonomy refers to the individual's right to make decisions that affect his or her own life. Mandatory testing at the time of employment violates the autonomy of employees because it limits their ability to decide for themselves whether or not they want to be tested. Autonomy is based on the legal obligation of written informed consent for HIV antibody testing. Currently, there is no legislation requiring widespread testing of employees. Regardless of whether we are talking about freely expressed voluntary testing or the one imposed by the employer, any person must be informed in advance about the need for testing before the actual analysis is carried out. This ensures compliance with the right to informed consent and confidentiality. It is essential to strike a balance between protecting the health of employees and respecting individual rights. Mandatory testing for HIV infection may be warranted in certain specific circumstances, such as accidental exposure of medical personnel during invasive procedures. However, it is important that these measures are implemented in compliance with ethical and legal principles to protect the rights and dignity of workers regardless of the field concerned. Most of the respondents, more than 35%, think that HIV testing should be restricted and recommended only in areas with high risk of disease through occupational exposure. The justification for the statements lies in the fact that often in areas with a minimal risk of infection, HIV testing is somewhat forcibly recommended.

The testing is often carried out abusively either at the request of the employer or directly by the occupational medicine physician without having a direct justification with the position targeted by the candidate. More than 32% of the people surveyed are of the opinion that these abusive tests are carried out knowingly. More than according to the law number 46 of 2003 on the rights of the patient, any person who has the quality of a patient at a given time can refuse or stop a medical intervention by expressing his option in writing declaring that he assumes the consequences. Disclosure of the diagnosis of HIV infection following testing can significantly reduce the employment chances of PLHIVs. More than 17% of the beneficiaries believe that the chances of professional integration decrease with the risk of disclosing the diagnosis to the employer. Making employment conditional on the result of an HIV test represents a serious violation of the right to work provided for in the Romanian constitution.

Almost 13% of PLHIV people state that there are employers who abusively request supporting documents certifying their serological status. A small number of subjects, less than 2%, believe that the HIV test does not constitute a problem in relation to the labour market. In essence, the testing must be carried out taking into account the professional field with the written consent of the beneficiary without constituting a reason for non-employment or dismissal. In practice, the status of an HIV-positive person can become a dismissal criterion for certain employers, thus violating fundamental rights such as those related to confidentiality and employment.

**Figure 3: The influence of serological status on the professional path (%)**



Source: generated by the author

When we refer to career paths in general, we mean aspects of a person's career path over time, including education, work experience and career development. Interpreting the career path can reveal various aspects such as professional development, changes that have occurred, opportunities for development and acquired skills. Each career path is unique and can be influenced by different circumstances. A person's career path is often a complex amalgam of decisions, opportunities and personal developments. It is important for each individual to choose a career path based on their personal interests, values and goals in order to build a career.

The existence of certain medical conditions will inevitably influence the subsequent developments of the professional experiences. HIV infection remains by far one of the challenges to be overcome in the socio-professional sphere. Certain professions where the risk of transmission of the infection is high are practically inaccessible to an HIV-positive person. More than 37% of the subjects believe that the practice of professions considered at risk of exposure are restricted in case of HIV infection. So that the health field, along with the army, police and firemen, are totally forbidden to PLHIV in Romania. The medical certificate attesting to the state of health or the existence of chronic diseases in these areas is an eliminatory criterion. Jobs in beauty salons are also on the list of prohibited professions for HIV-positive people in our country. The hotel and food industry are occupational fields that are restricted for these categories of people.

Obviously, we cannot ignore the impact of the disease on the full exercise capacity. Long-term antiretroviral treatment or regular hospitalizations can negatively influence the ability to work in harsh conditions such as construction. During the applied research phase, a beneficiary participating in the study died after a 2-year period of intense, unskilled physical labour on a construction site neglecting health care issues. These identified issues involve ethical, moral and legal issues.

HIV infection ends up negatively influencing the choice of a profession. For more than 33% of the subjects, the serological status decisively influenced the choice of a profession. In this context, the professions were not chosen according to the skills or desires of the subjects, but according to the possibility of practicing a job. Certain professions may involve exposure

to risk factors or intense physical and mental demands, which may be difficult for a person affected by HIV-AIDS to manage. Thus, certain occupations may be considered less feasible or may require the adaptation of working conditions to suit the medical needs of an HIV-positive person, which may become an inconvenience for the employer or co-workers. Moreover, the diagnosis can favor the appearance of stigmatization in the professional environment. It is important to emphasize that these negative influences are not universally valid and may vary according to the social, legal and medical context. It is also essential to promote education and public awareness about HIV-AIDS in order to reduce or combat the stigma and discrimination associated with this infection and to provide equal opportunities in choosing a profession for HIV-positive people.

PLHIVs are of the opinion that for many employers the status of an HIV-positive person raises a series of questions and fears related to the management of these situations. Almost 18% of the surveyed beneficiaries believe that employers in Romania are not very well informed regarding the professional context related to HIV infection. The subjects are of the opinion that in general, employers are afraid of the exposure of other employees, but also of the legal and administrative implications that can turn into high costs that they can have with an HIV-infected employee. Certain physical weaknesses or the side effects of ART can create problems for the employer who must create working conditions adapted to the medical requirements, including repeated medical leaves.

Approximately 11% of the people participating in the study believe that HIV infection does not influence, or rather should not influence, the professional path. Currently, most of the existing employers on the labour market in Romania do not have standardized work procedures regarding the professional training and employment of HIV-positive people.

## 5. Conclusions

HIV testing remains for some employers a criterion for integration into work. Although it should only be limited to areas considered at risk of disease, this practice is quite widespread. HIV-positive people who attempted employment experienced workplace stigma to varying degrees from both co-workers and employers. Both public and private institutions currently do not have specific implementation strategies for HIV-positive employees in Romania. Disclosing the diagnosis of HIV infection to the future employer remains a fairly common problem in occupational medicine offices. Currently, we do not have active mechanisms implemented that can combat this phenomenon found in these offices. These cases of abuse are often difficult to instrument or prove by PLHIV. Policies that support and facilitate the employment of HIV-positive people remain essential to promote inclusion and equal opportunities in the workplace, an objective that is currently not being achieved. At the legislative level, although the right to work is guaranteed for any person in Romania, in reality PLHIV currently do not have legal means to compel an employer not to fire them when the diagnosis of HIV infection is disclosed in the professional environment. So they remain exposed to the risk of unjustified dismissal.

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# **SOCIALITY: STRUCTURES, PROCESSES, AND IMPLICATIONS IN THE STUDY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

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## **Abstract:**

This article examines sociality and sociability as interdependent concepts, where sociality represents individuals' innate predisposition to engage in social interactions, and sociability reflects the manifestation of these interactions in social networks and relationships. The analysis highlights how social structures influence sociability, with cooperative and participatory forms stimulating it, while competitive and elitist forms inhibit it. Although individuals are shaped by collective norms and values, they retain the capacity to create and innovate, thus facilitating social change and maintaining a balance between stability and evolution in society.

Sociological paradigms such as positivism, social exchange theory, and Max Weber's theory of social action provide different frameworks for understanding human interactions. Positivism emphasizes social order, while social exchange theory explores reciprocity and benefit maximization, extending beyond material exchanges to include symbolic relationships. Weber's theory highlights the subjective meaning individuals attribute to their interactions, illustrating the complexity of human motivations. The article also explores the role of religion and morality in maintaining social cohesion, focusing on how they evolve as societies transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity.

**Keywords:** sociality, sociability, social structures, social exchange theory, social cohesion.

## **Introduction**

The study of human behavior from a sociological perspective requires an analysis of the fundamental processes and structures that govern interactions between individuals. One of the key concepts in this regard is sociality, a term that refers to the innate predisposition and ability of individuals to engage in social relationships. Alongside sociality, sociability represents the concrete manifestation of these interactions, reflecting the complexity and diversity of human connections.

This analytical approach is based on the premise that sociality and sociability are interdependent and vary depending on socio-cultural context, social structures, and dominant interaction patterns within a given society. Furthermore, the analysis involves assessing how internal and external factors influence social behaviors, from collective norms and values to innovations and changes generated by individuals through their interactions.

In the following sections, we will explore various sociological paradigms that explain sociality and sociability, such as positivism, social exchange theory, and social action theory, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how human relationships are shaped and reshaped.

## **1. Sociality, Sociability, and Socialization**

Society is more than just a sum of individuals; it represents an emergent entity with its own characteristics and laws. Through the interrelation and interaction of its members within social groups, a sui generis reality arises, qualitatively different from the sum of its parts (Copp, 1992). This supra-reality, external to individuals, exerts a coercive, normative, and regulatory effect upon them, compelling them to internalize collective norms and values. Socialization, the complex process of socio-cultural integration, ultimately leads to the reproduction of the socio-cultural patterns and matrices characteristic of a particular type of society (Otovescu, 2009: 230).



Although social determinism is strong, it is not absolute. The inner space of the individual is not entirely colonized by external influences. Human originality and creativity are inexhaustible resources that allow for innovation and social change, without which societies would become defensive, rigid, and incapable of adapting to an ever-changing external environment. Sociologist G.H. Mead (1934) developed a complex theory of social dynamics, arguing that there are reciprocal flows and interactions between individuals and groups on one hand, and social structures and institutions on the other. Thus, society shapes individuals through the patterns of thinking and behavior they adopt from the group, but in turn, through their creativity and multiple interactions, individuals reshape and influence the evolution of social structures on both micro and macro levels.

Cooley (1929) argued that the stability of interactions and predictability of human behaviors within a society, which facilitate cooperation and coexistence, represent the essence of social order. The way societies are structured through interactions among individuals is conceptualized in terms of sociality. Human societies are built and evolve around various types of sociality—competitive versus cooperative, egalitarian versus elitist, participative versus autocratic, etc. (Ungureanu, 1990: 15). These relational configurations generate and allow different degrees of sociability to manifest. Thus, there is an interdependence between sociality and sociability, and the level of individual sociability can only be evaluated in relation to the specific pattern of sociality.

The relational matrix of a society, materialized in its type of sociality, forms the foundation and framework that either optimizes or, conversely, limits and inhibits individuals' sociable potential and openness. Therefore, the profile of human sociability differs according to the social context, being stimulated by cooperative, participative, and egalitarian forms of sociality, and inhibited by competitive, restrictive, and elitist forms (Ungureanu, 1990). Consequently, a proper evaluation of sociability requires a holistic, integrative perspective that captures both contextual determinations and individual dispositions. Therefore, if sociality designates the "natural instinct of sociability" (Otovescu, 2009: 201), sociability refers to the "various forms of social interaction and human association" (García & Tegelaars, 2019: 2). Simply put, sociality refers to an individual's innate ability and predisposition to establish social interactions and relationships, reflecting the fundamental psychological need for human contact, belonging, and group integration. Sociality varies from person to person based on genetic and environmental factors, and societies, according to Ungureanu (1990: 15), are characterized by specific profiles of sociality based on the dominant types of social relationships. Sociability, on the other hand, refers to the concrete network of connections and social ties that an individual creates and engages in throughout life. It depends both on the level of sociality and on the opportunities and constraints of the social environment.

After an in-depth analysis of the literature on sociability, Anderson (2015) distinguishes the following types and forms of its manifestation:

- **Formal Sociability** involves adhering to clear protocol rules in social interactions, especially within high social circles. The aim is to maintain social status and transmit traditional values through well-defined codes of conduct.
- **Democratic Sociability** favors open and spontaneous relationships between people, regardless of their social status. The pleasure of interaction and the exchange of ideas matter, without any obligations or predetermined expectations.
- **Civil Sociability** takes place in public spaces, between citizens who may not necessarily know each other. The goal is to create an active civic community that stimulates civic engagement.
- **Evolutionary Sociability** studies the origin of social instincts in humans and animals. There are innate group behaviors that ensure survival. In humans, higher forms of altruism and cooperation have developed, but there is also non-human sociability (forms of association, support, cooperation).

- **Neighborhood Sociability** is based on neighborly relationships. People help each other, interact, but maintain a certain distance. A sense of local community is created.
- **Institutional Sociability** is imposed by the rules of an organization—school, workplace, etc. Interactions are structured according to the hierarchy, goals, and norms of the institution.
- **Convivial Sociability** encourages peaceful interactions, relaxation, and good humor within a group. There is light-hearted interaction, with no major conflicts, for the satisfaction of spending time together.
- **Cosmopolitan Sociability** values openness to intercultural dialogue. It involves the ability to find common ground with people from diverse cultures and value systems.
- **Online Sociability** takes place in the virtual environment, where geographical distances disappear. People interact in online groups and communities, where they express their sociality and need for interaction.
- **Intimate Sociability** occurs in small, primary groups where close bonds based on trust and mutual support are formed. There are expectations of loyalty from other group members.

These forms of socialization are not individualized within an amorphous environment; rather, they intertwine, complement each other, and through correlation manage to describe the complex phenomenon of socialization. We also mention the process of resocialization, which involves relearning the norms and values of a society (Manea, 2023). This process is specific to individuals who have been imprisoned for a long time and need to reintegrate into society and relearn its rules and norms. In this case, resocialization includes finding employment, housing, and forming new social relationships. However, this is not the only situation where resocialization occurs: overcoming addictions, emigrating to a country characterized by a different culture, and changes in political regimes are all examples that require the internalization of a new system of values and norms.

### 3. Paradigms for Analyzing Sociality

#### 3.1. The Positivist and Neopositivist Paradigm

In his fundamental work, *The Course of Positive Philosophy*, the founder of the positivist movement, Auguste Comte, establishes an analytical distinction between two branches of sociology — static and dynamic, which correspond to the two essential components of sociality. This division is inspired by the natural sciences, particularly physics, reflecting Comte's ambition to systematize sociology after the model of the exact sciences. Static sociology examines the conditions of existence of society, the mechanisms that ensure the stability and equilibrium of the social system. It corresponds to the idea of social order. In contrast, dynamic sociology analyzes changes and the historical evolution of society, the laws governing the succession of stages of social development (Bădescu, 2005: 51-55). This form is associated with the idea of progress. Although analytically distinct, the two branches must be correlated to capture the interdependence between order and change in social life:

"In short, social dynamics studies the laws of succession, while social statics seeks those of coexistence: so that the general application of the former is meant to provide practical politics with the true theory of progress, while the latter spontaneously forms that of order; which should not leave the slightest rational doubt about the necessary aptitude of such a philosophical combination to satisfactorily meet the dual fundamental need of current societies." (Comte, 2002: 222-223)

As revealed by Comte's discourse (2002), static sociology studies the general conditions of existence of society, the stable elements that allow the continuity of social life over time. It examines the institutions, values, and beliefs that form the foundation of social order. For example, the institution of the family, universally valid moral principles, aesthetic ideals. These persist beyond the diversity of historical events, forming the foundation upon which social life is built. Dynamic sociology, on the other hand, analyzes phenomena of

change, the evolution of forms of social organization across historical stages. It captures processes such as modernization, globalization, and demographic transition. Unlike stable structural elements, these phenomena represent the processual, evolutionary dimension of social reality.

Following the analytical direction opened by Comte, we can argue that sociality results from the complex interaction between social structure and social dynamics. The social structure represents the relatively stable set of historically consolidated institutions, values, norms, and practices. These form the basic matrix of social relations, the normative framework without which society could not exist. Social dynamics reflect processes of change, creative and unpredictable interactions that gradually reshape social structures. It expresses the vitality of the social, the capacity to adapt to new realities. The two dimensions are in constant tension. Social structures attempt to impose a pattern, an order. But social dynamics inevitably erode and reconstruct inherited normative frameworks. Social equilibrium requires the creative articulation of the stability of structures with the dynamic flow of situated social interactions. Capturing this fundamental duality is key to sociological analysis.

The two perspectives complement each other. Social changes would not be possible without the persistence of structures that give society cohesion. And social structures gradually adapt to new historical realities (Bădescu, 2005: 51-55). Thus, Comte correctly captures the interdependence between the static and dynamic in social life. Although schematic, his conceptual distinction opens the way for a rigorous scientific analysis of both social stability and transformation. It remains valid today, constituting one of the major coordinates of sociological thought.

Comte argues that with scientific progress, society evolves from a military form, where solidarity is based on emotional cohesion, to an industrial one, dominated by critical thinking and rational cooperation. The development of cognitive abilities leads from simple, homogeneous societies to increasingly complex and heterogeneous ones. Social dynamics are determined by the interaction between intellectual, emotional, and material factors. The evolution of society is influenced by the state of the collective mentality as well as by industrial progress, which transforms the material environment. Simply put, "social dynamics in relation to social statics is what physiology is to anatomy in biology" (Otovescu, 2009: 65).

In the view of the French sociologist, both society as a whole and each science individually evolve through three intellectual stages: theological, metaphysical, and positive. Initially, in the theological stage, people explain phenomena by invoking personified deities. Comte distinguishes here fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism. Gradually, societies transition to the metaphysical stage, where abstract forces replace anthropomorphic deities in attempts to understand the world. Finally, the positive or scientific stage involves explanations based on observation, experimentation, and logical reasoning, establishing causal relationships (Uta, 2013). Comte considered sociology the supreme science, the most complex, as it studies humanity itself. Therefore, the emergence of positive sociology marks the culmination of the evolution of human thought. It is the last science to reach the positive stage, as it depends on the prior development of other disciplines. Thus, Comte places sciences in a hierarchy, starting with the simplest—physics and chemistry—and culminating in sociology.

Applying the law of the three stages to the theorization of the concept of sociality, we can say that, at the level of human interactions, sociality evolves through the three successive stages identified by the French sociologist. In the primitive, theological stage, social relationships are based on rituals and taboos dictated by supernatural beliefs and the fear of miraculous punishments for deviating from divine laws. Interactions are rigid, uniformed by religious obligations. The metaphysical stage follows, where social rules take on a more abstract character but continue to be imposed through heteronomous constraints. Social relationships remain rigidly structured around speculative, non-empirically verifiable principles. Finally, in the positive stage, interactions become flexible, governed by a pragmatic

and scientific spirit. Social norms are validated through their observable effects, not dogmas. Individuals interact rationally, based on needs and interests rather than mystical obligations. Sociality takes on a functionalist dynamism.

Thus, the theory of the three stages offers a paradigm for analyzing the evolution of sociality from rigid, normative patterns to fluid, negotiated relationships oriented toward maximizing the common good. It highlights the progress from ritualism to rationalism in structuring social interactions. Comte's staged logic can still shape the scientific study of the dynamics of sociality today. However, this explanatory model is quite fragile from an epistemological point of view. Religious, metaphysical, and scientific aspects often coexist in contemporary societies. Religious beliefs and practices continue to play an important role in the lives of many communities. Philosophical reasoning has not disappeared but has adapted to scientific progress. Science, in turn, does not always provide exhaustive explanations of the world. Therefore, the strict separation between the three stages is not justified. Religion, philosophy, and science often interact productively, rather than excluding one another. Together, they can shape human sociality, offering complementary perspectives on existence. The strict delimitation of the three stages reflects the simplifying ontology promoted by early positivism, which posits a clear rupture between the scientific and speculative spheres. Post-positivist studies have shown that scientific observations are based on theoretical foundations, and scientific laws have a metaphysical substrate (Keat, 1980). An updated paradigm must recognize the subtle interdependencies between various approaches to reality without rigidly hierarchizing them. Explaining sociality requires an integrative approach that captures the complexity and pluralism of human knowledge. Criticism of Comte's model must thus be framed within a nuanced epistemology that avoids simplistic dichotomies.

Comte's model explains, in a mechanistic manner, the genesis, structure, and dynamics of society as a whole. Although certain elements are outdated today, his contributions remain fundamental to establishing sociology as an autonomous science. Commentators on the movement opine that "sociological positivism led to the establishment of an objective methodological practice insofar as it focused on developing sociology as a social science similar in research strategies and presentation of knowledge to the natural sciences" (Vlăsceanu, 2008: 43-44).

The neopositivist movement emerged in sociology around the 1930s, as a reaction to speculative and holistic theories. Neopositivists advocated for a sociology focused on factual observations, empirical data, and quantitative methods. Neopositivists use quantitative methods—statistics, surveys, questionnaires—to observe and measure behaviors. They build abstract models based on observable indicators to explain certain social phenomena.

F.H. Giddings and G.A. Lundberg charted the behaviorist direction in American neopositivist sociology, advocating for a scientific, quantitative approach focused on observing and measuring behaviors. The mentioned American sociologists believed that the progress of sociology depended on adopting the methods of the natural sciences, rejecting the abstract concepts specific to the humanities.

Of interest to the study of sociality is Franklin Giddings' theory of the social mind, a theory that reflects his effort to establish sociology as a legitimate science by identifying an object or reality that exists beyond the level of individuals who make up society (Chriss, 2006). Influenced by philosopher George Lewes, Giddings considered that notions such as "common sense," "general will," etc., indicate the existence of an objective social reality, not just a fiction. Thus, the mental and moral elements of society combine into a whole that transcends individual minds. The social mind results from pluralist behavior, meaning the interaction of multiple individual minds when they perceive the same facts and act in similar ways (Chriss, 2006).

An important aspect of the social mind is memory or social tradition, the sum of transmitted knowledge and beliefs, which Giddings classified into primary, secondary, and tertiary traditions. The social mind resembles Durkheim's collective consciousness, but unlike

Durkheim, Giddings considered it intact even in modern societies, though in a modified form — such as what we today call public opinion (Chriss, 2006: 131-132).

Giddings' theory of sociality stems from his psychological functionalism—a one-to-one correspondence between stimulus and response. The environment determines the composition of the population, and the population determines its mental characteristics. Four types of environments produce four types of populations and corresponding social minds (Giddings, 1904). Although the social mind implies a broad consensus, there are always forces that produce division in society. Thus, similar stimuli do not always produce similar responses, and individuals can develop radically different perspectives.

According to Giddings' theory (1904), the four types of environments that produce four corresponding types of populations and social minds are:

- **Poor and isolated environment** – produces a sparse and homogeneous population with a homogeneous social mind.
- **Poor but accessible environment** – produces a genetically homogeneous population with the possibility of migration, and a homogeneous social mind.
- **Rich but inaccessible environment** – produces a population with great genetic kinship, dense and homogeneous in origin but with inequalities, and a homogeneous but unequal social mind.
- **Rich and accessible environment** – produces a composite and complex population, dense with many immigrants, and a heterogeneous social mind.

Following the analytical direction laid out by Giddings, we can identify a certain type of sociality that characterizes each social environment:

- In a **poor and isolated environment**, a survival sociality develops, where people collaborate closely to meet basic needs and protect each other in a hostile environment. The group is united and homogeneous.
- In a **poor but accessible environment**, we see opportunistic sociality, where people constantly seek opportunities to improve their condition and are prepared to migrate. There is competition for limited resources.
- In a **rich but inaccessible environment**, an oligarchic sociality forms, where elites control resources and political power, while the general population is submissive and dependent.
- In a **rich and accessible environment**, we find diverse and dynamic sociality, with multiple interacting groups. There is social mobility and a pluralistic culture. Competition is regulated through non-arbitrary institutional mechanisms.

Both authors emphasized quantification and generalization, which are essential for science. Lundberg (1940) advocated for the importance of attitude scales, and Giddings for the role of statistics. They rejected value judgments, asserting that science must describe phenomena neutrally. For them, the goal of sociology was to develop universal laws of human behavior, similar to the natural sciences.

Although the methodological contributions of behaviorist sociology remain valid, its reductionist view was later contested. The complexity of social life cannot be captured solely through statistics and experiments; the interpretation of the meanings of human actions is also necessary. A comprehensive sociology must combine quantitative with qualitative methods, explanation with understanding. Excessive abstraction ignores the particularities of social and cultural contexts. The challenge lies in adequately articulating methods based on the specificities of the phenomena studied, recognizing the limits of a strictly positivist approach.

Karl Popper also belongs to the sphere of neopositivist concerns. "In the early stages of his career, he was associated with neopositivism. However, after coming into contact with A. Tarski's semantic concept of truth and other developments from the Warsaw school of logic, he definitively changed his views and later became a critic of it" (Wójcik, 2015:39-40). His theory of sociality is part of his early work and represents a novel attempt to interpret

human coexistence. Karl Popper approaches the phenomenon of sociality from an epistemological perspective, focusing on how knowledge is produced in society. He argues that human society has developed through its capacity to accumulate knowledge. Social behavior is mediated by symbolic representations, not just instincts. Language and cultural traditions allow the transmission of experience from one generation to the next (Popper, 2005). Popper considers that social order is based on a system of expectations communicated intersubjectively through language. Thus, social reality is intersubjective, resulting from the interaction of subjects who coordinate their actions reciprocally. The balance of mutually reinforced social expectations provides predictability and security to human relationships.

However, Popper emphasizes that collective representations are always incomplete. Therefore, continuous critique and reform of social knowledge are vital for progress. He proposes an open, negativist model of social organization, based on freedom of expression and the pluralism of ideas. Democratic institutions must allow critical debate to identify and correct errors in existing theories and policies (Popper, 1993).

In his work *Sociology of Knowledge: Knowledge: Critical Concepts* (Popper, 2005), Popper emphasizes the importance of a critical approach in the social sciences. Theories must be constantly tested and falsified to eliminate false elements. Knowledge progresses through trial and error; there are no absolute certainties. This anti-positivist view rejects the inductive method in favor of logical deduction and falsification. Popper insists that social sciences cannot achieve the same level of precision as the natural sciences due to the impossibility of controlled experimentation. The challenge lies in developing methods suitable for the complexity of the social world.

Thus, Popper's perspective on sociality is based on linguistically mediated intersubjectivity, continuous critique of knowledge, and the importance of ideological pluralism for the progress of society.

### **3.2. The Social Fact Paradigm**

The life and work of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim reflect the influence of the academic environment in which he developed. Born in 1858, Durkheim came from a Jewish family, with his father being a rabbi. After studying philosophy at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure in Paris, Durkheim taught philosophy at the secondary level for five years. Then, in 1887, he was appointed as a lecturer at the Chair of Social Sciences and Education at the University of Bordeaux, a position that made him a pioneer of sociology in France. Ten years later, in 1897, Durkheim founded the journal *L'Année Sociologique*, which quickly became a cornerstone of French sociological thought. Around this publication, the Durkheimian sociological school began to coalesce. Until his sudden death in 1917 due to an aneurysm, Durkheim remained a constant contributor to the journal, with his articles reflecting his interest in the scientific study of social facts. His work analyzes the institutions and evolution of modern society, emphasizing the importance of organic solidarity and moral consensus in maintaining social cohesion. Durkheim's intellectual legacy has profoundly influenced contemporary sociology (Scott & Marshall, 2014: 223).

For the French thinker, sociology is "the science of institutions and social facts" (Otovescu, 2009: 13). A key aim of his entire body of work was the need to apply the functions of sociology. Thus, he continually emphasized the close connection between social theory and social action, even stating that "our research is not worth the effort if its interest remains purely speculative" (Ferreol, 2009: 151). According to Durkheim, the need for reform had to be met by sociological disciplines, whose primary function should remain one of improvement. The need for social reform, according to Durkheim, must be accompanied by a moral reform, aimed at compensating for the deficiencies of organic solidarity (Ferreol, 2009: 154-158).

Émile Durkheim identified three fundamental components of sociology: "social morphology (which describes and explains the 'anatomy of society'), social physiology

(illustrated by specific sociologies that study the 'vital manifestations of society'), and general sociology (which synthesizes the conclusions of analyses from specific sciences)" (Otovescu, 2009: 18). The French thinker paid particular attention to how sociological research should be conducted, being, like Auguste Comte and Max Weber, an advocate of axiological neutrality. From this point of view, his focus on continually improving the research process represents a recurring theme in his work. For example, in his work *Suicide* (1897), Durkheim starts with the analysis and interpretation of statistical data, thus laying the foundations of modern sociological surveys. Additionally, the French sociologist "argues for the necessity of eliminating preconceptions from science, proposes criteria for distinguishing between the normal and the pathological in social life, establishes the rules of typological analysis, grounds deterministic sociological explanation, and prescribes the rules of comparative analysis" (Mihăilescu, 2003: 16). His work *The Rules of Sociological Method* is illustrative in this sense, remaining valid and indispensable today for those seeking to familiarize themselves with methodological principles, despite the inherent limitations of the era in which it was written.

In this analytical framework, sociality refers to the set of social facts and relations that constitute the reality of society. The social has a sui generis, autonomous existence that cannot be reduced to the individual. Society is more than the sum of individuals; it possesses emergent properties not found at the individual level. Therefore, sociality must be studied in and of itself, not explained by psychological or economic factors. The study of sociality primarily focuses on exploring how society functions as a whole, the role of institutions, and the forms of social solidarity. Durkheim pays attention to social cohesion, moral consensus, and the integrity of the social system.

In line with E. Durkheim's perspective, sociality must be explained through social elements, not by economic or psychological factors. Durkheim rejects the materialist-economic perspective promoted by Karl Marx, which reduces society to class struggle and relations of production. He also distances himself from Herbert Spencer's sociological evolutionism, rejecting the idea that societies follow natural laws analogous to those of biology. For Durkheim, society has a sui generis, autonomous existence that cannot be reduced to its components. Thus, through the scientific study of "social facts," Durkheim seeks to capture the essence of collective phenomena. The sociologist emphasizes the importance of a structural approach, which focuses on the interrelationships between social institutions in maintaining social order and solidarity. This unique perspective on the social foreshadows the structural functionalism that emerged later, which in the next chapter we will use to explain loneliness as a social phenomenon. By emphasizing moral consensus and the organic cohesion of modern society, Durkheim also anticipates important directions in contemporary sociology, from structural functionalism to systems theory.

"Durkheim believed that societies have their own reality—that is, society is more than the actions and interests of its individual members. Thus, society generates certain configurations that guide individual behavior" (Giddens, 2010: 11). Therefore, the individual should not be the basis of social research; instead, it is social facts, whose nature cannot be explained by studying non-social factors. Durkheim emphasized that "a social fact is recognized by the external constraint it exerts or can exert on individuals; and the presence of this power is, in turn, recognized either by the existence of a specific sanction or by the resistance that the fact opposes to any individual enterprise that would tend to violate it" (Durkheim, 1974: 65). From this, the main characteristics of social facts are derived—they are external to individuals (objectivity) and have a coercive nature, guiding the behavior of social individuals.

In his work *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), the French sociologist distinguishes between two forms of labor division, each corresponding to two forms of solidarity: weak division, which corresponds to mechanical solidarity, and complex division, which corresponds to organic solidarity.

1. **Mechanical solidarity** is the first historically and is specific to primitive, tribal societies. It is based on shared experiences and beliefs. "The strength of these common beliefs is of a repressive nature – the community promptly punishes anyone who attacks the conventional ways of life. Therefore, mechanical solidarity is based on consensus and similarity of opinion" (Giddens, 2010: 12).
2. **Organic solidarity** is specific to large urban communities, societies "united by the economic interdependence of people and the recognition of each other's contribution" (Giddens, 2010: 12).

Thus, Émile Durkheim analyzes the evolution of forms of social solidarity, correlated with types of labor division. The French sociologist identifies two ideal types of solidarity: mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity describes primitive societies with a weak division of labor. Here, social cohesion results from the similarity of experiences, common beliefs, and values, imposed on individuals through repressive mechanisms. Collective consciousness is overwhelming, and deviations from established norms are harshly punished.

In contrast, in modern societies with a complex division of labor, **organic solidarity** prevails. This no longer depends on the uniformity of behavior but on the functional interdependence between differentiated individuals and social groups. Individuals recognize the complementary contribution they bring to the functioning of the social whole. Thus, cohesion is no longer externally imposed but naturally results from the recognition of mutual utility. Collective consciousness has a lesser influence, there is more flexibility in relation to norms, and the severity of punishments is reduced. Durkheim's analysis opens the way for the study of social institutions' structures and functions, as well as the dynamics of relations between the individual and society.

From the perspective of the evolution of labor division, sociality can be seen as a complex phenomenon, constantly transforming. In traditional societies, with a weak division of labor, sociality was of a closed type – individuals were strongly integrated into primary, familial groups, where interactions were frequent and multiple. There was a strong sense of belonging to the community but also intense pressures of conformity. As the division of labor progressed, sociality became more open – functional interdependence gradually replaced dependence on the local community. Individuals interacted more based on professional relationships, developing a wide network of social contacts. The sense of belonging decreased, but individual autonomy and freedom of expression increased. Today, sociality takes new forms – online networks reinvent the ways of human connection and collaboration beyond spatial-temporal limits. The global division of labor generates complex interdependencies but also accentuated inequalities. The challenge is to harness the diversity and creativity of individuals while maintaining social solidarity and equity. Durkheim's theory helps us understand the directions of sociality's evolution.

Perhaps the most well-known study of the French thinker is *Suicide* (1897), a study that has had a remarkable influence on the subsequent development of sociological research, both theoretically and practically. Durkheim rejects the dominant paradigm of the time, which held that suicide was strictly a pathological psychological process. He starts by defining suicide: "We call suicide any case of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act carried out by the victim, knowing that it will produce that result. The attempt is the act thus defined, but stopped before death results from it" (Durkheim, 2005: 5).

Like today's sociologists, Émile Durkheim then studies the available statistical data on suicide rates in France, and by analyzing the relationship between variables, he arrives at numerous interesting conclusions that allowed him to create a typology of suicides (Durkheim, 2005). Based on the observed correlations, the sociologist establishes a complex typology of suicidal acts depending on the degree of social integration of individuals. He identifies **egoistic suicide**, specific to those insufficiently integrated into social groups, isolated from others, and lacking community support. Then, **anomic suicide** occurs during periods of social deregulation, when established norms and values are displaced, and



individuals experience a deep sense of meaninglessness. In contrast, **altruistic suicide** characterizes situations of hyper-integration into a group, where the collective's imperatives and expectations are so strong that personal life is sacrificed for common ideals. A final type, **fatalistic suicide**, results from excessive oppression exerted by society on the individual, who feels powerless. Durkheim's typology opens the door to novel perspectives on addressing suicidal acts, beyond psychological factors, through the lens of social causality.

In line with the theory of suicide, sociality can be understood as a dynamic set of interactions between individuals, groups, and social institutions. These interactions manifest differently depending on the degree of social integration of individuals. Excessive social isolation leads to a fragmented, atomized sociality, where emotional connections and community support are lacking. This favors egoistic suicide. At the opposite end, hyper-integration into a group generates oppressive sociality, where the collective's demands deprive people of autonomy and identity, leading to altruistic suicide. Between these two extremes lies optimal, balanced, functional sociality, where individuals interact in complementary ways, finding a balance between belonging and independence. But this is fragile – the disintegration of common values leads to **anomic suicide**. The French sociologist's theory highlights the need for optimal forms of sociality, harmoniously combining social integration with the affirmation of individuality. The challenge is to overcome egoistic isolation without falling into coercive uniformity, thus achieving a very delicate social balance.

Despite his Semitic origin, Émile Durkheim promoted the need for the establishment of a new moral system, based on secular moral principles, though it cannot be said that he completely renounced the culture in which he was raised (Ferreol, 2009: 152-153). Nevertheless, he cannot be considered a proponent of materialism; in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), he highlights the main ideologies, rites, norms, and values underlying different forms of religion, as well as their evolution from simple to complex. He states at the very beginning of the work that "an essential postulate of sociology stipulates that a human institution could not be based on error and falsehood, for if that were the case, it could not have endured. If it were not based on the nature of things, these would have opposed it with a resistance it could not have overcome" (Durkheim, 2005: 5).

Religion is a fundamental component of human sociality, as it expresses how people relate to the sacred and the transcendent. It constitutes a symbolic and moral system that contributes to the cohesion of social groups (Durkheim, 2005: 5). In traditional societies with mechanical social solidarity, religion plays a strong integrative role. Common religious beliefs and rituals strengthen the bonds among members of the local community. Strict adherence to religious norms is imposed by the fear of supernatural sanctions. As the social division of labor progresses, establishing organic solidarity, the integrative role of religion diminishes. Social relationships diversify, and social control becomes more relaxed. However, even in complex modern societies, religion provides an ethical and symbolic foundation for sociality. Although its normative influence diminishes, religion remains a vital component of social life. It satisfies profound human needs for meaning, continuity, and transcendence. Even in a secularized form, religiosity in various guises shapes how people interact and relate to the world (Poenaru, 2018).

Beyond its traditional role in social cohesion, religion can shape sociality in complex and sometimes paradoxical ways. For example, in the digital age, religious belonging tends to become individualized. People construct customized religious identities and practices, adapted to personal preferences (Kimmons et al., 2017). Thus, religion can contribute to social fragmentation rather than integration. At the same time, some radical religious movements exacerbate the separation between "us" and "them," leading to conflicts between groups. Religious exclusivism can undermine universal human solidarity. However, historical experience also shows the potential of religious ideologies to mobilize society for positive or negative purposes. Meanwhile, secularization does not necessarily mean the decline of

sociality. Civic values and rational ethics can strengthen cohesion in an inclusive manner. Moreover, spiritual practices unaffiliated with traditional religious institutions are experiencing a revival. Thus, the relationship between religion and sociality is dynamic and complex. Religion can shape social interactions in various ways, from integration to fragmentation. The challenge lies in harnessing the ethical potential of religiosity for open and harmonious sociality.

In conclusion, a provocative question arises: what would Durkheim have answered to the question: "Is sociality a social fact?" On one hand, many of the constitutive elements of sociality—customs, rituals, norms, institutions—meet Durkheim's characteristics of social facts: externality, coercion over individuals, objective existence. Regular social relationships and historically consecrated collective practices represent, for the French sociologist, social facts worthy of scientific study. However, sociality also encompasses aspects that are difficult to fit within the sphere of Durkheimian social facts. Spontaneous, contextual interpersonal interactions do not always follow predetermined patterns. Belonging to informal groups is based on fluctuating affiliations. The very subjective experience of individuals in the social environment—the feeling of loneliness or integration, emotional experiences in relation to others—exceeds the externality and coercion specific to social facts. Thus, in the Durkheimian understanding, sociality combines both objective, coercive dimensions and experiential, dynamic, even creative aspects. It cannot be entirely conceived as a static, immutable social fact. Sociality is a complex set of phenomena situated at the intersection of structure and action, between normativity and deviance. Some of its components fit the category of social fact, while others exceed it.

Durkheim's perspective remains highly fertile for the systematic, empirical study of sociality. The delimitation of social facts as objects of study allowed sociology to be constituted as a science. However, to capture the complexity of sociality, interpretive approaches are also needed, exploring the meanings, experiences, and situated interactions of social actors. An integrative vision of sociality requires articulating Durkheim's contributions with those of other sociological traditions.

### 3.3. The Social Action Paradigm

In his work *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), the French sociologist distinguishes between two forms of labor division, each corresponding to two forms of solidarity: weak division, which corresponds to mechanical solidarity, and complex division, which corresponds to organic solidarity.

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Thus, Émile Durkheim analyzes the evolution of forms of social solidarity, correlated with types of labor division. The French sociologist identifies two ideal types of solidarity: mechanical and organic. Mechanical solidarity describes primitive societies with a weak division of labor. Here, social cohesion results from the similarity of experiences, common beliefs, and values, imposed on individuals through repressive mechanisms. Collective consciousness is overwhelming, and deviations from established norms are harshly punished.

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cohesion is no longer externally imposed but naturally results from the recognition of mutual utility. Collective consciousness has a lesser influence, there is more flexibility in relation to norms, and the severity of punishments is reduced. Durkheim's analysis opens the way for the study of social institutions' structures and functions, as well as the dynamics of relations between the individual and society.

From the perspective of the evolution of labor division, sociality can be seen as a complex phenomenon, constantly transforming. In traditional societies, with a weak division of labor, sociality was of a closed type – individuals were strongly integrated into primary, familial groups, where interactions were frequent and multiple. There was a strong sense of belonging to the community but also intense pressures of conformity. As the division of labor progressed, sociality became more open – functional interdependence gradually replaced dependence on the local community. Individuals interacted more based on professional relationships, developing a wide network of social contacts. The sense of belonging decreased, but individual autonomy and freedom of expression increased. Today, sociality takes new forms – online networks reinvent the ways of human connection and collaboration beyond spatial-temporal limits. The global division of labor generates complex interdependencies but also accentuated inequalities. The challenge is to harness the diversity and creativity of individuals while maintaining social solidarity and equity. Durkheim's theory helps us understand the directions of sociality's evolution.

Perhaps the most well-known study of the French thinker is *Suicide* (1897), a study that has had a remarkable influence on the subsequent development of sociological research, both theoretically and practically. Durkheim rejects the dominant paradigm of the time, which held that suicide was strictly a pathological psychological process. He starts by defining suicide: "We call suicide any case of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act carried out by the victim, knowing that it will produce that result. The attempt is the act thus defined, but stopped before death results from it" (Durkheim, 2005: 5).

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overcome egoistic isolation without falling into coercive uniformity, thus achieving a very delicate social balance.

Despite his Semitic origin, Émile Durkheim promoted the need for the establishment of a new moral system, based on secular moral principles, though it cannot be said that he completely renounced the culture in which he was raised (Ferreol, 2009: 152-153). Nevertheless, he cannot be considered a proponent of materialism; in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), he highlights the main ideologies, rites, norms, and values underlying different forms of religion, as well as their evolution from simple to complex. He states at the very beginning of the work that "an essential postulate of sociology stipulates that a human institution could not be based on error and falsehood, for if that were the case, it could not have endured. If it were not based on the nature of things, these would have opposed it with a resistance it could not have overcome" (Durkheim, 2005: 5).

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Beyond its traditional role in social cohesion, religion can shape sociality in complex and sometimes paradoxical ways. For example, in the digital age, religious belonging tends to become individualized. People construct customized religious identities and practices, adapted to personal preferences (Kimmons et al., 2017). Thus, religion can contribute to social fragmentation rather than integration. At the same time, some radical religious movements exacerbate the separation between "us" and "them," leading to conflicts between groups. Religious exclusivism can undermine universal human solidarity. However, historical experience also shows the potential of religious ideologies to mobilize society for positive or negative purposes. Meanwhile, secularization does not necessarily mean the decline of sociality. Civic values and rational ethics can strengthen cohesion in an inclusive manner. Moreover, spiritual practices unaffiliated with traditional religious institutions are experiencing a revival. Thus, the relationship between religion and sociality is dynamic and complex. Religion can shape social interactions in various ways, from integration to fragmentation. The challenge lies in harnessing the ethical potential of religiosity for open and harmonious sociality.

In conclusion, a provocative question arises: what would Durkheim have answered to the question: "Is sociality a social fact?" On one hand, many of the constitutive elements of sociality—customs, rituals, norms, institutions—meet Durkheim's characteristics of social facts: externality, coercion over individuals, objective existence. Regular social relationships and historically consecrated collective practices represent, for the French sociologist, social facts worthy of scientific study. However, sociality also encompasses aspects that are difficult to fit within the sphere of Durkheimian social facts. Spontaneous, contextual interpersonal interactions do not always follow predetermined patterns. Belonging to informal groups is based on fluctuating affiliations. The very subjective experience of individuals in the social environment—the feeling of loneliness or integration, emotional experiences in relation to others—exceeds the externality and coercion specific to social facts. Thus, in the Durkheimian understanding, sociality combines both objective, coercive dimensions and experiential,

dynamic, even creative aspects. It cannot be entirely conceived as a static, immutable social fact. Sociality is a complex set of phenomena situated at the intersection of structure and action, between normativity and deviance. Some of its components fit the category of social fact, while others exceed it.

Durkheim's perspective remains highly fertile for the systematic, empirical study of sociality. The delimitation of social facts as objects of study allowed sociology to be constituted as a science. However, to capture the complexity of sociality, interpretive approaches are also needed, exploring the meanings, experiences, and situated interactions of social actors. An integrative vision of sociality requires articulating Durkheim's contributions with those of other sociological traditions.

### **3.4. The Social Exchange Paradigm**

The norm of reciprocity, based on the mutual expectations of social actors, represents one of the oldest regulatory principles of human interaction (Gouldner, 1960). Social exchange theory offers a relevant perspective on the foundations of social order, resulting from an interdisciplinary approach that integrates contributions from sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Its conceptual complexity is balanced by theoretical intuition and explanatory power, making social exchange a major sociological paradigm, especially useful in investigating the mechanisms of sociality.

Beyond simple economic exchange, the theory highlights the multiple types of symbolic and communicational exchanges through which social relationships are constructed and negotiated. The analytical framework of social exchange captures both the structural dimension and the processual, intersubjective aspect of human interactions (Bădescu, 2005: 206). This explains the formation and persistence of social bonds, as well as the possibility of their rupture when the balance of exchange is disrupted.

The dynamics of social exchange, however, depend on the socio-cultural context. The types of exchanges and their associated meanings are shaped by the value systems and norms of a society. Moreover, unequal social positions often give exchanges a coercive, dominant dimension in addition to a reciprocal-consensual one. The challenge lies in going beyond the utilitarian perspective and micro-interaction analysis to capture the multidimensionality of social exchanges and their role in structuring power relations (Cook et al., 2013). A critical sociology of social exchange can thus bring to light the subtle mechanisms of exploitation and domination masked by the appearance of reciprocity.

Anthropological studies initiated by Marcel Mauss have shown that gift-giving rituals precede and establish the normative framework of economic exchange (Mauss, 1997). The gift involves establishing a social bond, not just a material transfer. It entails mutual obligations that sometimes go as far as sacrifice, as shown by Mauss and Durkheim's analyses of agonistic gift systems like the potlatch. Thus, symbolic exchange precedes and underpins later forms of purely utilitarian exchange. It is based on conformity not only external but also internal to the norms that sustain social order. Moreover, symbolic exchange establishes specific social hierarchies. For example, in centralized redistribution systems like that of the Incas, gifts circulate from the periphery to the center and back, legitimizing the authority of the tribal leader. Therefore, social exchange must be analyzed from multiple perspectives. It involves both utilitarian calculation and the symbolic meanings that actors attach to exchange practices. Reciprocal obligations, social status, and collective ideals are essential dimensions.

Mauss (1997) highlighted the fundamental importance of symbolic exchange in the genesis of social relations. He shows that behind any economic exchange lies a complex substrate of ritual obligations meant to establish a social bond between partners before the actual transaction. Whether it's the circular Kula exchange between equals, hierarchical redistributive exchange, or the agonistic potlatch, all these forms are based on the logic of the gift, which involves more than just a simple utilitarian transfer (Mauss, 1997: 15-17).

Marcel Mauss analyzes an archaic form of exchange and social contract found in various traditional societies in Polynesia, Melanesia, and the Northwest coast of America. Unlike modern exchange, based on economic calculation and individual interest, this archaic system is based on the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate gifts. Mauss shows that a gift made by an individual or social group is not a voluntary or disinterested act. It is part of a complex system of "total prestations" and mutual obligations that bind social groups together. Refusing to enter into this system is equivalent to refusing alliance and friendship. The gift is accompanied by a "spiritual force" specific to each culture. Among the Polynesians, this is called "hau" (Mauss, 1997: 59-62). This intimate force of the given object obliges reciprocity, the return of the gift, under the threat of negative consequences. Keeping the gift without returning it is considered dangerous. The obligations related to the gift are threefold: to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. The return is then made with a certain "interest," a surplus. The gift often takes the form of "currency," valuable objects that fulfill the role of money but maintain a spiritual connection with the donor.

In some societies, the gift also plays an important religious role. Refusal to enter the gift exchange circuit can attract the wrath of gods and spirits. The gift is a means of obtaining the goodwill of supernatural forces. By analyzing this archaic gift system, Mauss reveals a form of social, economic, and spiritual organization profoundly different from modern individualistic society. He sees in it the roots of a type of social contract in which selfish calculation is replaced by moral obligation and honor. Thus, the economy does not derive from a simple atomized barter but requires the prior establishment of a relational and normative framework. The universal principle of reciprocity has a deeply rooted symbolic matrix, transcending utilitarian calculation.

Applying Mauss' explanatory model to the study of sociality, we can say that it is based on a complex symbolic matrix that precedes and establishes the later forms of purely utilitarian exchange. Economic transactions cannot take place without a relational and normative framework established beforehand through the symbolic exchange of gifts. As Marcel Mauss (1997) showed in his work, gift-giving rituals create mutual obligations that involve not just a simple material transfer but also the establishment of a profound social bond between the parties. These mutual obligations often go as far as sacrifice, as in the case of agonistic systems like the potlatch. The symbolic exchange of gifts entails conformity not only externally but also internally to the norms that sustain social order. It also establishes specific hierarchies, legitimizing the authority of tribal leaders in centralized redistribution systems. Thus, gifts circulate from the periphery to the center and back, consecrating the social status of tribal chiefs.

Therefore, if we think in Mauss' (1997) terms, sociality involves much more than simple economic calculation based on the utilitarian interest of social actors. It presupposes a strong symbolic dimension, related to the meanings that participants in the exchange attribute to mutual obligations, social status, and collective ideals. Any form of exchange is structured based on this pre-existing symbolic substrate. An economy based on atomized transactions between isolated individuals is a fiction. It cannot exist without the prior establishment of a relational and normative framework, realized through the symbolic exchange of gifts. The universal principle of reciprocity thus has a deeply rooted symbolic matrix that cannot be reduced to mere utilitarian calculation. Mauss' analysis deconstructs the myth of methodological individualism, showing that human sociality is always based on a collective symbolic dimension.

*The Gift Essay*, published by Mauss in 1925, anticipates social exchange theory, which solidified in the 1960s through the convergence of contributions from anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Influenced by utilitarianism and behaviorism, the new paradigm conceptualizes social interactions as exchanges of material and symbolic rewards between actors motivated by the maximization of benefits. G. Homans, the initiator, adopted a behaviorist view, explaining the formation of habits through the reinforcement of rewarded

behaviors (Cook et al., 2013). P. Blau extended the analysis to macrosociology, arguing that complex social structures are shaped by the force of social attraction that cements exchange relationships (Blau, 1968). George Homans started from the idea that sociology should find its foundations in psychology. He was influenced by behaviorism, a current that emphasizes the study of observable human behavior.

Homans tried to avoid any reference to concepts like social forces, considering that such abstract notions are unnecessary for explaining social life. In his view, the key to understanding society lies in the individual motivations of each person. Starting from the stimulus-response model, Homans believed that people act to maximize their satisfactions and avoid punishments. Thus, the basic principles of sociology would only be applications of psychology, the science that studies the mind and individual human behavior (Cook et al., 2013).

Starting from the notions of action, interaction, and emotion as basic elements of sociality, Homans proposed five axioms based on the behaviorist theory of instrumental conditioning. He believed that people tend to repeat actions that have been rewarded in the past, avoiding those that were punished. These axioms are (Ungureanu, 1990: 32):

- **Axiom of past stimulus:** According to this axiom, when a situation similar to one that in the past generated a rewarded behavior is repeated, it will likely generate the same behavioral response. For example, if we were rewarded for contributing to a project in the past, the next time a similar project is proposed, we will engage again. Thus, behaviors rewarded in the past condition us to reproduce the same patterns when the context is similar.
- **Axiom of frequency of behavior:** The more often a behavior is rewarded, the more likely it is to be repeated. If every time we help someone at work we receive praise, we will continue to offer help. Repeated rewards reinforce certain action patterns.
- **Axiom of reward value:** The intensity of a behavior increases with the perceived value of the reward. If the effort put into a project is rewarded with a large sum of money, we will be more involved than if the reward were symbolic. Valuable rewards motivate increased effort.
- **Axiom of satiation:** If an activity has been constantly rewarded in the past, the reward will need to increase to maintain the same level of involvement. If we receive the same Christmas bonus for five years, next year we will expect a higher amount, or we will not be as motivated. Rewards need to be diversified.
- **Axiom of aggregation of consequences:** The smaller the difference between the reward and the cost of an activity, the greater the dissatisfaction. If we work hard for a negligible bonus, frustration will arise. There must be a balance between effort and reward.

The axioms of social exchange are based on the premise that people act rationally, seeking to maximize benefits and avoid punishments (Ungureanu, 1990: 32). However, they reduce social behavior to the schematic stimulus-response, ignoring the complex cognitive, symbolic, and cultural processes that mediate human interactions. Homans attempted to impose the scientific rigor of behaviorism on social reality, but this eludes such simplistic logic. A comprehensive sociology needs multiple perspectives to capture the multifaceted nature of social existence.

Homans' approach, however, ignores certain essential aspects of social existence. The individual does not act in a social vacuum but is shaped by the culture and norms of the group to which they belong. Human behavior has an important symbolic dimension, not just a pragmatic one. Moreover, society is more than the sum of its individual members; it has its own characteristics and laws. The multidimensionality of social exchanges cannot be captured without considering the cultural context that structures the meanings and types of exchange. Additionally, exchanges do not occur in a social vacuum but are mediated by power relations that limit the actors' freedom of choice (Abrahamsson, 1970). A critical perspective must

highlight not only reciprocity but also the hidden exploitation in relationships such as wage labor. Beyond micro-interactions, macro-structures constitute the framework that optimizes certain exchanges while discouraging or penalizing others. The challenge lies in the complex articulation of multiple levels to capture both the interactional premises and the structural-cultural anchoring of exchanges that support and reproduce social order.

A contemporary sociology of exchange must also incorporate the new digital environments and globalized flows that radically reconfigure the sphere of human interactions. The virtualization of social relationships recombines the spatiotemporal coordinates of exchange, generating new types of communities and dependencies. At the same time, the expansion of integrated markets on a global scale intensifies interdependencies and inequalities between societies, challenging the classical paradigm of social exchange to adapt in order to remain a viable tool for explaining the foundations of sociality.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Sociality and sociability are interdependent concepts, with sociality representing the innate predisposition of individuals to interact, while sociability reflects the actualization of these interactions in social networks and relationships. Social structures directly influence the degree of sociability, and patterns of sociality vary according to socio-cultural contexts. Thus, cooperative or participatory forms stimulate sociability, while competitive or elitist forms inhibit it.

Although social determinism is strong, it is not absolute. Individuals are shaped by collective norms and values but retain the capacity for creativity and innovation, allowing for social change. This balance between stability and change is essential for the adaptation and evolution of societies. On one hand, society imposes behavioral patterns, but on the other, individuals can reshape these patterns through their multiple interactions and originality.

Sociological paradigms, such as positivism or social exchange theory, offer different analytical frameworks for understanding human interactions. Positivism, supported by Auguste Comte, emphasizes social order and stability, while social exchange theory explores the dynamics of reciprocity and benefit maximization in human relationships. However, social exchange is not limited to the material dimension; it also includes symbolic exchanges, such as the social bonds formed through gifts and symbolic reciprocity.

Max Weber, through his theory of social action, highlights the importance of the subjective meaning individuals assign to their interactions. He distinguishes between rational action, traditional action, and affective action, showing that human motivations are complex and diverse. Thus, social relationships are not only guided by formal rules or rational calculation but also by traditions and emotions.

Religion and morality play an important role in maintaining social cohesion. In traditional societies, religion helps reinforce mechanical solidarity by imposing common norms and rituals. As societies evolve toward modern forms of organic solidarity, the role of religion transforms, but it continues to provide a moral and symbolic framework for social interactions.

The evolution of sociality is a dynamic process, moving from rigid and imposed forms of interaction in traditional societies to more flexible and interdependent relationships in modern societies. These changes are driven by the progress of labor division and new forms of social interaction, including those facilitated by technology and globalization.



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## THE PERCEPTION OF SOCIETY REGARDING TATTOOED INDIVIDUALS

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**Abstract:** The topic of tattoos has sparked controversy regarding the public image and social perception of tattooed people. They are socially accepted and rejected, influenced by factors such as the education, social status, age and cultural background of the viewer. Views on women with tattoos vary widely in society depending on culture, social class and personal value systems. Some cultures hold tattooed women in high esteem because they see the tattoos as a sign of boldness and creativity: for them, the act of tattooing is an expression of individual autonomy and self-empowerment. On the other hand, some societies perceive tattooed women negatively, which leads to discrimination and stereotyping; one common negative stereotype in such cases is to consider such women as unprofessional or non-conformist. The perception of tattooed women within society varies significantly; consider it like this — some see it as a sign of boldness while others frown upon it with negative connotations. This paper aims to understand society's perception of tattooed people. This objective was achieved through a micro-survey conducted in Craiova, Dolj County, using a questionnaire-based sociological survey as a research method to understand the current perception of tattooed people in the population. Given the generally negative attitudes towards tattoos and tattooed people in Romania, it can be assumed that the research results will be in line with this trend in terms of expected results

**Key words:** tattoos, social stigma, stereotypes, self-expression, labor market

### 1. Introduction

In the recent years, tattoos have seen a rise in popularity among people of all walks of life but still frowned upon by society as an art form. There is limited literature on this subject, yet I think it is important to investigate how opting for ink can affect different spheres of your life— social status, interpersonal connections, professional image. We are always bound within these typical stereotypes which place individuals with tattoos under the category of either criminals or rebels; at best not smart criminals at worst. The story should rise above these common clichés that hover around tattooed individuals. Society often considers women with tattoos to be lower class, promiscuous, unattractive or untrustworthy. I chose to discuss this topic because it is under-researched compared to the socio-psychological effects of individuals who choose to get a tattoo in the process of developing their own identity. I want to show that not all people with tattoos are necessarily intellectually inferior, do not have any pathological conditions, and do not have criminal or promiscuous tendencies. Moreover, I want to emphasize that stereotypes and social stigma may devalue and affect these people's social relationships, career development and even their self-image.

There is a significant difference between the acceptance and rejection of tattoos in popular culture, and the same controversy is reflected in the research literature on tattoo practices. For example, psychoanalyst Karacaoglan (2012) interprets her clients' tattoo motivations as pathological, deviant, aggressive, masochistic, painful, self-harming, and psychotic. In contrast, Atkinson (2004) notes that tattooing is interpreted as a prosocial and emotionally regulated communicative behavior rather than a pathological example of self-harm.

## **2. Theoretical framework and literature review**

### **2.1 The main concepts and theories related to the researched topic**

#### **Symbolism:**

**Cultural meanings:** Tattoos were frequently significant in the symbolic culture of many cultures. These included an expression of one's personal identity or narrative personal history; family history or tribal stories; and religious or spiritual faith, along with the personal connections that were cherished within the community.

**Symbols and motifs:** Tattoos often use particular designs and symbols as a way to express faith, love or power.

**Protection and healing:** Tattoos have not lost their popularity in the present age. They are considered an art form and a way to express one's personal identity. The different types of designs, styles and meanings make the world culture more colorful because it reflects individuality on a global scale richly. There can be many reasons behind the decision to get a tattoo that ranges from social to psychological and many factors that influence one's choice for tattoo art— here are some typical illustrations:

Tattoos' popularity as an art form and a mode through which people can share their stories continues unchanged even in this era. The different designs, styles and symbolic meanings present in the tattoo art world depict the wide diversity of human culture globally — from one end to another. Many social and psychological reasons can influence why a person gets a tattoo; various factors often come into play to determine an individual's choice on what design they would like permanently inked on their skin.

#### **Social explanations:**

**Expressing individuality:** The common perception of tattoos is that they are a permanent form of self-expression unique to the individual's body design.

**Affiliation with groups and subcultures:** Some groups use tattoos as a symbol of their belonging to a particular tribe or social group. These people can be artists, members of the military, music lovers— among others.

**Commemoration and memory:** Tattoos are common among many people as a way to remember significant events in their lives like the birth of a child or death of someone close to them.

**Rebellion and Unconventionality:** For some, tattoos are a form of resistance to social rules or authority, this gives them a means to distinguish themselves and refuse to deviate.

#### **Psychological explanations:**

**Autonomy and control:** Tattoos can represent a method of expressing control over the body and life, this leads to the feeling of independence and mastery over personal decisions.

**Self-discovery and personal development:** A few individuals choose to have tattoos, and consider them a form of personal development and self-discovery: a significant portion of their life.

**Emotional repair or healing:** Tattoos are said to be a form of self-expression and healing that is triggered by trauma or other emotional issues. They provide a means to express and resolve their emotions.

**Adrenaline and sensory pleasure:** The acquisition of a tattoo is emotionally and sensory-charged, with some people experiencing an adrenaline rush and a lot of positive emotions. It must be understood that the reasons for getting inked are different for each person, depending on the social setting and personal beliefs.

## 2.2. The perception of society regarding tattooed women

Over time, society has become more accessible and accepting of tattoos, and tattooed women have gained ground in various fields, including professional and artistic ones. However, there are still lingering biases and stereotypes, and tattooed women are sometimes victimized by discrimination or malapropisms from more conservatives or traditional people. Although the presence of tattoos is often associated with attributions of negative traits, little research has been done on perceptions of people with tattoos (Durkin & Houghton, 2000). Degelman and Price (2002) showed that women with tattoos were viewed as less attractive, honest, generous, and intelligent than women without tattoos.

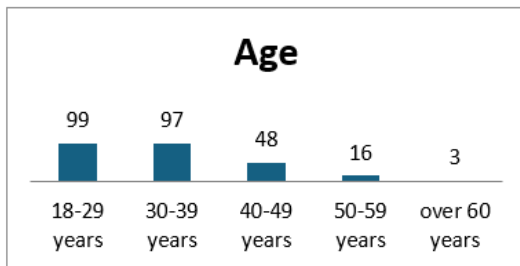


Fig. 1

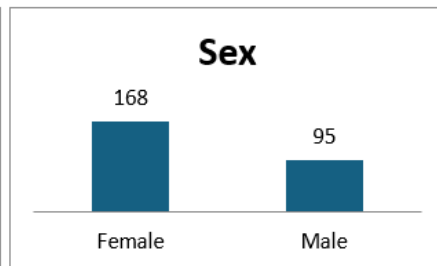


Fig. 2

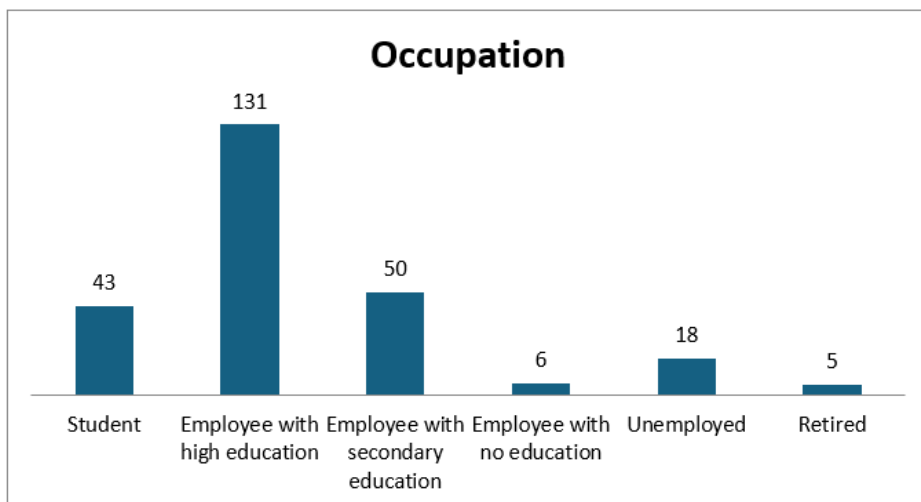


Fig. 3

The social disapproval of women who have tattoos is typically caused by multiple factors: cultural components, gender dynamics, and typical norms. Here are the primary characteristics of this stigmatization:

**1. Gender Norms and Stereotypes:** In numerous cultures, women are prohibited from participating in activities that typically require men to participate, and they have stringent rules about how they should appear and behave. In some cultures, tattoos are considered to be in violation of the expected behavior of a woman or the common perception that women should appear and act certain.

**2. Shallow judgments and biases:** Tattoos are a topic that women are subject to criticism for not having them. It's commonly understood by many that a tattoo is associated with lack of commitment to professionalism—or creativity, or any other desirable attribute—this dissuades more women from having tattoos as art.

**3. Media portrayal:** The depiction by media of tattooed women typically places them in contexts associating them with nonconformists or marginalized women, such as musicians or those in adult entertainment industry. Such depictions might strengthen societal prejudice against tattooed women.

**4. Professional context:** In certain professions, tattooed women may have problems accessing employment or may be subject to discrimination in their workplaces due to the bias of their clients or employers. Recently Swami and Furnham (2007) found that tattooed women were rated less attractive and sexually more promiscuous. Additionally, investigations of the attitudes of employers towards tattooed individuals (Bekhor, Bekhor, & Gandrabur, 1995) and healthcare professionals (Stuppy, Armstrong, & Casals-Ariet, 1998) demonstrated that tattooed individuals are associated with negative emotion, as a result, they may be treated differently in these environments.

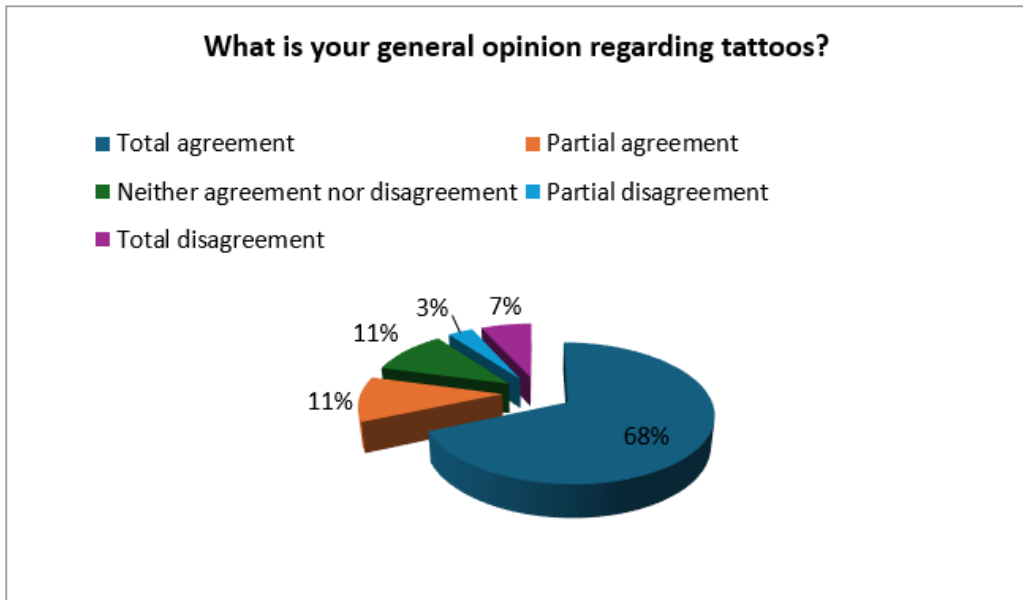


Fig. 5

### 2.3. The perspective of the tattoo in terms of insertion into the labor market

Little information is known about the effect of social stigma on professional development when tattoos are not permitted in the workplace. Savickas documented the significance of careers to individuals and stated that people today have a greater desire to find meaning and a connection to society in their work.

In his concept we find that he also stressed the importance of identifying and exploring tattooed people's self-concepts, cultural barriers and limiting assumptions as it helps to better understand the social context in which workers (tattooed people) work in order to understand how to adequately address their barriers in their careers and construct their self-identity in social and professional settings in order to achieve better functioning in the labor market and better integration in the workplace.

Atkinson (2004) emphasized the intention to be different and unique and the sense of empowerment that tattoos give people. He argued that tattoos are a way to empower women and reject traditional gender role expectations.

The gender roles can impede and restrict the behavior, wishes, and potential of women and men in society and into the labor work. These limitations may include:

**1. Social roles and expectations:** Culture and societies manifest varied expectations regarding behaviors and roles of women as well as men. Typically, women are expected to take up the role of care for children plus the home while men are encouraged to be autonomous and pursue careers that lead to professional success.

**2. Access to opportunity:** Human resources can differ in the ways women and men are able to get various educational, professional and social. There is a possibility that women will not be well represented in certain fields or leadership because these areas would require them, yet men could also be required not to take up positions on specific fields which are considered feminine by society.

**3. Social conventions:** Cultural norms can have a considerable impact on how individuals manifest their gender-specific identities. For example, the display of aggression or assertiveness might not be an acceptable trait for women whereas affection or emotional openness could easily be ignored if shown by men.

**4. Perceptions and stigmas:** The negative portrayal and criticism of individuals' adoption or non-adoption of what are considered the "normal" gender roles can result in situations that ostracize or exhibit a form of prejudice. People who endeavor to get out from under the limitations brought about by gender disparities may encounter such difficulties — whether in their private spheres or places of work.

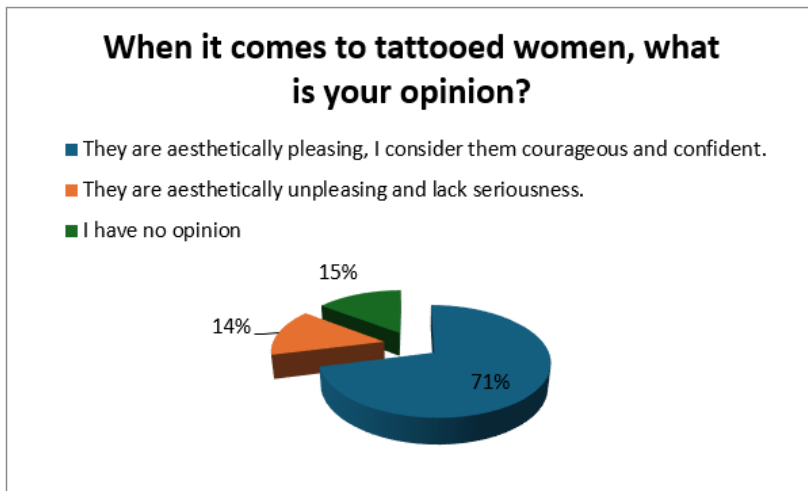


Fig. 6

Tattoos have always been a popular form of body art as well as a controversial one (Atkinson, 2002). Even though the perceptions about tattoos have changed over the past decade, it is still possible to say that tattoos make a cultural statement among women who refuse to conform to traditional femininity (Hebdige, 1979). This "noise" challenges society's preconceived notions of what a woman's body should look like and allows others with alternative ideologies to identify themselves. Those inked are seen fighting against conservative norms while also feeling proud of their cultural identity. By rebelling against these norms, they create an environment where older women could control younger women through participation in the practice of tattooing women (Young, 2001). The cultural movements of this age have a significant impact on shaping an individual's identity— thus it is logical why one popular reason people get tattoos removed is not that the tattoo does not resonate with their personal history, but rather because they have evolved from that cultural current.

Limitations of self-expression and opportunities for both women and men— together. This brings about the need to recognize such limitations but work towards attaining gender parity, let alone any other bias or discrimination against females and males in society.

Tattoos are still considered by many as art or a way to express deep emotions—even with the social stigma attached to them, as they also deny conformity to associated stereotypes. But it is important to understand that even in this era of progress and empowerment, women with tattoos can still face discrimination; let us all promote acceptance of diversity in how individuals wish to show what matters most to them and who they are.

One of the most neglected areas of tattoo research is women's involvement with tattoos. Because tattoos have long been associated with masculinity, few researchers have addressed issues of cultural construction and expression of femininity through tattoos (Atkinson, 2001; DeMello, 2000; Mifflin, 1997; Sanders, 1991; Wroblewski, 1992).

When issues related to femininity are incorporated into tattoo analysis, the primary focus is on how tattoos can visibly threaten women's femininity. For example, Steward (1990: 127) categorizes tattooed North American women as "wanderers," "lesbians," and "farm women." Based on the notion that women who mark their bodies with tattoos are consciously violating existing gender norms, associations have been established between tattoos and "degenerate" or overly masculine women (Gray, 1994).

### **3. Research methodology**

This article has two major components:

**a) The theoretical part** (literature review) with the purpose to comprehensively present the trend of self-expression through the practice of tattooing as a direction in which expression and the establishment of identity are becoming increasingly important in today's society, as well as to offer psychological and sociological explanations for the need to get tattooed, which is manifested by an increasing number of individuals.

**b) The applied part**, the one in which the studied concepts are put into practice – it aims to apply a questionnaire based survey among people from Craiova.

*The objectives of the practical part are:*

#### **b1) General objectives**

Objective no. 1: Studying the relationship between tattooed individuals and social stigma

Objective no. 2: Studying the correlation between labor market insertion and the access of individuals with tattoos

#### **b2) Specific objectives**

Objective no. 1: Highlighting the fact that tattoos are no longer exclusive to criminals and uneducated individuals

Objective no. 2: Revealing the citizens' opinion regarding the practice of tattoos, tattooed individuals, especially women with tattoos

**b3) To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following working hypotheses were proposed:**

*The first hypothesis:* If a woman is tattooed, she is considered promiscuous and untrustworthy.

*The second hypothesis:* If an individual has tattoos, he is considered dangerous.

*The third hypothesis:* If an individual is tattooed, he does not have access to certain professional occupations.

#### **b4) Method**

To conduct this study, a questionnaire-based investigation was used, the research tool being a questionnaire.

#### **b5) The investigated population**



This paper aims to investigate the general opinion of citizens about tattoos and tattooed individuals. For this, 263 subjects aged 18 to over 60 years old, female and male, were surveyed in May 2024 in Craiova, Dolj County. They come from all socio-professional categories, being both tattooed and non-tattooed individuals.

**4. The perception of society regarding tattooed individuals - The results of the study on Craiova citizens**

After applying the questionnaire to assess the number of tattooed and non-tattooed respondents, they were divided into two batches: the one that includes the tattooed subjects (122 of 268 representing 46,4% from the surveyed sample) of these, a percentage of 2,3% regretted getting tattoos; and the batch of non-tattooed individuals (141 of 268 representing 53,6% of the total subjects). From this last category, 23,2% (61 of 141) expressed the desire to get tattooed in the future. We will subsequently analyze their age and the socio-professional category they belong to.

*Individuals without tattoos but who intend to get tattooed*

Sex	Age	Education/Occupation
Female: 38	18-29 years old: 39	Student: 26
Male: 23	30-39 years old: 13	Employee with high education: 25
	40-49 years old: 7	Employee with secondary education: 7
	50-59 years old: 2	Employee with no education: 1
		Unemployed: 1
		Retired: 1

As can be seen in the statistics above, individuals intending to get tattooed are mostly young, female, and with higher education, which contradicts outdated opinions that people with a preference for tattoo are either delinquents or uneducated.

Regarding the general opinion of the surveyed subjects about tattoos, we can see that the majority (181 of 263, 68,8%) are totally agree with it, in contrast to a percentage of 6.8% (18 of 263) of those who completely disagree with the practice of tattooing.

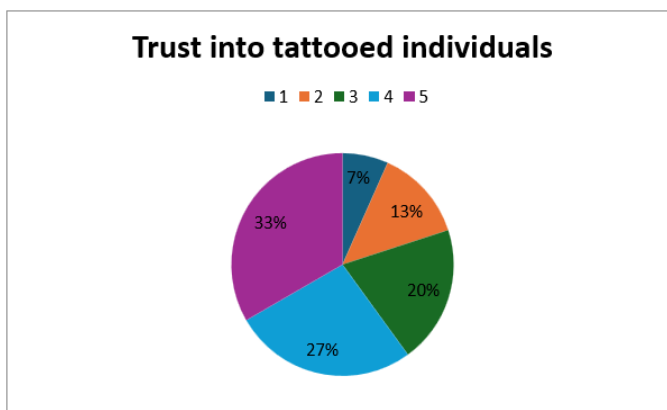


Fig. 7

*First hypothesis:* If a woman is tattooed, she is considered promiscuous and untrustworthy.

As we will see below, this hypothesis is not supported, with 189 out of 263 (71, 9%) respondents finding tattooed women aesthetically pleasing, courageous, and self-assured. Only 38 (14, 4%) subjects consider tattooed women to be unattractive and unserious.

*Second hypothesis:* If an individual has tattoos, he is considered dangerous.

Asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents minimum and 5 maximum, how much trust do they have in tattooed individuals, 20 of the respondents (7,6%) have no trust at all, 6 (2,3%) of them have low trust, 36 (13,7%) have medium trust, 43 (16,3%) of respondents have high trust and 160 (60,8%) trust completely tattooed individuals; this fact disproves the second hypothesis, namely that tattooed individuals are considered dangerous.

*The third hypothesis:* If an individual is tattooed, he does not have access to certain professional occupations.

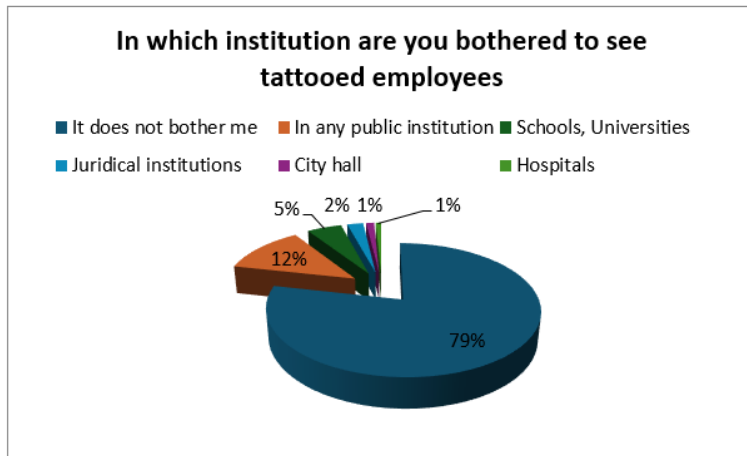


Fig. 8

Asked in which institutions would they be bothered to encounter employees with tattoos, the subjects responses prove that this hypothesis is invalid too, most of them (204 of 263 – 77, 6%) not being bothered by the tattoos of the employees. However, the rest of the responses are distributed like this: 12% of them are bothered to see tattooed employees in any public institutions, 5% of the subjects are bothered by the tattoos of the teachers, 2% disapprove tattooed employees in juridical institutions, and an equal percent (1%) are bothered to see tattooed employees in hospitals and City Hall.

## 5. Conclusions

From what has been stated so far, an important conclusion emerges: tattooing is no longer considered a practice associated with morally dubious or delinquent individuals. More and more people with higher education have at least one tattoo, and more people, especially young individuals and, surprisingly, more women, intend to get one. Although prejudices about the femininity and seriousness of tattooed women still exist, the majority view them as courageous and aesthetically pleasing.

As we have seen, citizens tend not to judge a person's integrity based on their physical appearance, specifically tattoos, with more people trusting tattooed individuals. Tattooing should no longer be a disadvantageous factor for tattooed individuals entering the labor market, as most people do not find it disturbing.

Current Romanian society, like other societies, is in a state of continuous change, placing increasing emphasis on the individual's need to affirm their identity and feel free to express their personality without infringing on personal and collective rights and freedoms.

The social stigmatization of tattooed individuals impacts their quality of life. The general opinion of the society can either improve or worsen aspects such as self-image and emotional health, social relationships, and access to the labor market for tattooed people.

Although the anticipated results of this research were negative and unfavorable to tattooed individuals, the reality on the ground demonstrated the opposite. Society is becoming more open and tolerant towards tattooed people, who are no longer considered dangerous but rather individuals exercising their right to free expression through the art of tattooing.

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## THE INFLUENCES OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON ADOLESCENTS' SCHOOL SUCCESS, AS A PSYCHOSOCIAL PHENOMENON

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**Abstract:** This article proposes a sociological approach to the influences of emotional intelligence on the school success of adolescents as a social problem, with an emphasis on how it is reflected and re-signified in the specialized literature. In the first part of the article, we will deal with the operational definition of the concept of emotional intelligence, school success and other emerging notions, and we will review a series of relevant theoretical models from the field of sociology, special psychopedagogy and social psychology. Later, in order to know how the issue of school success is represented, we analyzed a multitude of articles that focus on the issue. The results of the research bring to the fore the variables with which emotional intelligence is correlated at the level of the theoretical discourse, the most relevant of which are students from pre-university education.

**Key words:** emotional intelligence, school success, adolescents, psychosocial phenomenon, education

### 1. Introduction

The choice of this theme was motivated by a relatively old phenomenon. Being a valuable source of information, emotional intelligence acquires the profile of the reference matter in the analysis of human success. This is important and appreciable because it ensures survival, decision-making, setting limits, communication, unity of all members of society. When we have to shape our decisions and actions, emotions and feelings matter as much - sometimes even more - than thoughts. Thus, more and more researchers from various fields recognize the disappointments in the cognitive orientations, which failed to provide the complex model of social success, and launch opinions according to which affective knowledge considerably increases the possibilities of social integration, ensuring the quality of human activity.

In the first theoretical part of the paper, I presented psychological and sociological aspects regarding emotional intelligence, specific aspects of mental processes in preadolescents and adolescents and benchmarks of school success. In the second part, of the research methodology, I presented the goal - the identification of ways and means that contribute to school success, especially to emotional intelligence -. The objectives of the research are to investigate the characteristics of emotional intelligence in preadolescents and adolescents, to investigate the defining parameters of school success in preadolescents and adolescents, to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and school success in preadolescents and adolescents.

In the second research part, we established as hypotheses: i. we assume that the emotional intelligence of girls has higher values compared to that of boys of the same age level; ii. we assume that the level of development of emotional intelligence parameters influences the determining parameters of school success; iii. we assume that the stimulation of emotional intelligence will lead to the efficiency of the defining parameters of school success. In the presentation of the research sample, we have 33 subjects between the ages of 11 and 18, and the methods used were the temperament test, the hostility test, the Raven test, and the tree test.

## **2. Emotional intelligence, psychological processes in adolescents and benchmarks of school success: conceptual delineations and theoretical approaches**

As MacKenzie (2003: 325) noted, defining a concept by its causes and outcomes “is not useful because this definition does not specify the 'nature' of the construct. Defining a construct in this way also makes it impossible to empirically test the proposed theoretical links between the construct and the specific antecedents and consequences mentioned, because these relationships are assumed to be true by definition.” Cherniss's approach seems to confuse the definition of a construct with its incorporation into a nomological network. The latter is an important aspect of construct validation, but it does not replace a definition that establishes the unique properties of a construct independent of its relationships with other variables. (Antonakis, 2010)

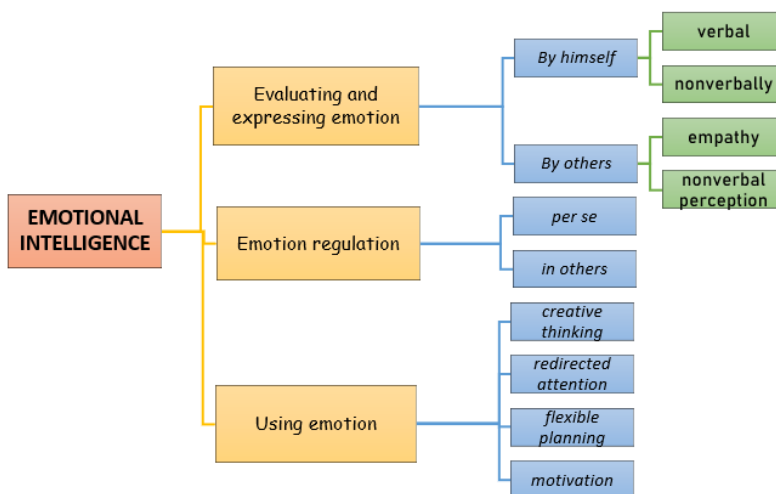
Second, his conceptual distinction between emotional intelligence and emotional and social competence is unclear: he suggests that emotional intelligence is a capability and emotional and social competence is a competence. However, Cherniss also refers to competencies as skills. This confusion about skills and competencies is not surprising. Boyatzis (2008), whose definition of competence is also cited by Cherniss, defined an “emotional intelligence competence” as “an ability to recognize, understand and use emotional information about oneself ... that leads to or causes effective or superior performance ” (p. 228). So what is emotional and social competence: a skill or a competency? If it is the former, emotional and social skills or emotional intelligence are redundant. If it is the latter, emotional and social skills remain undefined (Antonakis, 2010)

Third, in delineating models and definitions of emotional intelligence, Cherniss asserted that EI provides “a useful catalog of personal qualities other than cognitive intelligence that most strongly aid adjustment.” Thus, models of emotional intelligence are defined by exclusion—a “laundry list of virtually every positive character quality except cognitive intelligence” (Zeidner et al., 2008: 64–65). Such reasoning does not help the field move forward because it does not prospectively define the construct of emotional intelligence; that is, this definition does not specify exactly what is included in the construction. It opens the door to convey established constructs such as personality traits as emotional intelligence. Confusion and conceptual imprecision undermine constructive validation. As noted by Matthews, Zeidner, and Roberts (2002: 45), “a test should not be labeled as a measure of EI when it is really a measure of some other well-established personality trait or of a related individual difference variable. (Antonakis, 2010)

An initial comprehensive theory of emotional intelligence and preliminary demonstration that it could be measured appeared 20 years ago in the scientific literature (Mayer, Salovey, & DiPaolo, 1990; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The 2000 edition of the Handbook of Intelligence defined emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive and express emotion, to assimilate emotion in thought, to understand and reason with emotion, and to regulate emotion in oneself and others. (John D. Mayer, 2011)

Today, emotional intelligence (EI) is conceptualized in the same way by many investigators, and there is a much better sense of what emotional intelligence is, how it can be measured, and what it predicts than there was two or even a decade ago. Although there are alternative uses of the term emotional intelligence, it is more likely to refer to a group of diverse positive traits and competencies, not all related to emotions, intelligence, or their intersection. (John Mayer, 1997)

Emotional intelligence may be the best predictor of success in life, redefining what it means to be smart. In short, the phrase “emotional intelligence” has become widely known, appearing in numerous magazine and newspaper articles (e.g., Bennetts, 1996; Henig, 1996; Peterson, 1997), books (e.g., Cooper & Sawaf, 1997 ; Gottman, 1997 ; Salerno, 1996; Segal, 1997; Shapiro, 1997; Simmons & Simmons, 1997; Steiner and Perry, 1997; Weisinger, 1997) and even in popular comics, Dilbert (Adams, 1997) and Zippy the Pinhead (Griffith, 1996). (Mayer, 1997)



**Figura 1.** Salovey and Mayer's 1990 model of emotional intelligence

According to this framework, the main details of which are represented in Figure 1, emotional intelligence comprises three conceptually related mental processes involving emotional information. These processes are: (a) evaluating and expressing emotion, (b) regulating or controlling emotion, and (c) using emotion in adaptive ways. As can be seen from Figure 1, two branches are further divided into self and others. Thus, Salovey and Mayer distinguish between the two perspectives of perceiving and regulating one's own or another person's emotions. In the lower branch (evaluation and expression) self and other perspectives are further subdivided according to a content factor, that is, a verbal versus a nonverbal domain. The model seeks to incorporate a number of well-established constructs from emotion research. Assessing the emotions of others in the verbal domain, for example, is equated with the well-known construct of empathy. (Aljoscha C. Neubauer, 2000)

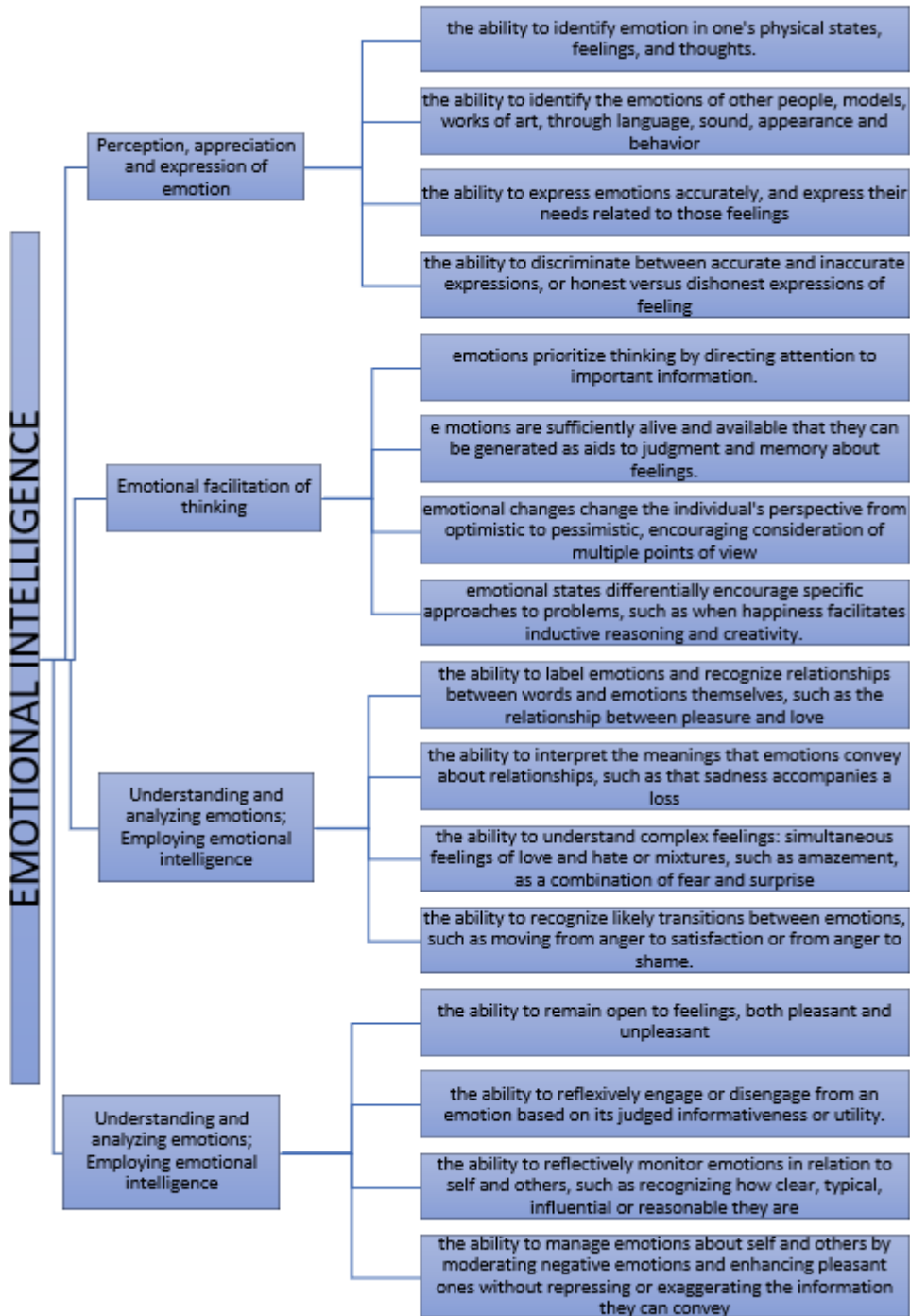


Figura 2. Solvey and Mayer's 1997 model of emotional intelligence

Adolescence refers to the period of physical and psychological development between childhood and adulthood. The beginning of adolescence is loosely anchored to the onset of puberty, which brings dramatic changes in hormone levels and a series of consequent physical changes. The onset of puberty is also associated with profound changes in drives, motivations, psychology, and social life; these changes continue throughout adolescence. There is a growing body of neuroimaging studies of brain development, both structurally and functionally, during adolescence. Almost all of these studies defined development in terms of chronological age, which shows a strong—but not uniform—correlation with pubertal stage. Very few neuroimaging studies have linked brain development to puberty, and yet there is tentative evidence to suggest that puberty may play an important role in some aspects of brain and cognitive development. In this paper we describe this research and suggest that, in the future, neuroimaging studies of adolescent development should consider the role of puberty. (Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, 2010)

Adolescence is the period of physical, cognitive and social maturation between childhood and adulthood [Lerner and Steinberg, 2004; Sisk and Foster, 2004]. The onset of adolescence occurs around the onset of puberty and is therefore marked by dramatic changes in hormone levels and physical appearance (including rapid physical growth, changes in facial structure, and the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics). During this same period, adolescents experience numerous changes in social, academic, and other influences and typically enter a stage of profound psychological transition. The end of adolescence is said to occur when an individual has reached a stable adult role, by which time most pubertal transitions will have reached completion, at least in industrialized nations [Choudhury, 2010; Lerner and Steinberg, 2004]. (Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, 2010)

Early adolescence is characterized by changes in the body as a result of puberty, which includes three endocrine events: adrenarches, gonadarches and the activation of the growth axis [Dorn, 2006; Spear, 2000]. Gonadarche, which is often considered to constitute puberty itself, is a biological process that begins with the activation of the hypothalamic pituitary-gonadal axis and ends with the attainment of reproductive competence. This process usually begins between ages 8 and 14 in females (average age 11) and between ages 9 and 15 in males (average age 12), in response to the pulsatile release of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) from the hypothalamus, which stimulates pituitary production of luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH). LH and FSH activate maturational changes in the gonads (ovaries or testes), which respond by reaching reproductive capacity (producing gametes). Maturing ovaries and testes also secrete the gonadal steroids, estrogen and testosterone, respectively. In turn, these increases in gonadal steroids trigger further changes in the reproductive organs and the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics. (Susman EJ, 2004)

A plethora of clinical and epidemiological studies examining developmental trajectories to psychopathology have identified adolescence as a potential window of vulnerability (Costello et al., 1996, 2011; Pine et al., 1998; Merikangas et al., 2007). Early adolescence, with the onset of puberty, is a particularly vulnerable developmental period for the emergence of behavioral and emotional health problems. Indeed, although adolescence represents one of the healthiest periods of life in terms of physical health, paradoxically, there is growing evidence to suggest that global rates of morbidity and mortality increase by 200–300% (Ozer et al., 2002). . For example, in addition to the increased prevalence of mood and substance use disorders, rates of accidents, suicide, alcohol and substance use, eating disorders, HIV, unwanted pregnancies all increase dramatically during this developmental period (Force, 1996; Ozer et al., 2002). The sources of this dramatic increase in adolescent death and disability rates appear to be primarily related to problems with emotion regulation.(Ladouceur, 2012)

In recent years, neuroimaging techniques have shown that the development of the human brain is much more protracted than previously thought (see Paus, 2005, for review). In



particular, the adolescent brain undergoes considerable structural changes, especially the prefrontal cortex. Adolescence is also characterized by major hormonal and physical changes and dramatic developments in identity, self-awareness, and cognitive flexibility (Rutter, 1993; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). However, empirical research on the interplay between neural and cognitive development during adolescence is in its infancy. (Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, 2010)

Research indicates that self-esteem declines in early adolescence, especially in young women (Atwater, 1992). Adolescent idealism coincides with their heightened sense of uniqueness, self-awareness, and critical thinking. Combined with increased family conflict during early adolescence, these changes heighten adolescents' need for peer approval. Betting group compliance peaks at around twelve to fourteen years of age. (Steinberg, 1993)

Collectively, these changes make teenagers targets for psychological intimidation. Fear and the threat of losing peer approval motivate young adults to do actions for the group that they would not do on their own. Moreover, a conspiracy of silence and diffusion of responsibility within the group maintain the status quo until there is a "stand-off" and the ultimate test of power. (Stringer, 1994)

Individuals' responses to conflicts, pressures, and setbacks partly determine the results of character tests. How does the search for identity shape a person's "strength of character"? Erik Erikson proposed that during the fifth psychosocial stage of development, adolescents face a "normative crisis" involving a struggle to achieve an authentic identity. According to Erikson, identity development is a lifelong process that takes on special significance in adolescence. Teens need to experiment and test out different roles before committing to a career, political system, or religion. Erikson and James Marcia point out that in our complex society, this moment of experimentation, the moratorium, is crucial to the realization of identity (Atwater, 1992; Conger, 1993).(Stringer, 1994)

A recent meta-analysis (Durlak & Weissberg, 2005) of 379 school-based prevention and youth development interventions targeting 5- to 18-year-olds that promote one or more SEL skills reported that these interventions produced a series of positive benefits for participants. These included increased personal and social skills, decreased antisocial behavior and aggression, and fewer serious discipline problems and school suspensions. They also indicated that students who participated in SEL programs, compared to peers outside the program, enjoyed school more, had significantly better attendance records, had higher GPAs, and ranked at least 10 percentile points higher on academic achievement tests.(Cary Cherniss M. E., 2006)

A growing number of schools emphasize the importance of enhancing students' social and emotional competence to promote their success and well-being. For example, Foster et al. (2005) found that 59% of US schools reported directing resources to poorly implemented curriculum-based programs to improve the social and emotional functioning of their students. Some states have even passed legislation requiring school districts to include social and emotional development in their educational programs and to ensure that all students meet social and emotional learning standards that have been integrated into their state learning standards. For example, based on the Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 (Public Law 93-0495), students in Illinois must now meet learning standards aimed at achieving the following three educational goals by the time they graduate from high school: (a) self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve success in school and in life; (b) use social and interpersonal awareness to establish and maintain positive relationships; and (c) demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts. It is clear that educators and policy makers recognize the need to address children's social and emotional development as an important part of education. (Cary Cherniss M. E., 2006)

### 3. Research methodology

We start, in the investigative approach, from the premise that there is a correlation between emotional intelligence and school success in adolescents. Consequently, if we accept the idea that emotional intelligence can positively/negatively influence school results, it represents a social problem, it follows the need for a perspective to approach this problem specific to the mediated space. How is the influence of emotional intelligence on the school success of adolescents represented in the specialized literature? This is the research question from which we started our approach.

The purpose of the research is the identification of ways and means that contribute to school success, especially emotional intelligence .

General objective: To study the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

Specific objectives:

- Investigating the characteristics of emotional intelligence in preadolescents and adolescents;
- The investigation regarding the defining parameters of school success in preadolescents and adolescents;
- Investigating/analyzing the relationship between emotional intelligence and school success in preadolescents and adolescents.

Hypothesis: We assume that emotional intelligence significantly influences school success. There is a significant influence, there are significant statistical differences between the level of emotional intelligence and school success of adolescents.

Particular assumptions:

- We assume that the emotional intelligence of girls has higher values compared to that of boys of the same age level;
- We assume that the level of development of emotional intelligence parameters influences the determining parameters of school success;
- We assume that the stimulation of emotional intelligence will lead to the efficiency of the defining parameters of school success.

Description of the methods used in the research activity

- The emotional intelligence test : The test is developed by Daniel Goleman, the author of the book "Emotional Intelligence", published in 1995. The test is adapted by Mihaela Rocco and consists of 10 questions that present some situations (scenarios) in which a person can find himself;
- The Friedmann Questionnaire: The questionnaire evaluates the degree of emotional maturity in terms of emotional balance or emotional balance. Emotional maturation refers to the strength of the Superego and its qualities are emotional security, realistic perception of oneself, others and the world, the objectification of the Ego. The emotional imbalance is generated by the fragility of the Ego, by the emotional instability and is accompanied by a series of infantile, childish psycho-affective reactions. This questionnaire evaluates the degree of emotional maturity;
- Student assessment scale : aims to draw up a characterization of the student in order to monitor school success. The evaluation leads to the permanent maintenance of a functional feedback between the teacher and the students that reorients the education process towards its perfection. Pedagogical evaluation has reverberations on the quality of relationships at the level of the student group. The group functions as a "comparison space" within which qualities recognized by teachers are validated (or invalidated).
- Learning Motivation Questionnaire: This questionnaire looks at the motivation behind learning.

#### 4. Research results

After extracting the results of the research, we can conclude that there are differences in the parameters of emotional intelligence in girls compared to boys, because in the case of the chosen variables, there is a significant statistical correlation, which means that the hypothesis is confirmed, and the emotional intelligence of girls knows values higher than that of boys. Analyzing the results of the target group, we can state that the level of development of the parameters of emotional intelligence influences the determining parameters of school success, confirming the second hypothesis. At the same time, after analyzing the data, we can claim that the stimulation of emotional intelligence will lead to the efficiency of the defining parameters of school success, a fact from which it follows that the third hypothesis is confirmed.

The general question of the extent to which psychological development is continuous or discontinuous remains one that excites both interest and controversy. Given the vast body of developmental research that has been undertaken over the past half-century, one might assume that it is time to arrive at a satisfactory answer to solve the problem one way or another. But there is no such answer, and yet investigators disagree about the conclusions to be drawn. For example, Lipsitt (1983: 182) argues: "the accumulation of early life experiences, beginning in childhood, is critical and determinant of later development and behavior has been almost universally adopted by scientists of human development". Intermediate conditions may disrupt anticipated events, but he emphasizes that this does not contradict the continuity of development: "Apparent non-continuity may be a situation of continuity that has not yet been fully revealed" or "continuities that have not been sufficiently investigated".

#### 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, in order to stimulate emotional intelligence in order to improve the parameters of school success, it is desirable that teachers and trainers are willing to turn themselves into confidants, good listeners, conspirators or entertainment partners of the adolescent at any time. Cultivating emotional intelligence on both sides is actually the most important aspect of a loving relationship based on trust and sincerity. The most frequent trap is that parents and teachers focus mainly only on the school results, on the intellectual performances of the students. In fact, the identity and future of adolescents are determined by their emotional and spiritual well-being.

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## LABOR MARKET AND CSR

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**Abstract** *The current social and economic outlook at EU-27 level is showing some concerning trends, as it seems that the social outcomes are lagging behind economic results, at a time when the latter are on a declining and concerning trend, as well, due to the inflationary pressures recorded over the last couple of years. Extreme far-right movements gain momentum in countries regarded up to now as stable and consolidated democracies, and the New Member States seem to pick the signals and head towards their own nationalistic and extremist movements, be they far-right or far-left biased. EU-27 had to manage multiple challenges over the last period (2014-2024), aimed at combating climate change, reducing poverty and strengthening the middle-class which was subjected to increased pressures leading to polarization. The issue of polarization brings with it questions related to how the EU-27 citizens are faring, how economic and social measures are implemented and harmonized in combating inequity and inequality.*

*The present paper aims to underpin some of the key issues that have to be dealt with, by including into consideration the CSR-factor which, despite initiatives, has not gained sufficient momentum at EU-27 level. The methodology is based on comparative statistics regarding some indicators relevant for both the social and the economic dimension of the EU-27, for selected central and eastern European countries sharing some similarities as regards geography and historical background. The conclusions show that, in the new context of the ESG-Agenda, and based on the fact that CSR is still a rather new initiative at EU-level, the selected New Member-States have a unique opportunity of using their experience in performing two transitions during a century and a half for making use of CSR tools in a way that might be translated also at EU-27 level. The argument is that their transition from one economic and social system to another, twice in the same century (after the Second World War, and by the end of the eighties), makes these countries to be better equipped for making informed decisions impacting labor market, including by using CSR tools. At the same time, they are also most challenged, as the difficulties they are faced with give way to perceiving sometimes levels of corruption that are exaggerated, and not corresponding to the reality, to considering the private sector (still) as more of a threat than an opportunity, especially for those occupation that become increasingly more obsolete in the context of the digital economy. Moreover, CSR instruments should focus more on young adults – born after the end of the eighties – who are more vulnerable when faced with the 'histories' told by either the far-right or far-left propaganda. In brief, in the absence of judicious CSR initiatives in both public and private sector, aiming simultaneously at both social and economic indicators, and according to the current state-of-play, with the emphasis on social, the risks are on increase when trying to reconcile economic growth, combating climate change and poverty alleviation.*

**Keywords:** economic; progress; institutional; environmental; social.

### 1. Introduction

The period of slow, constant economic growth of the period 2014-2019 was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict made the recovery more difficult both from social and economic perspective. Hence, the period 2014-2019 might be considered as the quasi-last period of development according to the standards set and improved within the European Economic and Social Model (EESM). The developments show clearly that the year 2020 was the turning point for world economies and societies, including the EU-27, as regards several components relevant for the economic and social context at the same time. It was in particular relevant for the labor market and the economic and social policies addressing the significant structural element represented by employment. It was the year when jobs were categorized as “essential” and “non-essential”, when the imposed quarantine measures worried, confused and even outraged the confused population faced with multi-level challenges from the ones related to the job, to the ones related to timely access to relevant social services. The period of exiting the pandemic and recovering economically and socially as of 2021 was one of uncertainty and new difficulties emerged as

the structure of employment changed in this period considerably. The transition to ‘the new normal’ was characterized by the reality of a more digitalized economy and society, with a sharp and uneven recovery across sectors, occupations and of the member-states’ labor markets. The year 2022 was expected to confirm the new trends for jobs and occupations, but the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict associated to a dramatic humanitarian crisis affected both economies and societies of the EU-27, as energy prices increased to concerning levels, and supply chain disruptions continued to persist. The effects were considerable inflationary pressures reached 9.2% in 2022, but then decreased slowly over the year 2023, and continued to decrease in the first semester of 2024, however with considerable differences among member-states, and in particular for some of the New Member-States. The structural changes of employment, associated to the imbalances and instabilities in the labor market contribute thus to a disturbing social image, which increased the risk of distorted vision as regards the future of the EU Economic Social Model (ESM) which is the necessary complement of the European Economic Model (EEM).

In this context, extreme far-right movements gain momentum in countries regarded up to now as stable and consolidated democracies, for instance Germany and France, but affected at concerning levels are also Italy and the Netherlands, while the New Member States seem to pick the signals and head towards their own nationalistic and extremist movements, be they far-right or far-left biased.

Indeed, EU-27 had to manage multiple challenges over the last period (2014-2024), aimed at combating climate change, reducing poverty and strengthening the middle-class which was subjected to increased pressures leading to polarization.

Considering the picture provided by the labor market as meeting point of economic, social and cultural interest, some questions arise as regards the key stakeholders in managing the resilience and recovery plans of the EU, respectively governments, businesses public and private, and society at large. Therefore, the present paper aims to underpin some of the key issues that have to be dealt with, by including into consideration the CSR-factor which, despite initiatives, has not gained sufficient momentum at EU-27 level.

## **2. Labor market, government-business cooperation and CSR**

Any objective analysis of the EU-27 society as a whole, needs to start from the premises created on the EU-27 labor market, and on the labor market of each member state, as this abstract construct (labor market) contains information that can be interpreted from both social and economic viewpoint, and thus carries a particular weight. The developments of the labor market provide an image about how employment rates develop, about the most relevant socio-economic groups present in the labor market and how their numbers and relevance changes, about the effectiveness of policies addressing its main concerns as regards workforce supply and demand, educational levels, earnings, wages, labor shortages, education, vocational training, health care needs, and most importantly about how these are reflected in the perception of the society as regards quality of governance, quality of business environment, and about opportunities or hindrances for upwards social mobility, and the capacity of countries to attract and retain talent. Therefore, labor market can be regarded as the most sensitive barometer for the state-of-play at the level of society.

Research questions, in the complex context generated by the two disruptions represented by the pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine require, hence, a holistic approach in which economic and social information need to be analyzed comparatively together, for gaining in-depth understanding about the direction in which EU-27 economies and societies are headed, as they are at crossroads from political, economic and social viewpoint.

We suggest an analysis based on the developments of the labor market over the period 2014-2024 which shows that considerable structural changes occurred in employment, leading to the paradoxical situation of labor shortages – based on skill

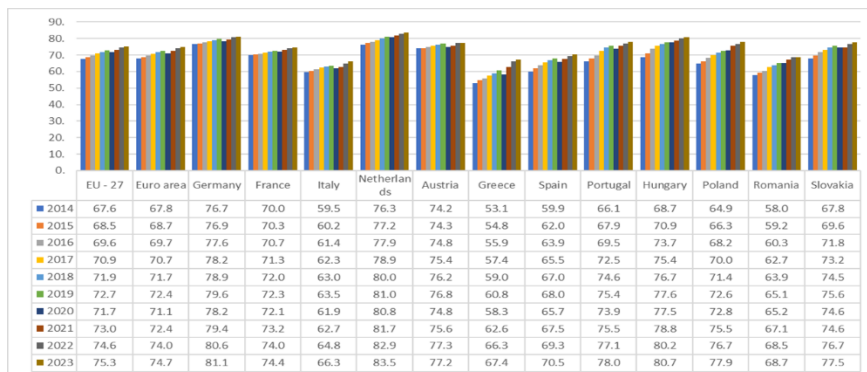
requirements – and the threat of a ‘vanishing middle-class’ which was regarded, traditionally, as the economic and social progress engine not only at European, but also at world level.

In order to obtain a clearer image, we restricted our analysis to 12 countries of the EU-27, respectively Old Member-States (OMS) represented by France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, Former Member-States of Convergence and Cohesion (FMSCC), respectively Spain, Portugal, Greece and Austria, and for the New Member-States (NMS) we opted for Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. The reasoning was based on the recent developments that show the increase of populist waves in all these countries, but also based on: a) common features in the historical background for both Former Member-States of Convergence and Cohesion and the selected New Member States as, with the exception of Austria, they all exited in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century dictatorships that left them with poor infrastructures, if not inexistent infrastructures, fragmented agricultural sectors despite the considerable weight in the country’s economy, labor-intensive industries, rigid economic policies (Gibson H., 2001), to which we add the distorted social policies, which sometimes even compromised relevant institutions like unemployment, unemployment benefits and voluntary participation, as was the case in all selected NMS.

**2.1. Labor market developments over the period 2014-2024, inequality and polarization**

The year 2014 marked the end of the financial-economic crisis at EU-level, and the beginning of a new economic cycle, that had brought already changes and concerns as regards the employment of labor force and meeting the employment targets set by the European agenda. However, these concerns proved wrong, as the employment rates were on steady increase, for all selected member-states over the period 2014-2019. The decreases during the coronavirus crisis were recovered close to pre-pandemic levels in 2021, 2022, and continued also in 2023 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Employment rates, annual change, total (%), for selected member-states



**Source:** author’s own processing after Eurostat [lfsi\_emp\_a\_custom\_12872016]

However, on closer look, there are some differences between the three groups of countries, and also inside the same group of countries, that are indicative for the structural changes that occurred in employment during this period, when teleworking, platform work and hybrid work (from home and at the workplace) gained all more significance for how the labor market functions.

However, there are multiple differences, impacting also how the labor market will evolve, and this is shown on one hand, by how the numbers in total employment reflect changes in the structure and demand of jobs in the business sector, and on the other hand by

how digital solutions are used – depending on access, but also on the willingness to adjust to digital solutions in households, at individual level, and also in the public and private sector providing various types of services.

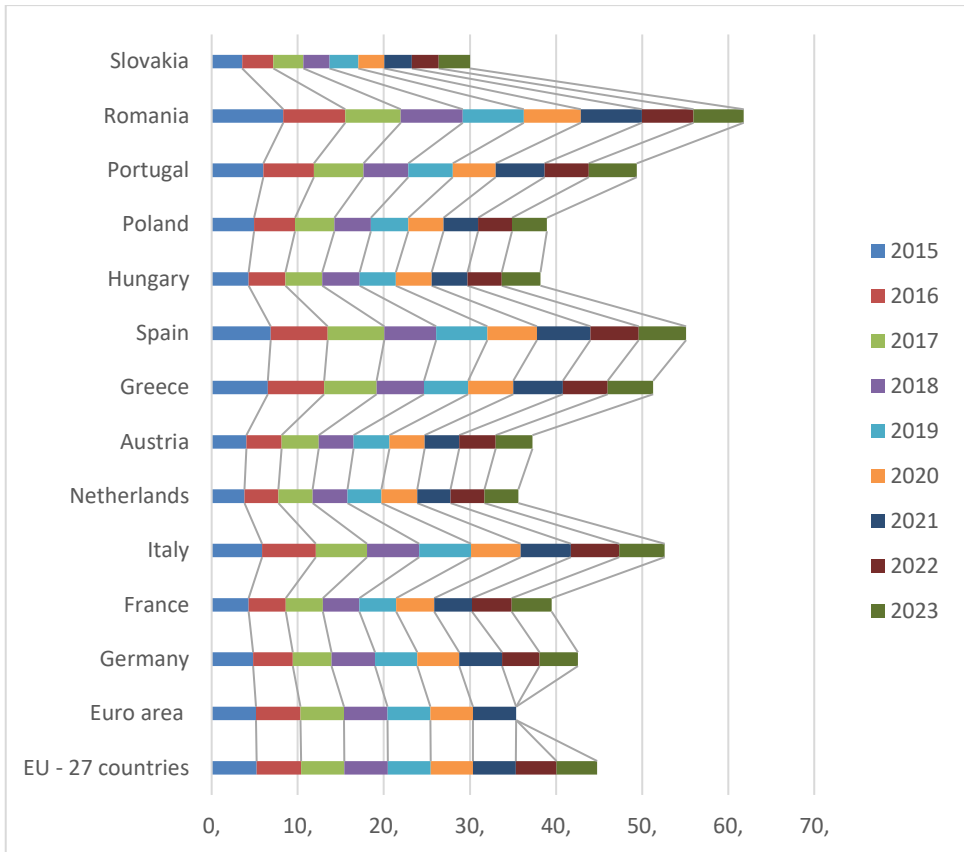
From this, considering the aim of reducing poverty and ensuring social inclusion, it is necessary to look at inequality as a phenomenon becoming more complex, as it is no longer only the inequality of incomes, but also other types of inequality influencing the EU-27 societies. Moreover, our opinion is that these types of inequality will influence not only the economic, but also the social, political and cultural lives, as it is already proven by the steady increase of the nationalistic, far-right and EU-centrifugal movements, not only in the member-states that are more recent members (see FMSCC or NMS) but also in countries that were founding members of the EU.

Inequality is generated first in the labor market, based on the mechanisms of wage setting, and the fact that there is a consensus that, overall, incomes tended to be lower than the expectations of the workforce. However, if we analyze the three groups of countries, OMS (Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands), the FMSCC (Austria, Greece, Spain and Portugal) and the NMS (Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) it can be easily noticed that over the entire period, and especially during and after the pandemic, and in the current period of war in Ukraine, the highest income inequalities from the viewpoint of incomes are still recorded in the NMS, with Romania being the leader as regards income inequality (Figure 2).

Interestingly enough, on analyzing the developments over the period 2015-2023, it is noticeable that Romania, can be included into a cluster with two of the FMSCC, respectively Spain and Portugal, and with Italy from the group of OMS. This implies and research has confirmed that income inequality is determined also by the characteristics inside the regions of a country, actually why Italy is included though it is an OMS, considering that its Mezzogiorno region continues to be problematic. It is a fact reconfirmed by how the income disparity evolves in Romania, based on reasons related to the wage setting mechanism, to economic policies pursuing to encourage specific developments in some economic activity sectors, like ITC, health and in pursuing the strengthening of the public administration sector, as it was believed that by ensuring this sector with some facilities, this might contribute to diminishing perceived corruption and improve the absorption capacity of EU funds overall. Another source, this time for the selected NMS, is the difference between how their national regions of development evolved. For instance, in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia the discrepancies seem to be much lower, which shows that in the case of Romania, the high income inequality is also dictated by the different pace of development of its regions where the high urbanized areas (Bucharest-Ilfov, West and Centre) outpace the other regions, respectively North-East, North-West, South-East, South-Muntenia, and South-West Oltenia (Figure 3).

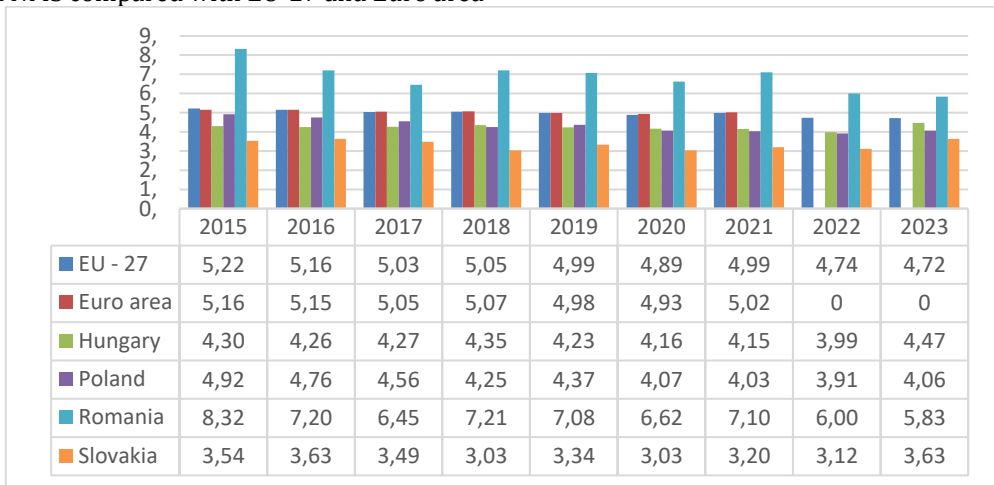


**Figure 2:** Total income quintile share ratio S80/S20 of disposable income (%) for selected member-states groups, compared with EU-27 and Euro Area



Source: author’s own processing after Eurostat database [ilc\_di11]

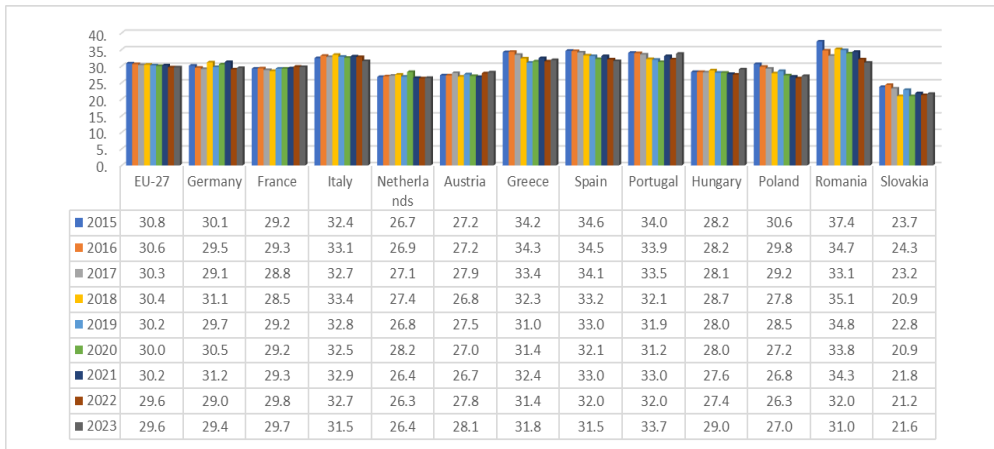
**Figure 3:** Total income quintile share ratio S80/S20 of disposable income (%) for selected NMS compared with EU-27 and Euro area



Source: author’s own processing after Eurostat database [ilc\_di11]

At the same time, if we consider the evolution of the Gini coefficient over the same period of time, we find that there might be some truth in the fact that the diminishment of the convergence differences regarding incomes was not that much a result of positive conjugated economic and social policies, but rather the result of a relative wage stagnation in the context of constantly increasing inflationary pressures, especially over the period 2022-2024 (Figure 4).

**Figure 4** Gini coefficient of equivalized disposable income, total %, for the selected groups of countries over the period 2015-2023



**Source:** author’s own processing after Eurostat database [ilc\_d12]

An increasingly more pressing source of inequality in the context of the digital economy, is the disparity in the use of digital solutions at the level of households and businesses alike, as the slow increase in internet uses, together with the capacity of using high-tech-intensive and not labor-intensive manufacturing and processing solutions, will contribute to changing not only the industrial and services’ landscape and competitiveness, but also the wellbeing at individual level and the welfare at the level of the society.

Here we deal with the increasingly more relevant issue of skill shortages, leading to considerable labor shortages, in a period when the objectives of the Green Deal need new innovative approaches in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.

All these sources of inequality hint that government-business cooperation needs to identify better solutions with the understanding that, for the business sector, the improvement and consolidation of the middle-class, that is the engine for entrepreneurship, and for the development of the SME sector at EU-27 level is a must. In this respect, the relevant question is how national governments should approach improvements in their cooperation with the business sector, and how the business sector might contribute to improving the living conditions of the population from the local level up to the national level, by resorting to flexible, innovative at the same time, and practical tools, facilitating communication and cooperation with the two stakeholders, on one hand the government, and on the other hand the education and vocational training system. It is important to underpin that, in this context, the latter stakeholder is the main supplier of the most important resource: the human resource.

One solution, in the wider framework of ESG is the component represented by the corporate social responsibility, which is already included in the EU-27 strategy and agenda, as at EU-27 level as a whole, it still shows delays regarding processes, practices and initiatives compared with the Anglo-American countries, or countries that have implemented earlier the Anglo-American CSR model.

## 2.2. Government-business cooperation and CSR

In analyzing the conditions on the labor market, it is obvious that the period 2015-2024, was marked by the objectives of macroeconomic recovery, while financial volatility increased affecting prices' stability. The relaunch of the EU industrial agenda (2020), after the initial initiative of the European Commission (2012) did not deliver, still has to show first results. Drawing a map for reindustrializing Europe by increasing the share of industry in GDP from 16% to 20% by 2020 was the initial goal. This initiative was somewhat stymied by the pressure of aiming towards climate neutrality, in particular post the adoption of the Green Deal (2019), which proposed a "new growth strategy" having at core the idea of joining and meeting both green and digital transition while attempting to diminish geopolitical dependencies (European Commission 2019).

These objectives of macroeconomic policies in terms of fiscal and financial stability, economic growth, and unemployment diminishment were accompanied by considerable changes in the businesses' ecosystems due to higher rates of digitalization after the Great Recession. A renewed acceleration of the transformative processes introducing wide-scale digitalization occurred in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic which altered at least some of the rules of the game in the public and private sector (Tirca et al. 2021).

It is here where CSR, still at low levels in the EU-27 might prove to become an improved tool, if initiatives are put in place for instrumentalizing it, as the private sector needs to act more attuned with the interest of the EU, and of each of the member-states in which they operate.

In order for CSR to gain more relevance, the first step is improving government-business, and business-academic system cooperation, as both contribute to strengthening the social and economic institutions which are applied at micro-level by businesses that have CSR programs and practices included in their organizational policy and strategy.

One discussion that is worth having, also by assessing the answer through the CSR lens, is for the digital economy the degree of automation in any given economy, regarding how profitable it is to adopt such technological capabilities over a short-period of time, i.e. which is the optimum speed of diffusion (Acemoglu et al. 2018). Among others, this speed of diffusion is depending on other factors as well, from the process of organizational redesign for increasing quality of goods and services by obtaining also efficiency gains (Bresnaban et al. 2002). Moreover, another significant factor is that investments' capacity might be a hindrance in implementing new technologies (Arntz et al. 2018), while institutional-legislative frameworks and ethical reasons might also factor in when analysing the speed of technological adoption (Thierer et al. 2015; Bonnefon et al. 2016).

This is also in reference to the fact that, in considering the relationship between the competitiveness incentives resulting from intra-organizational policies, strategies and processes is of negative sign, as the interest for increased competitiveness and meeting the targets of the stakeholders, and of the company managers resulting in higher incomes and bonuses for the latter, lead to reluctance in engaging in CSR processes and practices and therefore, to a lower response-level as regards labor market incentives (Chowdhury, Hodgson, and Hasan 2022).

Leaving aside the perspective of the businesses defined as employers, an issue that needs to be tackled at EU-27 level is the perspective of the workers, especially those in the industry and services' sector that are increasingly more digitalized and associated with digital technologies about their preferences regarding CSR in their own organizations. This means, that sound CSR practices, in order to succeed in the EU-27, as expected based on the EU initiatives in this respect, that CSR needs to address simultaneously the external and internal environment of the firms (Lee, Chen 2017), as starting point, thus creating shared values and building the required mechanisms for the institutionalization of CSR at EU-27 and member-states' level.

Considering the current complex geopolitical context, another issue becomes relevant in relating and developing measurements for the evolution, efficiency, efficacy and quality of CSR in the EU-27 context: the current geoeconomic manager involved in CSR needs to become a geopolitical manager as well, so as to be able to develop CSR policies, strategies, measures and tools that not only instrumentalize CSR, but also contributes by these means to diminishing tensions, from local to national level, for employers and employees alike, in brief for the entire society.

### **Conclusions**

The period analyzed in the present paper covers the more or less the ten years, after the European Union exited the crisis, up to the present when the levels of uncertainty and volatility are on increase. It should not be omitted that by the time of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a new external shock after a relatively short period of economic recovery, the post-crisis effects were still lingering, and the EU was in an intense process of reviewing its policies with respect to the industrial sector. Covid-19, and the war in Ukraine did not slow down the convergence processes at EU level on the four specific dimensions (economic, social, institutional and environmental). However, inside the convergence processes there were detected some divergence trends, in particular for some of the central European countries all related to increasing inequality. Most visible effects, which pose substantial questions, can be seen in the case of Romania, country in which despite wage and pension increases the at-risk-of-poverty rate is the highest 32.0% (2023), this attracting also other effects such as social exclusion. Comparable shares were recorded only in Bulgaria (30.0%) and Spain (26.5%).

Income inequalities triggering higher at-risk-of-poverty rate and social exclusion are often combined, as we noticed while elaborating the paper with lower access to education, in particular in rural areas. To this is added, the low appetite of employers, irrespective if they represent the public or the private sector for investing in the reskilling and upskilling of their employees. This is a direct indication of the relevance of institutional indicators related to various forms of cooperation between stakeholders in both sectors for creating favorable premises, under the pressure of the digital economy, for generating formal and informal education and training opportunities.

EU-wide, inequalities are triggered increasingly more by perceptions and attitudes related to migration for work, and to asylum seekers, and these become more acute in the context of the war in Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis.

The combination between the effects that the twin transition might generate, the somewhat vulnerable welfare state due to the latest evolutions are all factors contributing to increased instability for all member-states, and the EU-27 as a whole, because for ensuring a somewhat better economic and social climate inside the borders of their countries, governments might be tempted to trade-off shared goals at EU-level, for short-term benefits at national level.

It is clear that a paradigm shift needs to take place on the economic, social and institutional dimension for being able to attenuate foreseeable and unforeseeable impacts of external shocks, for increasing the attractiveness for investment flows from inside and outside the EU, in particular in fields related to innovation, and manufacturing, the most relevant ones being dedicated to cutting-edge chip manufacturing plants, but also investments for creating clusters and pools of research-development and innovation where the cooperation between businesses and the academic environment could contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the EU, and to reducing on long-term income disparities.

In the wider framework of ESG goals and targets, CSR is a significant sub-component, for which the monitoring and measurement tools need to be improved, in particular at EU-27 level, as there continues to be some reluctance as regards CSR at EU-27 and at member-states' level, due to the fact that the interest in improved and developed CSR practices became one of the EU-27 goals only over the last period, respectively over the period 2018-2022.

It is obvious, that for labor markets as the core for well-functioning societies it is necessary to combine the two narratives dominating the current geoeconomic and geopolitical context as they both impact to various degrees the businesses' financial, investment, location, supply etc. and hence their capacity of ensuring good workplaces for the individuals, which in turn results in reducing inequalities and contributes to avoiding the traps generated by societal discontent.

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