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## UNDERTAKING OF EVIDENCE ACTIONS BY THE POLICE IN SERBIAN LEGISLATION: INVESTIGATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

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**Abstract:** *In this paper, several significant roles of the police were considered, with the focus being on two related activities. This work, entitled undertaking of evidence actions by the police in Serbian legislation: investigation and reconstruction, as can be concluded, primarily deals with the issue of undertaking of evidence actions by the police, after which two very delicate and key police actions for successful the discovery of the perpetrator of the criminal act and the possibility of successfully completing the court process in general. The hypothesis of this research can be seen precisely from the above. The investigation aims to gather evidence of criminal activity, determine the circumstances surrounding offenses, and ensure thorough documentation of findings, as mandated by the Criminal Procedure Code. The collaborative effort between public prosecutors and police is crucial for effective investigations, with expert assistance being a valuable asset. The necessity for continuous training and adherence to high standards in investigative practices is emphasized, addressing common pitfalls such as selective evidence collection. The reconstruction process is complex and subject to subjective influences, necessitating high professional standards from investigators. The Criminal Procedure Code recognizes it as an independent action, contrasting with previous legal frameworks where it was merely a segment of investigations. Reconstruction is ordered by procedural authorities to verify evidence and establish essential facts related to criminal offenses. Unlike earlier legal interpretations where only courts had the jurisdiction, both public prosecutors and police can now order reconstructions, fostering collaboration while ensuring that the prosecutor is informed of the process and outcomes.*

**Keywords:** evidence actions, investigation, reconstruction, Serbian legislation, Criminal Procedure Code

### 1. Introduction and opening of the discussion

Following the general efforts undertaken by the Republic of Serbia in the context of accession to the European Union, an important segment of these tendencies is represented by the undertaken obligations to reform the Ministry of Internal Affairs and certainly the police (Nikač & Leštanin, 2016:110). Arising from constitutional powers, the newly adopted Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Law on Police, the position of the police is additionally adjusted to the new challenges of combating extremely complex phenomena, such as organized crime and corruption (Marinković, 2010:75).

Analyzing the national legislative framework, part of the police activity is based on undertaking search actions from Art. 286 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), which are aimed at achieving the basic goal of criminal proceedings. This implies the detection of criminal acts and perpetrators, as well as the detection and securing of traces of criminal acts and objects that can serve as evidence in criminal proceedings.

Bearing in mind the aspect of social development, it should be noted that in the previous decades, criminality also evolved in a phenomenological sense. Hence, the actions of the police are of particular importance in all those non-traditional forms of illegal action, which require practical and legislatively complex application of high technologies (Bodrožić. 2013:150), as well as new legal institutes (Matijašević-Obradović, 2017:400).

In order to fulfill the duty from Art. 286, para. 1. of the CPC, the police can: request the necessary notifications from citizens; to carry out the necessary inspection of means of transport, passengers and luggage; to restrict movement in a certain area for the necessary time, up to eight hours at the longest; to take the necessary measures in connection with establishing the identity of persons and objects; to issue a search warrant for the person and objects sought; to inspect certain facilities and premises of state bodies, companies, shops and other legal entities in the presence of the responsible person, to gain insight into their documentation and to confiscate it if necessary; to take other necessary measures and actions. It is, in fact, a fairly wide range of powers that, in the demands of the dynamism of the police, enable the application of complex criminal procedures and the timeliness of response in the context of discovering the perpetrator of the crime and fixing the identified evidence.

A report or an official note will be drawn up about the facts and circumstances that were established when certain actions were taken, and may be of interest for criminal proceedings, as well as about the objects that were found or seized. Here, therefore, we are talking about the original actions of the police, the main purpose of which is to discover the perpetrator, discover and secure evidence, and collect data and information that can be useful in the further course of criminal proceedings (Ilić et. al, 2012: 611).

In the criminal procedure, three types of facts are determined (decisive and auxiliary facts and indicative facts) and without their determination, the correct application of criminal law is not possible. Also, bearing in mind the complexity of the concept of "facts", it is necessary to point out the concept of "evidence", where we come across numerous interpretations.

According to Bauer (1978, p.15), evidence is the carrier of data on the basis of which the criminal procedure body concludes about the existence or non-existence of facts, so the following are named as evidence: witness, expert, object or things. Also, there is an understanding that evidence is the result (source of knowledge) obtained by the procedural action of the data bearer, on the basis of which it is concluded whether there are facts that need to be determined in the procedure. Evidence, according to this understanding, would be the testimony of witnesses, findings and opinions of experts, objects as material evidence, documents and the like. From the above, it can be concluded that the term evidence refers to the source from which the evidence originates.

After that, Božidar Marković (1930, p.322) defines that evidence "is the evidentiary actions prescribed by procedural law that are undertaken in the procedure for the purpose of establishing the facts, so, accordingly, all evidentiary actions, such as the examination of witnesses, expert testimony, etc., are considered evidence."

The process of proof consists of several systematic process activities of criminal process subjects, which can be classified by way of synthesis into: discovery of evidence, verification of evidence and assessment of evidence. The above-mentioned activities are planned in a logical order, with some of them taking place simultaneously, for example, presentation and evaluation of evidence, that is, discovery and presentation of evidence, etc (Dimitrijević, 1981:168).

Therefore, we can conclude that the term "proving" represents a complex and diverse procedural activity of parties to criminal proceedings and the criminal court with the aim of establishing legally relevant and other facts in criminal proceedings.

Accordingly, the police in the preliminary procedure can:

- to hear the suspect, if the public prosecutor entrusts it to her, whose statement, if obtained in the presence of a defense attorney and the hearing itself was conducted according to the provisions for hearing the accused, can be used as evidence in criminal proceedings;
- to determine the necessary expert reports (except for expert reports on corpses and exhumation) for all criminal acts, with the emphasis that the police cannot question a person in the capacity of an expert witness;
- undertake an investigation, regardless of the gravity of the crime;
- determine the reconstruction of events, for all criminal acts;
- temporarily confiscate objects that should be confiscated according to the provisions of the Criminal Code or that can be used as evidence in criminal proceedings;
- enter the apartment or other premises and, if necessary, carry out a search if the conditions prescribed by the Code are met;
- obtain documents from the domain of their jurisdiction that can have the character of public or private documents and that can be presented as evidence in criminal proceedings, assuming that they are authentic.

Therefore, in order for the evidence collected by the police to be used in the criminal proceedings, it is necessary to collect such evidence in accordance with the prescribed manner prescribed by the Code itself.

In the continuation of the work, we will show and explain the procedure of the police in the investigation and reconstruction of the event.

## **2. Investigation**

Analyzing the contributions of domestic authors, Milidragović (2008, p.72) points out that the investigation represents an important phase of the pre-criminal procedure, during which objects and traces of a criminal offense are secured and fixed. That is, this is the procedure for determining all other

facts and circumstances that can be used for the purpose of elucidating the committed criminal act and concluding the criminal case in the appropriate procedure before the court.

In addition to the criminal procedural definitions of investigation, it should be noted that there are closer criminal concepts in the literature. Legal-theoretical contributions from the time of the former SFRY thus define an investigation as "a procedural action by which a criminal procedure authority (or, exceptionally, an internal affairs authority) learns (determines) certain facts that are the subject of determination in criminal proceedings and which are recorded in the minutes or in some other way by their own observation" (Bayer, 1980: 49).

Perhaps the most complete framework of definition is given by Aleksić and Škulić (2002, p.63), who state that investigation is "a system of various criminal actions, which, based on the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, are observed at the scene (directly or indirectly with the participation of experts, or with the use of special instruments criminal techniques), all important circumstances of the events that occurred, and find and in accordance with the criminal-technical rules expertly process traces and objects with a mental reconstruction of the criminal event, and with the aim of collecting and registering (through the record and its criminal attachments - sketches, photos, video -recordings, etc.), all criminally relevant information, for the purpose of clarifying the criminal event and collecting evidence". Bearing in mind the national framework of positive criminal legislation, in order to undertake an evidentiary action such as an "investigation", it is necessary to refer to Article 133 of the Criminal Code, which states that an investigation is an evidentiary action undertaken when it is to establish or clarify a fact in the procedure, direct observation of the procedure body is required. Therefore, this evidentiary action is carried out by the authority of the procedure, and by that term we mean that they are the public prosecutor, the police or the court. Therefore, to establish a fact with the help of an investigation means to make sure that it exists or does not exist based on the direct observation of the procedure body, and to clarify it means to directly perceive some features or relationship of objects or traces of a criminal offense, which serve to clarify, i.e. to understand the existence or non-existence of important fact procedure.

Referring to the contributions of Bejatović and associates (2013, p.107), according to the time of the investigation, investigative investigation and the so-called trial investigation can be distinguished. The first framework is implemented in pre-investigation and investigative proceedings, by the police or the public prosecutor, while the second framework represents the jurisdiction of the court.

Only the distinction between these forms is based on the principle of immediacy. Namely, in the first case, important facts are perceived by non-judicial authorities, while the court obtains knowledge based on the content of the recorded minutes. However, if the investigation is conducted at the main trial, the court panel has the possibility of direct inspection of the identified evidence.

Returning to the previous elaboration, it should be pointed out that the Code of Criminal Procedure determines only this, above-mentioned, condition for conducting an investigation, while it does not provide for other material and formal conditions. Therefore, the opinion, that is, the definition of Z, stands out. Jekić, who states that an investigation means the actual undertaking of an action for which only the existence of a material condition is sufficient (Jekić, 1998:292).

Therefore, we can state that in the criminal procedure provisions it is not foreseen, that is, it is not emphasized for which crimes an investigation should be carried out, nor is it determined according to which type of criminal offenses and sanctions an investigation can be carried out, nor according to the degree of importance, nor the amount of the threatened prison sentence. Based on the contributions of Matijević and Marković (2013, p.107), the investigation is an urgent investigation. In fact, it is carried out according to the principle of speed and efficiency, with the tendency to make the time between the execution of the criminal offense and the investigation as short as possible.

The aforementioned imperative arises from the consequent effect of the law of entropy, that is, the loss of relevant information that can be destroyed by the action of the perpetrator of the crime himself - persons who may unknowingly damage or contaminate the place where the crime was committed or due to the action of atmospheric conditions.

The question of the urgency of the procedure has significant implications regarding the equipment and skills of the procedural body that conducts the investigation. Precisely for this reason, the technical aspects of this task are entrusted, as a rule, to the police. In addition, taking into account other criminal possibilities, such as the identification of traces and the smell of the perpetrator of the crime, the possibility of using, for example, sniffer dogs, speaks in favor of the justification of the police as an enforcement agency.

In addition to the stated principle of urgency or timeliness, the investigation must incorporate the principle of objectivity, activity and methodicality. The first frame thus implies that during these actions,

all possible versions of events are foreseen, and that they are examined with equal attention. This practically means that investigative action cannot be carried out with a certain preconceived notion, that is, a predetermined interpretation.

The second segment refers to the imperative of creative initiative of the procedural body that conducts the investigation *ex officio*. Finally, the methodical principle will cover the planning segment of the preparation of means and procedures, and their implementation according to the order and rules of scientific and professional knowledge. (Krivokapić et al, 2000:158; Ishchenko, 2010:120).

In the context of criminal theory, we can state that the object of investigation can be a place, person or thing. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out an investigation in all criminal acts where traces and objects can be found at the place of execution or in a wider area, to determine certain facts and circumstances of importance for clarifying the criminal act, discovering the perpetrator and securing evidence. It is necessary to emphasize the opinion of S. Bejatović (2010, p.74), who states that in relation to which criminal offense is committed, every investigation must be characterized by timeliness, objectivity in work, activity of the body undertaking the investigation, methodicality and consistency.

Also, the goal of the investigation is to discover and collect evidence of the existence of a criminal act, to determine the circumstances under which the crime occurred, i.e. to determine the circumstances for the classification of the criminal offense, to discover evidence important for finding the perpetrator and determining his criminal responsibility, to collect data important for determining the existence and amount damage, checking other evidence and the like, and therefore it is of great importance that this evidentiary action is carried out in a professional and professional manner, i.e. according to procedural provisions and criminal rules, because what is missed during the investigation is difficult or almost impossible to find later can compensate (Vasiljković & Grubač, 2010:250).

In the theory of criminal procedural law, there are numerous classifications of investigation, which depend on certain criteria. We are of the opinion, as we have already mentioned, that investigations are distinguished by the subject of the investigation and the time of the investigation. The subject of the investigation can be a person, thing or place, while according to the time of the investigation, investigative and investigative investigations differ. In the following, we will primarily point out the characteristics of investigative investigation.

Investigative investigation is undertaken during the investigation, while trial investigation is undertaken at the hearing and other hearing sessions of the court, after which criminal cases are adjudicated. The competence of the public prosecutor to conduct an investigation follows from the competence of conducting the investigation. Considering the expertise, equipment and competence, the public prosecutor in practice often entrusts the investigation to the police. Therefore, we state that there is no legal obstacle for the police to independently conduct an investigation with mandatory reporting to the public prosecutor (Bošković, 2015:111).

Based on the statements of the previously mentioned Matijević and Marković (2013, p.174), the public prosecutor, due to the nature of his education, is not capable of conducting investigations independently. Finally, Rakočević (2014, p.44) points out similarly, who notes that the *conditio sine qua non* of a complete and valid evidentiary procedure is knowledge of criminal tactics, methodology, technique, operatives and strategies. This is why the cooperation of the prosecutor, criminal inspector and technicians is extremely important. Only in that synergistic case, it is possible to adequately cause and secure material traces, package identified evidence, photograph and sketch the necessary details of the crime scene.

According to Bošković (2015, p.111), the best solution in practice would be for the public prosecutor and the police to conduct the investigation together, that is, for the public prosecutor, as *dominus litis* of the previous proceedings, to lead the investigation in cooperation with the police, who will provide adequate professional assistance. Therefore, the procedural body that undertakes the investigation has the possibility to seek help from an expert. Most often, these are professionals from the forensic, traffic, architectural, IT, medical or other professions, who use their extra-legal knowledge to clarify a specific matter.

The main characteristic of an expert is having expertise that can cover different fields of expertise. This is stated in view of the phenomenological heterogeneity of criminalistic requirements, and the impossibility to determine in advance what kinds of professional knowledge are necessary in order to carry out the investigation in the prescribed manner. It can be said that an expert, if hired by the authority leading the proceedings, ie hired by the police or public prosecutor, can attend the investigation, and it is necessary to provide his professional and adequate assistance (Bošković, 2015:112). The complexity of the procedure during the investigation is also determined by the very diversity of the execution of criminal

acts. Numerous works by domestic authors therefore refer to challenges in the evidentiary context of various illegal actions, such as those against life and limb (Krstić, 2002:15), causing fires (Blagojević et al, 2010:80), high-tech crime (Ivanović, 2015:15) or crimes against sexual freedom (Bojanić et al, 2008:30). It is precisely in this sense that there is a demand to follow high standards of science in the context of criminal and forensic knowledge (Alimpić, 2017:130; Bjelovuk et al 2017:80).

The question of the quality of the investigation is also emphasized in the context of the imperative of continuous training of members of the criminal police (Brkić, 2016:196). This is especially important considering the not-so-rare mistakes that are made during investigative actions. Authors Miladinović and Simkić (2013:100) thus point out that it happens that the police selectively collects only the evidence they consider relevant. Also, among the mistakes, it is stated that not all the evidence is collected, especially not those that support the suspect or if it is estimated that the existing quality of the evidence is sufficient to clarify the criminal case. Finally, the same authors point to the frequent neglect of the application of the so-called doctrine. "fruits of the poisonous tree".

When it comes to procedural expertise, authors such as Kiurski (2014:200) also emphasize the requirement that prosecuting prosecutors undergo mandatory training in criminology. This is imposed because, in addition to the legal segment, the one who leads the investigation must also have knowledge of the technique and organization of the investigation. The same author notes that only a well-trained and technically well-equipped investigative team can accomplish the complex task that is set before them in the event of a criminal offense being committed.

Analyzing further procedural aspects of the investigation, it is necessary to keep in mind, when we talk about the probative value of the testimony of an expert, that that person does not conduct the investigation. In fact, it is justified to say that a professional of a certain profession, only on the order of the investigative body, attends a specific evidentiary action. That is, when attending an investigation, an expert works exclusively on the orders and instructions of the public prosecutor or the police. The head of the investigation team, that is, the authority of the procedure, by his signature on the prepared minutes of the investigation, confirms that all the stated data, given statements and stated facts obtained by experts are true and reliable.

As we have already stated, an expert can be invited to the investigation if his opinion and presence is necessary and significant (Article 133, paragraph 4). Above all, we would stop for a moment to briefly explain, in our opinion, the difference between the activities of a professional and an expert. Under the term "professional person", we consider that natural person of a non-legal profession, that is, we consider that a person who possesses professional knowledge that is diverse (forensic, technical, medical, traffic or some other profession) who may or may not be official face. The testimony obtained by an expert does not constitute evidence, because that person does not conduct the evidentiary action, but only participates in the investigation according to the instructions and directions of the competent authority. True, it is not impossible that when fixing the evidence, the same is done in the context of the testimony of an expert, which actually carries a certain evidentiary strength of the mentioned framework.

Contrary to the previous one, bearing in mind that "expert" in itself is an evidentiary action, the testimony, findings and professional opinion of an expert, according to the automatic system, is evidence in criminal proceedings.

Therefore, when performing the evidentiary action of investigation, unlike an expert, an expert has the right to demand that certain circumstances be clarified. Also, in addition to the aforementioned experts, experts, police and public prosecutor, the suspect, his defense attorney and the injured party can attend the investigation, if the investigation is not conducted against an unknown person. On the basis of Article 404, paragraph 3 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), the investigation, which is conducted outside the main trial, can be attended by the injured party and the expert advisor, defense counsel and the parties.

As already mentioned, it is generally known that when it comes to the subject of the investigation, it is divided into the investigation of persons, things and places. Article 134 of the CPC states that the investigation of the accused person will be undertaken without his consent if it is considered necessary to establish facts important for the proceedings, while the investigation of other persons will be undertaken without their consent only if it is necessary to determine whether certain traces or consequences of a criminal offense are found on their body. If, during the performance of the evidentiary action, the examination of the person, it is established that there are certain physical injuries or certain biological traces on the body, with the conditions prescribed by the Law, it may be ordered to take samples of the same for forensic genetic analysis or expert examination.

After the completed investigation, as in the previous evidentiary action, the questioning of the suspect, it is necessary, i.e., it is mandatory for the police officers to draw up a Record of the completed investigation, which must contain, in a descriptive form, the factual situation at the place where the crime was committed, with special reference to the objects found and traces. Also, the factual situation is documented with a photo report and a sketch of the place where the crime was committed, which is an integral part of the record. Therefore, as Article 233, paragraph 3 of the CPC states, when undertaking an action, such as an investigation, taking a sample, search or recognition, data that are important considering the nature of such an action or for determining the identity of individual objects (description, measurements and size of objects or traces, labeling of objects, etc.), and if sketches, drawings, plans, photographs, film or other technical recordings were made - this will be stated in the minutes and attached to the minutes.

### **3. Reconstruction**

The reconstruction of the criminal event, viewed in the national legislative framework, was introduced as an investigative action by the Law on Criminal Procedure of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1977 (Radosavljević 2015:127). Starting from then, with a larger segment of domestic and foreign scientific works, this topic was analyzed from a criminal point of view (Modly, 2019:125; Šikman, 2012:107). However, in addition to this professional aspect of the procedure, the given framework also requires the criminal procedural aspect of consideration, in the context of strengthening evidentiary credibility.

According to Đurđević and colleagues (2009, p.70), the reconstruction of a criminal offense can be defined as a set of systematic analytical processes aimed at ensuring reliable and relevant information about the manner and dynamics of the execution of the criminal offense. This complex process integrates material evidence obtained, for the most part, during the investigation, but also other sources of information, such as statements of witnesses, victims, and even the accused.

Bearing in mind the complexity of the reconstruction requirements, it should be noted that this is a segment of the procedure that is subject to subjective influences. It is only with the aim of achieving maximum approximation to the real characteristics of illegal actions, which are the subject of analysis, that a high level of professional knowledge and ethical standards of the acting criminal investigator is imperative.

Studying the criminal-procedural literature, there are divided opinions on whether the reconstruction of a criminal event is just a special type of investigation or whether it is a special investigative action. The authors, like Roksić (2014:100), emphasize that the given framework does not represent an independent means of evidence, but only a special case of investigation. However, following the provisions of Article 137 of the new CPC, the reconstruction of the event is prescribed as an independent action, which was not the case in the case of the old CPC from 2001. That is, according to the provisions of the previous CPC, reconstruction was seen only as a form or segment of investigation.

When it comes to the reasons for conducting the reconstruction of the event, the same is carried out by order of the procedural authorities, on two grounds: 1) the first frame involves checking the evidence presented; 2) the second framework is subordinated to the goal of establishing facts that are important for solving the criminal offense.

Similar to the previous segment of the analysis of evidentiary acts, the question arises of the competence of the authority for determining the reconstruction. This is particularly accentuated in comparison with earlier legal solutions, where the given framework of jurisdiction was entrusted exclusively to the court. Only the role of the police, in that sense, was at the level of assistance, but by no means independent powers.

Analyzing the framework of the CPC, it is found that the content of Article 2, para. 1, item 15 of the CPC, explains that the reconstruction of the event can be ordered by the public prosecutor and the police. At the same time, the aforementioned is not limited by the severity of the criminal offense. Only the limitation, in this sense, implies the obligation that when the reconstruction of the event is ordered by the police, the authorized police officer must immediately, without delay, inform the public prosecutor about the need to carry it out. Practically, the same as in the previous evidentiary actions, if the implementation of this evidentiary action is left to the police, then the authorized officials will be obliged to immediately inform the public prosecutor about the course and outcome of the reconstruction. Although the reconstruction of the event is based on the repetition of the action or the situation of the commission of the criminal act, it should be noted that the legislator limits these actions within the framework of insulting public morals or endangering people's lives and health (Article 137, paragraph 2, of the CPC). At the same



time, in addition to the tendency to formulate identical conditions for the performance of the event, the reconstruction of the event can also be performed based on the testimony of the witness or the defendant. Just as it is possible in practice for witness statements to not completely match, that is, to possibly deviate from other evidence, the CPC predicts that the reconstruction will take place in separate scenarios, individually, with different witnesses.

The subject concept itself can find different frameworks of practical implementation. Most often, this implies artificial conditions, which according to their attributes most closely correspond to the observed situation in reality, based on photo-documentation, prepared sketches and performed expertise. With the development of the technique, apart from the tendency of weather conditions and the use of means of committing the crime, other concepts are also applied (Robert, 2007:74). For example, the modern framework of forensics includes special ballistic gels that imitate the density and structure of the human body, as well as the special use of digital technologies (Jussila et al, 2005:67). Thus, today, with the application of special computer software, it is practically possible to repeat the context of the criminal act, giving a graphic representation and technical interpretation of the decisive variables of the execution (Krivokapić, 2008:40).

According to M. Škulić (2007, p.433), during the reconstruction of the event, the results obtained by undertaking evidentiary actions are checked, which can reveal other feigned criminal acts. Also, the virtual reconstruction of the criminal offense, which is used to a considerable extent in our country, can be of great importance. Therefore, with the use of modern techniques and technologies, the use of certain computer software, based on the obtained statements and collected evidence, by entering certain parameters into the program, it is possible, in a very realistic way, to show how and in what way a criminal offense was committed, i.e. that did the said crime really happen or was it faked?

Based on the work of Matijević and Marković (2013, p.180), in addition to the concept of reconstruction, the evidentiary importance of the concept of criminal experiment should also be emphasized. Namely, it is about the procedure of conscious, planned and repeated variation of the circumstances, and in the function of determining the causes, mechanisms of the development of the criminal event, and the legality of the emergence of the consequences and traces of the criminal act. In fact, it can be said that it is one phase of the reconstruction of a criminal event, which checks the validity of existing evidence and strives to find new ones.

According to the same source, there are certain differences between the reconstruction of a criminal act and a criminal experiment. Thus, the first frame will exclusively be based on those data that are related to the factual situation, without varying them (Marinković & Stevanović, 2014:79). However, when it comes to the experiment, it is actually about realistic modeling and introduction of new circumstances, which aim to eliminate ambiguous scenarios.

The reconstruction of the event can be carried out in full or in part, and some evidence can be presented again, which depends on the specific situation (Article 137, paragraph 3 of the CPC). In the event that the police need help in reconstructing a criminal event, traffic, forensic, medical or other professionals will be hired, depending on the specific case.

Therefore, we can point out that the role of the police, during the reconstruction of the event, is to secure the place where the reconstruction is carried out, to limit movement in the area where it is carried out, to obtain the necessary data from criminal records and other records within its jurisdiction, to establish the identity of the injured party and other persons, to implement the measures of summoning and enforcement of orders to bring in persons and other legally regulated and entrusted tasks within its jurisdiction. During the reconstruction of events, it is necessary, as with previous evidentiary actions, to take into account ethics, which implies that one acts with special care and professionalism, objectivity and impartiality, as well as the need to respect each individual, privacy and their human dignity (Kiurski, 2014: 204).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Bearing in mind what has been presented on the topic of investigation, the following can be concluded. The investigation is an evidentiary action that is undertaken when the determination or clarification of a fact in the procedure requires the direct observation of the authorities of the procedure, i.e. the police. In practice, the investigation is more trusted than the testimony obtained during the questioning of the suspect precisely because of its immediacy, and it is also considered the most reliable evidence in criminal proceedings, because the sensory perception of the organs of the procedure during the investigation is carried out thoroughly, expertly and planned. When it comes to the reconstruction of events we can conclude that the evidentiary action "reconstruction" is used to check the evidence

presented or establish facts that are important for clarifying the subject of the evidence. The reconstruction of the event is carried out by repeating the event or situation in the conditions under which it happened, based on the collected statements and evidence, that is, it is a simulation of the event. If necessary, the police hires an expert who, with his expertise, participates and helps in the reconstruction of the event. In principle, the reconstruction of events rarely establishes facts that are important for clarifying the criminal offense, but that is why already established facts are checked.

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## CASE STUDY ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this article was the career orientation of a female pupil in the final year of high school, specifically the choice of a bachelor program related to the cognitive and personality profiles we conducted. The motivation for this study had as guidelines the interests for vocational counseling and the adolescence age stage. Respecting the ethical aspects involved, the following instruments were used: anamnesis sheet, educational task inventory, CEI, V21, FFPI, CP5F, AP, CAS++. Good cognitive abilities, a personality profile oriented towards agreeableness and social relationships, dominant social and artistic interests were revealed. The subject fits vocationally into the two professions of interest, psychology and pedagogy of primary and pre-school education. The conclusions highlighted an approach that the subject can take regarding her vocational choice, necessary updates of occupational profiles, but especially the need Romanian students have for more career guidance activities.*

**Keywords:** Vocational guidance, personality traits, autonomy, cognitive abilities, education.

### 1. Introduction

The theoretical thread guiding the presented case study is grounded in John Holland's theory of vocational personality (Holland, 1997; Holland, 1992). This theory, with continuing application in vocational counseling, is described by the author as structuralist and interactional. In this regard, Holland proposes a structure of predominant occupational interests of people, also suggesting that career development and related behaviors are determined by communication between people and the external environment. The six categories of occupational interests, work environments and vocational personalities respectively are: realistic, investigative, conventional, artistic, social, enterprising/entrepreneurial.

In addition, people actively seek living environments that allows them to manifest their personality, attitudes, values and, of course, interests. Accordingly, vocational behavior is determined by a person's personality as well as the environment of which he or she is a part of (Niles, Harris-Bowlsbey, 2015). It is within this synthetic theoretical framework that our case study is situated, with a focus on the two primary dimensions of being human, the inner and outer worlds, that we set out to uncover.

The six categories of interests are found among all people to varying degrees and at least one of them stands out in their vocational identity. The advantage when they are all assessed for a single person is the possibility to compare them with each other and to capture links between two or more types of interests, even non-adjacent ones, taking also into account the person's life context. In this way, it is possible to have a greater certainty about the person's genuine interests and, as a result, to orient him or her towards actions in line with the interests highlighted.

One of the key elements in Holland's theory relates to vocational congruence. This involves the degree to which personality and present or future work environment match with each other (Niles, Harris-Bowlsbey, 2015). Incongruence occurs when an individual's personality (towards instance a social one) is manifested in a non-adjacent occupational environment (a realistic one). These congruencies can be observed in the hexagonal model proposed by Holland (Holland et. al, 1973) which captures all the links between the six categories and those that can be combined to achieve the highest congruency. In this sense, any career counseling/guidance activity is fundamentally aimed at finding the most congruent fit between the person and the environments.

The development of vocational identity, another key concept in this theory, is dependent on all the aspects brought together in an individual's life, and any counseling activity or research proposal must take into account as much information as possible about the person involved and their preferences and abilities. It is in this direction that the need for case studies that could contribute, theoretically and applicatively, to the existing paradigms in vocational counseling is emerging.

## 2. Objectives

The general objective of the paper is to explore the psychological characteristics of the subject in order for her to choose a university bachelor program. In pursuit of this objective, we have outlined the following specific objectives: to identify the cognitive skills developed at the time of the study, the dominant personality traits at this age, the interests and values that guides the person and to establish correlations between these variables to identify the professional vocation.

## 3. Hypothesis

The working hypothesis of this paper is concerned with matching cognitive and personality profiles with the aptitudes required for the subject's professions of interest.

## 4. Demographic data

The case study involved a pupil, A.S., aged 19, who at the time of the study was in grade XII, in an urban environment. She is of Romanian ethnicity and followed a science profile.

## 5. Methodological design

The study was carried out over a period of 10 weeks from March to May, with meetings set according to a joint work schedule, but with at least 2 days between them. During the first meeting we communicated to the subject the proposed general objective, identified the subject's needs and established the working schedule (number of meetings and their frequency, the appropriate workload for a meeting and the methods for analyzing and communicating the results). We also obtained the subject's informed consent before starting the process of gathering baseline information. Following the data collection through the tools used, scoring and reporting of the results to the standard was performed. In consonance with these, cognitive and personality profiles were made, as well as analyzing the correlations between them and the values and interests' profiles.

The methods used to assess the target constructs are the following: anamnesis interview, psychological questionnaire survey and psychological testing. The instruments used are the following: the Job Task Inventory (Popa, 2008); the Interest Appraisal Questionnaire (CEI); the Values Appraisal Questionnaire V21 (Miclea et al., 2013); the Five-Factor Personality Inventory (FFPI) (Hendriks, Hofstee, Raad, 1999); the CP5F Personality Questionnaire (Albu, 2009); the Personal Autonomy Questionnaire (PA); CAS++ - Cognitrom Assessment System (Cognitrom SRL, 2009). The grid used for the anamnesis interview can be found in Annex 1.

## 6. Ethical aspects

During the entire period of the study and after its completion, the ethical conditions of research with human subjects were respected: the person was informed about the purpose and duration of the research, she has given informed consent to the processing of data and her confidentiality has been maintained. She was also informed that she could withdraw from the study participation at any time. The subject also consented to the audio-recording of her answers during the first meeting, relating to the anamnesis interview. She was also informed of her right to request the results that were recorded and to ask for any clarifications in relation to them.

## 7. Results and discussions

### 7.1. Anamnesis

Ψ **Presentation of family background:** The subject is part of a nuclear family, being the only child. Also specific to the family is that the subject was adopted. The parents' financial income provides for her primary and secondary needs. Her mother is 56 years old, a kindergarten caretaker and has completed 10 grades. Her father is 59 years old, a driver and has 12 years of school finished with the Baccalaureat exam.

A.S. states that being adopted does not define her and it is easy for her to talk about this characteristic of her family. She feels that what her parents have done is very important, that they had courage and she is proud of that, she feels wanted in the family. She admires her mother a lot because she overcame the difficulty of not being able to have children of her own.

Ψ **Current family atmosphere:** A very good relationship with the mother (being her life model) and an ambivalent relationship with the father are reported, because there are times when they do not get along very well (lack of active communication with him).

The subject reports that her role in the family is to unite, being the youngest member of the family, including the extended one. The other members already had families of their own when she was adopted, so the subject states that she always brings something new, contemporary.

Family activities are rarely carried out at the moment, those happening more often being holidays. In the evening, they watch the news together. The subject explains the causality of this lack of spending time together in the present through the busyness of all the family members. She admits she misses them, wanting to devote more time to her family.

Ψ **Social-emotional history of the family:** The subject states that throughout her life she had a good relationship with her parents, except for the preadolescence period and the debut of adolescence, when the discrepancies between her wishes and those of her parents began to appear (especially with her mother). A traumatic history of the father is reported, as he had an abusive father figure and divorced parents. The subject states that her father did not learn domestic violence as a result of these events, but he has difficulty communicating with others when there is a problematic situation and does not communicate his thoughts and emotions.

Ψ **Parental projects** about the future of the subject: The subject states that she has always been supported regarding what she wants to do (choice of hobbies, high school profile, college). Concerning the choice of the bachelor program, the father wanted her to choose a faculty related to professions which offers a short work schedule and high salary, but now he only wants her to follow her wishes. Both parents want her to overcome their socio-economic condition, not work as much as they do, without being recognized for their merits.

Ψ **Medical history:** The subject reports that at the time of the study, during the final year of high-school, she takes medication for peaceful sleep. The sources of stress she identified in her life are school, Baccalaureate exam, family (sometimes), friends. In the past, she has experienced frequent episodes of insomnia. Also, the subject wears glasses because of strabismus.

Ψ **Social relationships:** A. S. states that she is a sociable person and avoids conflicts. In addition, she has two close friends, besides family, and believes that she can go to them when she needs. She had short romantic experiences, typical for her age. Among the difficulties she encounters in relationships, the following were highlighted: she quickly attaches to others and gives them complete trust; she is jealous and ruminates about relational contexts and she is also jealous, although does not show it; she does not always manage to show her affection towards others (aspect she attributed to the ambivalent relationship with the parents).

The relationship with her classmates is typical, having a few good friends. As for relationships outside of school, she believes that she has a secondary role in her friendships (affirms that she does not have a group, but only dyadic relationships), because she does not have a romantic partner. She states that this fact does not bother her and is trying to be the person who makes others laugh and reliable.

Ψ **Educational context:** The subject states that she is a pupil who respects the rules and status of the teacher, yet there are teachers with whom she professionally disregards, but maintains her respect nonetheless. She believes that school is important, but is disappointed of the educational system in Romania, wanting more vocational counseling in the school structure. The subject also states that she would like to have more artistic extracurriculars.

She has average results (as she states) and focuses on the disciplines that arouse interest (mathematics, Romanian, psychology). The discipline that causes difficulties is chemistry.

Her plans for the future involve completing university studies and to profess as a psychologist, but also as a teacher. She would want a work environment that allows her to have time for family and to travel as much as possible.

Ψ **Motivational sphere:** The hobbies A.S. has are playing the guitar and photo editing. As for the musical instrument practiced, the subject states that she reached a high level of performance, since she began at an early age and participated in many competitions and shows. At the moment she spends her free time, which is limited, reading. She spent several years doing animation for children and young people, being proud of her manifestation at that time. She has also performed guitar teaching activities for children, which she claims have been a success in her life, showing her that she is good at something. Animation meant a lot to her, dedicating a lot of her time in her high school years to these projects. What prompted her to give up were the divergences she had with certain people, but also the start of the XII<sup>th</sup> class. The professions she is interested in are psychology and teaching. The passion for psychology is determined by the subject's desire to discover how people think, being attracted by the idiographic approach of their personality. In addition, she is also interested in teaching, because she noticed the beneficial impact she had on the children who participated at her guitar activities, considering that she

would do a good thing to society, while doing something that she likes. However, it is worth noting that until the guitar activities the subject did not consider the profession of teaching. She prefers to work alone, although she works well in a team.

## 7.2. Cognitive profile

**Table 1. Tests results CAS++**

ABILITY/APTITUDE	TEST	RAW SCORE/INDEX	TEST LEVEL	GENERAL LEVEL
General learning ability	Analytical reasoning	19	Very good	Good
	Cognitive inhibition	0,18	Average	
	Analog transfer	19	Good	
Verbal ability	Understanding of the texts	15	Good	Good
Numerical ability	Mathematical reasoning	15	Good	Good
	Mathematical calculation	10	Average	
The ability to perceive form	Perceiving details	4	Very weak	Very weak
Decision-making capacity	-	7	Good	Good

The **analytical reasoning** test suggests that the evaluated person performs better than 93.3% of the population, with a very good score. The score indicates an increased ability to find logical rules and put them into practice in solving problems. It also highlights the ease of merging the initial information to draw valid conclusions. The test indicates the increased ability of formal reasoning, independent of the knowledge the subject holds.

At the Inductive Rational A sub-scale A.S. has a score of 11/12 points, suggesting the increased ability to selectively compare (choosing relevant information for problem solving). Subscala Rational B, deductive type, with a score of 8/12 points, it shows that the person has developed the ability to identify ways in which information can be grouped into a single mental model.

Being at the age stage where complex reasoning prevails thinking (Sălceanu, 2015), it can be said that the subject is in the normal graph of cognitive development according to her age.

The **cognitive inhibition** index (0.18) places the person in class/level 3, an average level, better than 30.9% of the population. The test measures the ability to inhibit a prepotent response, attentional executive control, through a Stroop-type load. In this context, A.S. obtained an average score, which suggests an average ability to ignore irrelevant stimuli in order to solve a problem. However, A.S. had no errors during the test, giving all the correct answers and in a cursively way, without breaks and the need to repeat a word. This indicates that, in reality, her ability to inhibit a prepotent response is good, but does not have the speed necessary for a high score.

The **analog transfer** test indicates a good level of performance (4 = IV-a class), higher than 69.1% of the population, at a score of 19 points. In essence, A.S. has enhanced the ability to identify criteria relevant to relational structuring in new situations, following the common points between the present situation and the past situations (ability necessary to solve heuristic problems). Analog transfer is considered a general skill, necessary for learning, and extremely useful in professions such as: programmer analyst, teacher, doctor, psychologist, architect, management functions of various trades (Cognitrom SRL, Cognitrom SRL, 2009).

Analog transfer has two parts: verbal and figurative analog transfer. At the first the subject scored 11 points (out of 12 possible), and at the second one 8 points. Although the test manual indicates that the scores on the figurative section are usually higher (because they are not dependent on the level of instruction), A.S. has recorded a visibly higher score on the verbal section.

The application of the **text comprehension** test revealed a score located on a good level (class 4), the subject having a better performance than 69.1% of the population. Therefore, she has a good ability to derive the meanings of the isolated phrases found in the texts read, to associate logical phrases, to advance hypotheses about the text by following cause and effect relationships and to merge information to generate conscious or unconscious inferences.

The **mathematical reasoning** test indicates a good level (class 4), a better performance than 69.1% of the population. Thus, she performs mathematical reasoning, numerical data analysis and identifying relationships between them at an average level. Being a pupil with a science profile, she has the potential to activate in professions such as: engineering, architecture, statistics, mathematics. These areas require mathematical reasoning ability. However, the subject is not attracted to these areas of interest, despite the fact that she resonates positively with the field of mathematics.

The **mathematical calculation** test indicates an average level (class 3), the person having a better performance than 30.9 % of the population. The subject has an average level of numerical aptitude characterized by rapidity and correctness of simple mathematical calculations. Errors can be due to both the lack of numerical acquisition and the lack of concentration on certain calculations. It can be seen that the subject failed to perform the calculations quickly and correctly, but this indicates the possibility that in the absence of limited time she will correctly perform several calculations. Considering this ability is trained at the moment for the Bacalaureate exam, having good results at the national simulations, the time limit imposed may distort her real ability to solve simple calculations.

The **detail perception** test indicates a raw score of 4 points, the subject being placed in class 1 with a very low level, suggesting that there are difficulties in identifying the details found in various graphic materials or images. Considering the psychology and teaching professions, which require an average-medium level of this skill, A.S.is below the minimum required level.

In this context, an analysis of this ability is required. First of all, it involves: concentration and mobility of attention; abstaining from certain details to identify relevant others; perceptual analysis, synthesis and comparison. Selective attention (the ability to ignore certain stimuli and identify others) matures in the early years of adolescence (Hobbiss, Lavie, 2024). The subject, passed this subperiod of adolescence, therefore she would benefit from training it now, being able to assimilate a large volume of new information and skills. The phases of the perceptual act that may be undeveloped are identification and interpretation, detection and discrimination being unlikely to be affected, because she has a normal intellect.

Secondly, the subject responded predominantly correctly in the first part of the test, being consonant with the specificity of the structure of the items, being on an axis from easy to difficult. There is also the possibility that the limited time to solve the items determines this low level, as well as the existing vision problems (in this latter case, the subject wearing the glasses at the time of the test, a specific medical evaluation of the perception of details is required in order to provide this argument with certainty).

The **decisional capacity** test illustrates a raw score of 7 points, the subject having a good level (class 4) of decision rationality and a low sensitivity to decision biases and heuristics. The person is characterized by the reduced use of general decision heuristics, choosing to analyze decision situations in detail. People who have a high level performance can reach high levels in professions that mainly involve decision making (administrators, managers, economists, judges, lawyers, investigators, detectives, etc).

The test suggests that A.S.is not in a hurry to make inferences in a situation until after carefully analyzing it. The result also suggest that she likes to get involved in the analysis of problematic situation. This aspect is relevant for a psychologist, because meeting/managing such situations is an active task of it. In addition, the teacher also requires a higher average level of this skill, being often put in a position to make decisions according to the specifics of the situation and in a relatively short time.

### 7.3. Personality profile

**Table 2. FFPI, CP5F, IEC and V21 results**

TEST	SCALE	RAW SCORE	T SCORE/ PERCENTILES	LEVEL
FFPI	Extraversion	72	50	Average
	Agreeableness	98	72	High
	Conscientiousness	77	53	Average
	Emotional stability	64	48	Average
	Autonomy	71	49	Average
CP5F	Social desirability	71	67	High
	Extraversion	67	43	Average
	Agreeableness	117	75	High
	Conscientiousness	109	64	High
	Emotional stability	71	51	Average
	Autonomy	65	38	Low
Interests Questionnaire	Artistic interests	16	-	High
	Conventional interests	1	-	Low
	Entrepreneurial interests	2	-	Low



	Social interests	18	-	High - dominant
	Realistic interests	5	-	Low
	Investigative interests	7	-	Average
Values Questionnaire	Professional recognition	9	C9	Low
	Authority	5	C6	Low
	Social relationships	12	C42	Average - dominant
	Autonomy	11	C20	Average
	Safety	8	C14	Average
	Respecting rules	11	C40	Average
	Challenge	11	C39	Average

### 7.3.1. FFPI and CP5F questionnaires

Firstly, A.S. may have presented distorted aspects of her personality in a positive sense, as the score on the Social Desirability scale indicates is high. Thus, it is recommended that the interpretations of the other scales be placed under the sign of uncertainty for a correct approach of the case.

The two personality questionnaires show equivalent levels on the Extraversion (average), Kindness (high) and Emotional Stability (average) scales. These results are consistent with the claims of the subject. The subject is characterized by paying attention and care to/for others, an average ability to manage situations with emotional impact and an ambivert temperament, at least at a first assessment of these dimensions. Thus, A.S. shows interest in people around her, respecting their opinions and rights. She also tries to maintain good relationships with others. She is generally thoughtful, generous, confident, helpful, concerned about social harmony (Rothmann, Coetzer, 2003), has an optimistic view of human nature, being trustworthy. She also tends to prioritize the well-being of others and can often compromise to maintain harmony in interpersonal relationships.

The literature supports the linear character of agreeableness throughout life, with late adolescence being a stage where the person scores high scores, unlike puberty and the early years of adolescence (Donnellan, Lucas, 2008).

Again, the professions of interest of the subject are emphasized. In addition to this argument, it has been shown that there is a positive correlation between agreeableness as a personality trait related to the BIG5 model and the social interest related to Holland's theory (Larson, Rottinghaus, Borgen, 2002).

Regarding the differences between the two questionnaires, the FFPI Conscientiousness scale shows an average level and the CP5F a high level, the scores being obviously discrepant. Explanation can be based on the high level on the Social Desirability scale. The subject often stated that she spends most of her time completing school duties and preparing for the Baccalaureate exam. Differences between scales would require additional assessments to be able to determine the actual level of the person.

The level of autonomy is average on the FFPI scale and low on the CP5F, which outlines a weak development of this feature, which is usually a great need in adolescence. This may be caused by the lack of training of daily activities, the subject being accustomed to other people (for example, parents) making decisions for her in this regard. A.S. affirms that she needs more independence, therefore autonomy development comes first (understanding both of the psychological terms), because she had conflicts with her parents on the basis of this need. Thus, there is awareness of this personality peculiarity, as well as her desire to develop it.

In addition, not only does the autonomy related to daily activism seem to be medium to low, but also social and emotional autonomy, relying on high agreeableness. Being a person who is more concerned about the well-being and validation of others, the subject often tends to give up her own initiatives, although the decisional capacity shows us that she is good at analyzing problematic situations and making cautious and effective decisions. However, the hypothesis of conformism is highlighted, in the absence of a stable group of friends, being a feature that manifests itself globally. It is thus emphasized the possibility that the subject has the necessary resources to be autonomous in thinking, but also in personality aspects, choosing to adhere to the choices of others for social reasons.

### 7.3.2. Questionnaire assessing personal autonomy

In order to achieve a deeper look at the manifestation of autonomy in the psychological reality of the subject, the AP questionnaire was also applied.

**Table 3. AP scores**

SCALE	RAW SCORE	T SCORE	LEVEL
Value autonomy	32	58	Average
Behavioral autonomy	41	56	Average
Cognitive autonomy	39	61	High
Emotional autonomy	33	62	High
Total	145	62	High

Cognitive autonomy is high, which can also be supported by her results on decision-making capacity (6.2). Emotional autonomy is also on a high level, suggesting a high capacity for emotional independence from the opinions of others.

The subject achieved different levels on this trait globally between applied tests (medium-low on FFPI and CP5F) and high on AP. The AP manual notes that there is often a link between the high level of autonomy and the social desirability scale on the CP5F. In this regard, it is possible for the subject to present herself more autonomously than she really is. Although it seems that A.S. has the necessary resources from the point of view of thinking and personality to be autonomous, which is evidenced by her scores, it is possible that reality is a little distorted. Being a kind person who does not want to disturb others, behavioural autonomy (average on AP) suggests that the subject chooses not to show off her opinions and even some of the solutions she might reach.

Value autonomy is also average, which can support the argument of a medium-low autonomy, not always being important for her to manifest it.

### 7.3.3. Interests Questionnaire

Following the application of the occupational interests questionnaire, the subject's preferences for the following areas of activity are illustrated:

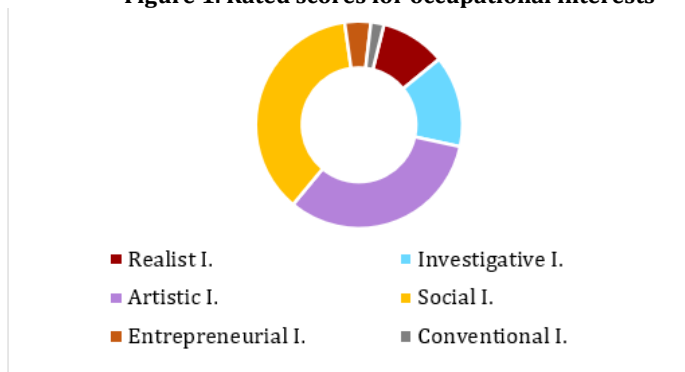
1) Scale: Social Interests (S); Raw score: 18; Rated score: 90%

Interpretation: Is interested in activities involving interpersonal relationships. She prefers to help people solve their problems or teach them things, rather than doing activities that require the manipulation of tools or machines. The suggested professions are: teacher, counselor, therapist, doctor, nurse, policeman, speech therapist, etc.

2) Scale: Artistic Interests (A); Raw score: 16; Rated score: 80%

Interpretation: Manifests attraction to less structured activities, which involves creative solutions and offers the possibility of self-expression. The suggested professions are: musician, poet, sculptor, writer, actor, architect, designer, editor, journalist, etc.

**Figure 1. Rated scores for occupational interests**



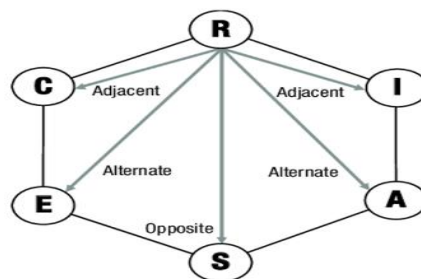
The analysis of the questionnaire follows diadic patterns, therefore, the first two types of interests with the highest scores (dominant-social and the first secondary artistic type are taken into account for the achievement of a picture of relevant interests). Jigău (2006) presents the environment, the personality and behavior characteristics of a person with each category of interests, those concerned being described as follows:

The social environment offers opportunities to talk, to listen to others, to show an understanding and friendly attitude in interpersonal relationships, to help people. Therefore, the areas that focus on this issue are education, social assistance, health. The type of social personality is exemplified by a person who

enjoys working with people in order to inform, guide, instruct, educate, care for them. She also has skills in using language in a creative and comprehensive way. The behavior of a social person is oriented towards social interactions, prefers collective activities that involve cooperation.

The artistic environment involves an unstructured, free work program that actively calls for initiative and puts maximum emphasis on the individual way of artistic and emotional expression. The artistic personality type includes artistic skills, abilities and intuition, affective-emotional approaches of the surrounding world. In addition, she enjoys using her imaginative processes and expressing herself original and unsystematized. The behavior of an artistic person is manifested by the use of visual/auditory materials to exemplify and behave, preference for individual activities and decision making by resorting to the emotional component.

**Figure 2. Congruence relations between the types of interests**



In reality, it is rare for an individual to have a single personality type or belong to a single work environment. Combinations are often found, which is why Holland's Code uses three letters to illustrate each personality type or work environment (for instance: EIA, ISE, etc). The first letter in the combination represents the dominant style and the other two are the adjacent styles. The more similar the types of interests that make up the personal pattern, the higher the coherence and the possibility of conflicts between internal preferential structures decreases, which facilitates decision making towards a profession (Băban, 2001). The code of A.S. is SAI (social-artistic-investigative). According to the six-interest model it is coherent with adjacent interest categories that can be easily combined over the course of the career. In consonance with these interests, A.S. has presented throughout the study interests towards the field of psychology and pedagogy, orienting herself at the moment (march, 2024) to the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of Ovidius University. She also follows training classes within the Psychology discipline, being curious about this field and suggesting that she would love to discover it within the faculty. Once more, she carried out volunteering and animation activities for children and young people at an ONG in Constanta, her social orientations being highlighted again.

Addressing the subject's claims about her motivation, we can consider, in particular for further evaluations, the type of motivation underlying the interests for the two professions. Affirming that the option of teaching appeared only when she received positive feedback from the beneficiaries (children) of the sustained guitar activity, we hypothesize an initial extrinsic motivation for this profession, according to the reward motivation theory (Lemeni, Miclea, 2004) that is specific to the age of adolescence. Affirming that now she wants to be able to give children a qualitative education, the motivation type seems to be altruistic, therefore the need for a thorough analysis is enhanced.

For a more detailed perspective, some reference points in the occupational profiles for psychologist and teacher of the platform CAS++ are described. Although the subject is interested in the elementary teacher profile, not the professor one, the occupational profiles do not approach the first one, so the profile chosen was the closest conceptually to it. For a future analysis with a higher validity is recommended to evaluate her with an updated profile. Beneath are the profiles used in this evaluation.

**Table 4. Occupational profiles of areas of interest**

Occupational profile of a psychologist						Occupational profile of a professor																																																																																																																											
<p>- <b>General tasks:</b> studying human mental processes and behaviours, developing assessment techniques, applying and interpreting psychological tests, facilitating individual, group or organizational development and change, supporting and conducting research;</p> <p>- <b>Physical environment:</b> offices, cabinets, offices or laboratories;</p> <p>- <b>Socio-organizational environment:</b> many unstructured activities, many important decisions, very frequent interpersonal interactions;</p> <p>- <b>Skills:</b> used in learning, problem solving, social, resource management;</p> <p>- <b>Aptitudes</b>  <b>Cognitive</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">ABILITY</th> <th colspan="5">Level of development</th> </tr> <tr> <th>1 (minimum)</th> <th>2 (lower middle)</th> <th>3 (medium)</th> <th>4 (upper middle)</th> <th>5 (maxim)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. General learning ability</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Verbal ability</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Numerical aptitude</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Spatial aptitude</td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Shape perception ability</td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Functional skills</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Speed in reactions</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>8. Decision-making capacity</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Psychomotor:</b> auditory acuity, clarity of speech.</p> <p>- <b>Holland Code:</b> ISA (investigative, social, entrepreneurial);</p> <p>- <b>Sources of job satisfaction:</b> autonomy, use of individual skills, service to others, creativity in work, responsibility, personal fulfillment, variety of tasks;</p> <p>- <b>Labor market search:</b> increased.</p>						ABILITY	Level of development					1 (minimum)	2 (lower middle)	3 (medium)	4 (upper middle)	5 (maxim)	1. General learning ability					X	2. Verbal ability				X		3. Numerical aptitude			X			4. Spatial aptitude		X				5. Shape perception ability		X				6. Functional skills			X			7. Speed in reactions				X		8. Decision-making capacity				X		<p>- <b>General tasks:</b> plans, evaluates and revises the components of the educational structure, transmits information with an instructional-educational nature, adapts the content according to the needs of the students, monitors and evaluates their progress, organizes extra-curricular activities, pursues the potential for excellence;</p> <p>- <b>Physical environment:</b> in the classroom, office, laboratory, school workshops, sports hall (depending on the subject taught);</p> <p>- <b>Socio-organizational environment:</b> teaching time is 16/18 hours/week, freedom to decide on the particularities of the lessons, continuous interaction with students, parents, other teachers;</p> <p>- <b>Skills:</b> problem-solving, social;</p> <p>- <b>Aptitudes</b>  <b>Cognitive</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">ABILITY</th> <th colspan="5">Level of development</th> </tr> <tr> <th>1 (minimum)</th> <th>2 (lower middle)</th> <th>3 (medium)</th> <th>4 (upper middle)</th> <th>5 (maxim)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. General learning ability</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Verbal ability</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Numerical aptitude</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Spatial aptitude</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Shape perception ability</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>6. Functional skills</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>7. Speed in reactions</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8. Decision-making capacity</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>x</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Psychomotor:</b> manual dexterity, physical stamina, visual acuity, clarity of speech.</p> <p>- <b>Holland Code:</b> SAI (social, entrepreneurial, investigative);</p> <p>- <b>Sources of job satisfaction:</b> use of individual skills, service to others, social status, teamwork, institutional practices and policies, recognition;</p> <p>- <b>Labor market search:</b> low.</p>						ABILITY	Level of development					1 (minimum)	2 (lower middle)	3 (medium)	4 (upper middle)	5 (maxim)	1. General learning ability					x	2. Verbal ability					x	3. Numerical aptitude			x			4. Spatial aptitude			x			5. Shape perception ability			x			6. Functional skills				x		7. Speed in reactions					x	8. Decision-making capacity				x	
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8. Decision-making capacity				x																																																																																																																													

Occupational profiles suggest that the necessary dominant type, the social one, is present in the code of A.S., the investigative one being its second secondary type, also found in the codes in the table. Although the entrepreneurial one is not in the person's code, it's score is close to the investigative one. Despite the fact that type A (artistic) is not found in the profile codes, creativity is an essential element, both in psychology and pedagogy.

People have certain traits that are relatively stabilized after adolescence, therefore, entrepreneurial interests can crystallize during university studies, and the artistic ones that A.S. already possesses are an indicator of her cognitive flexibility that is necessary in solving unexpected situations and to generate social situations (for example, original teaching activities with pupils or differential approaches in therapy). As far as the professional environment is concerned, both professions provide interactions, which is a need of the social type. Also, the malleable structure of professional tasks is supported by the artistic type, and the sources of job satisfaction are in consonance with the needs of a social and artistic person. According to the cognitive aptitude tests, the subject meets some of the standards of the occupational profiles (Figure 4), with numerical aptitude and decisional ability being met on both profiles. The psychologist profile has the required levels met/exceeded on three of the five dimensions tracked. Also, the greater closeness between the minimum and lower-median levels on the shape perception skill on the psychologist profile, as opposed to the teacher profile, supports a higher fit on the latter. It is noteworthy that not all tests were applied on certain skills, thus not having a complete and certain picture of the cognitive sphere. Notable about occupational profiles is that their applicability today is questionable, as they were developed about 10 years ago. Within this framework, certain aspects might differ nowadays, towards instance looking at the labor market.

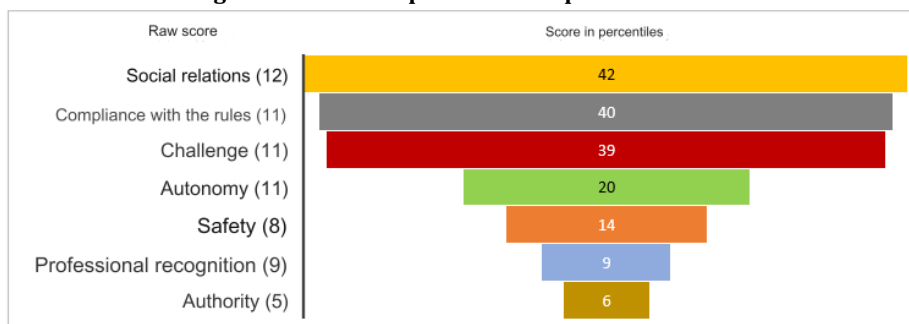
Another aspect to consider is the limitations of the Holland test, as it does not analyze other factors that may influence the choice of vocation: environmental, economic, cultural. The test pursues a

psychological theory of personality, which reveals information correctly related to the statements and results of the subject A.S., but it is necessary to have an overall perspective with an objective point of view over this paper.

### 7.3.4. Values questionnaire

The results of the values questionnaire indicate the levels of the seven targeted values as follows:

**Figure 3. Results in percentiles of personal values**



The values that emerge most strongly are: social relationships, compliance with the rules and challenge.

Ψ Social Relationships: Is a person for whom it is significant to focus on forming and maintaining pleasant, non-competitive and non-coercive interpersonal relationships with those with whom they come into contact in any type of environment;

Ψ Rule-following: This is a person for whom it is important to organize and start his/her activities following rules that are well established by others (family, organizations, society);

Ψ Challenge: This is a person for whom the pursuit of risky, strategically complex activities for planning, carrying out and monitoring is important.

According to the results, the value of social relationships, at the highest level, is complementary with the type of social interest and the subject's statements about his social needs and willingness to help others, as well as to the strongly characterized trait of agreeableness. Following rules and pursuing challenges, although seemingly at odds, may reflect that the subject is a conformist, obeys people in positions of authority and, when referring to activities, is a person who pursues difficult situations that cognitively challenge him. In other words, the subject compensates the lack of social autonomy with the need for stimulating tasks. A.S. has a moral profile characterized by socialization, collaboration, conformity, respect, risk and curiosity.

Being in the socialization period (13-21 years) of values appropriation, A.S. has the value of social relations developed at a high level, at the same time obeying people in authority, which suggests a person with respect from a value point of view. The value of challenge, of exploration of the unknown is specific to the adolescent age, pushing the subject towards self-discovery and discovery of the surrounding world. Following the analysis of the anamnesis data, following the rules as a value is reinforced by the subject's statement that her most important life principle is justice. In addition, the relatively low level of autonomy as a value is also illustrated by the low level of the trait with the same name in CP5F questionnaire.

### 7.4. Inventory of educational tasks

For the personal development of the inventory, the educational tasks of terminal year pupils were identified. The next step was to determine the relevant information to be known for each task, time allocated and perceived difficulty (difficulty is rated on a five-step Likert scale). Therefore, the inventory was conducted for the educational tasks, according to the work task inventory model (Popa, 2008: 49, apud Sandu, Sălceanu, 2018):

**Table 5. Inventory for educational tasks. Subject's answers**

Task list	Time allocated	Difficulty
1. Attendance of classes	5/7 days	4
2. Realization of projects/portfolios/essays	A lot	2
3. Preparation for school assessments	A lot	4
4. Preparing for the baccalaureat exam	Most of the time	4

5. Tutoring for the baccalaureat exam	3/7 days	3
6. Doing homeworks	A lot	4
7. Reading books with subjects of interest	A little	1
8. Participating in school competitions/olympics/artistic and/or sports activities at school	Never	-
9. Interacting with classmates	A lot	2
10. Relations with teachers	A little	2
11. Preparing for an oral presentation	A little	4
12. Preparing for national simulations	A little	3
13. Preparing for college enrollment	A lot	2

After processing the results, the activities carried out by the subject can be categorized according to the two elements observed as follows:

Ψ By **time allocated**: The allocation of time to fulfill the main school assignments as well as to enroll in college is emphasized, with the subject showing seriousness about her professional future. The subject is also concerned about socializing with peers, which is also supported by her social interests.

Little time is allocated to reading books of interest, which may cause the subject's ambivalence between two centers of interest for her future profession. In the context of pupils' limited time in 12th grade and compulsory reading for the baccalaureate, the need for reading to learn more about the subjects relevant in the decision of the bachelor program is emphasized.

Ψ By **perceived difficulty**: The subject states that school tasks come with a high degree of difficulty (4), along with preparing for an oral presentation. Relating with peers and teachers ranks in the lower-medium range (2), illustrating the subject's ease of communicating with those in the school environment.

### 8. Conclusions and recommendations

In summary, the results and interpretations related to the assessment of the subject A.S., the cognitive and personality profiles were outlined as follows: The cognitive profile illustrates good levels on the targeted skills, except the shape perception aptitude with a very poor level. The personality profile shows equivalences on the two instruments used, with average levels on two scales (Extraversion, Emotional Stability) and high levels on Agreeableness. Having also high social desirability, conscientiousness and autonomy on different levels, it is recommended to analyze these data cautiously. The Values Questionnaire shows an emphasis on social relationships, following rules and challenge.

In order to verify the working hypothesis, the compatibility between the subject's desirable occupational profiles and her cognitive (knowledge, skills, abilities, competences) and personality (interests, aspirations and ideals, value system) profiles, the subject A.S. has social and artistic interests, which are both shown in the questionnaires and the anamnesis. According to the occupational profiles, she is closer to the one of psychologist. The subject also seems to be more passionate about this field, an aspect observed throughout the study.

Given that the cognitive (aptitudinal) profile has a higher informational value than each of its individual elements, subject A.S. has a good cognitive development, the only exception being the shape perception aptitude. It is recommended to test the individual in the future with the other tools related to this skill in order to confirm whether she really has a very poor level of this skill. Addressing only detail perception, the subject could try the following activities to improve it: visual memory and detail identification games, number paintings. Short-term, visual memory and observation are key elements to be pursued in this direction, and can also be trained through other activities (other games, activities in nature etc).

Given the low level of autonomy on one of the scales, it is recommended that A.S. takes on more tasks related to the home environment and personal schedule. Stating that she does not have enough time to read in the areas of interest (psychology and pedagogy of primary and pre-school education), it is recommended that she restructures her program to allow her to study books, movies with related topics and attend thematic seminars.

Educational recommendations for the education system, which arise from an important need in the lives of high school pupils, are to conduct more visits to public institutions, open days ("Zilele porților deschise"), career days, which also provides diversity for the wide range of interests of students. These activities, often found in vocational guidance literature, are incompletely carried out and some are not

even implemented. This case study, typical by its nature, thus tries to illustrate a fundamental need of Romanian pupils. An update of the occupational profiles could also be considered for the validity of their use in the context of case studies/psychological assessments/career guidance and counseling. It is essential for the subject to become aware of the type of motivation that underlies her socio-human interests. If ambivalence persists, it is advisable to seek vocational counseling, as this case study provides only a direction in the orientation towards university studies.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Grid used for the anamnesis interview

English version

Anamnesis Interview

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- 1. Name:
- 2. Age:
- 3. Sex:
- 4. Birth date:
- 5. Race:
- 6. Occupation:
- 7. Family type:
- 8. Education:
- 9. Civil status:

FAMILY PRESENTATION

- 1. How many members are in your family?
- 2. What's your mother's name?
- 3. How old is your mother?
- 4. What's your mom doing for a living?
- 5. What level of training does your mother have?
- 6. What's the father's name?
- 7. How old is your dad?
- 8. What's Dad doing?
- 9. What level of training does your father have?
- 10. Details of brothers/sisters (if any)
- 11. Who do you live with? What type of housing is it?
- 12. How was it for you to grow up in this family?
- 13. Are there emotional and/or psychological difficulties in family history?
- 14. Are you closer to one of the parents? If yes, by whom?
- 15. What activities do you do with your family? How often?
- 16. Is there anything important about your family that you haven't communicated so far?
- 17. Were there any traumas of any kind in your family?
- 18. Did you feel wanted in the family?
- 19. What conditions are offered to you in the family?
- 20. Does your family support you in your own choices?
- 21. What do your parents expect from you?
- 22. What role do you think you have in the family?
- 23. What are you missing in your family environment?

MOTIVATIONAL SPHERE

- 1. What hobbies do you have?
- 2. Do you practice them often?
- 3. Have you reached a high level of performance of an activity of interest?
- 4. What do you like to do in your free time?
- 5. What professions attract you? Why?
- 6. For what conviction are you willing to fight the most?
- 7. What role models do you have? What do you appreciate about them?
- 8. How do you see yourself in 5 years?
- 9. What do you think of the society you live in?
- 10. Do you prefer working with someone or alone?

MEDICAL HISTORY

- 1. Are you suffering from a disease?
- 2. Have you had surgery?
- 3. Take medication?
- 4. Have allergies?
- 5. Do you have any dependence?
- 6. Sources of stress?
- ψ Another:

Physical deficiencies	
Craniocebral trauma	
Crisis of loss of consciousness	
Fébrile or afebrile seizures	
Pre-menstrual syndrome	
Disturbance of sleep	
Food disorders	
Problems with hearing	

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- 1. Do you consider yourself a sociable person?
- 2. Do you have people you can go to when you have a problem?
- 3. How do you relate to the adult generation?
- 4. Have you had romantic experiences?
- 5. What difficulties do you have in relationships?
- 6. How do you get along with your classmates?
- 7. What role do you have in your current friendships?
- 8. How important are social relationships to you?
- 9. Who do you spend the most of your free time with?
- 10. What groups are you part of?
- 11. What do you lack from the social environment?

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

- 1. Have you had any behavioral issues so far?
- 2. Did you had problems learning?
- 3. How do you get along with your teachers?
- 4. What school results do you have?
- 5. What attitude do you have towards school?
- 6. What future projects do you have?
- 7. What successes have you had so far?
- 8. How do you manifest yourself during the class hours?
- 9. Do you prefer a particular subject? If you do, why?
- 10. Do you avoid a certain subject? If you do, why?
- 11. What are you missing in the educational environment?



## THE PROBLEM OF PRIMACY IN HISTORICAL EXPLANATION

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**Abstract:** *The significance of methodology goes beyond just being a reflection of how academics conduct their research. In a sense, methodology also dictates the legitimacy and soundness of the research outcomes. With this consideration, this paper examines the explanatory approaches that philosophers employ in their research and the arguments for the validity of such approaches. The two prominent ones in philosophy and other social sciences are methodological individualism vis-à-vis methodological holism. While the proponents of the former place a premium on individuals as an appropriate explanatory guide to research and emphasize that social regularity or phenomenon is grounded in individual motivations and behaviors, the latter places emphasis on society and the many social groupings that exist within it as the most important components of the historical process. Both approaches have made credible contributions to our knowledge. However, regardless of the fact that each approach is potent in furnishing us with particular truth at the micro and macro levels of history, none is capable of the 'whole truth. Therefore, it is suggested to carefully consider the intermediate school as a balance between methodological individualism and methodological holism. Therefore, by integrating the intermediate school as a compromise between methodological individualism and methodological holism, methodological approaches in the social sciences can be enhanced for better outcomes.*

**Keywords:** methodological individualism, historical processes, historiographical methods, speculative philosophy of history, causal explanation, societal influences.

### 1. Introduction

For a long time, philosophers and historians have been subjecting historical processes and historiographical methods to philosophical engagements through philosophical reflections. The 20th century saw a number of distinct schools of thought in the philosophy of history; however, one school of thought that emerged was known as the speculative philosophy of history. This school of thought seeks to gain a profound understanding of actual historical shifts and promotes a political ideology that is amenable to widespread adoption. The term "historical explanation" does not refer to a specific method for elucidating the happenings of the past; rather, it refers to any and all methods that are utilized with reference to objectives, purposes, reasons, and aims, as opposed to narratives that are more broadly applicable (Fisk, 1982).

As is to be expected with any idea, there is a significant amount of disagreement among philosophers over a singular viewpoint for the explanation of historical events (White, 1943). Some people believe that historical explanation is an application of the paradigm of scientific explanation to subject an event to causal law as an instance of the law. Other people, however, believe that historical explanation is rather a rational-explanatory purpose and standard that provides insight into causal sequence (Raji, 2019). In spite of the fact that they are different, these points of view tend to share the consensus that the historical explanation is the explanation of causes. The historian is responsible for compiling all of the pertinent historical causal information that is necessary to adequately explain the events of the past. In contrast to the scientific and social sciences, the explanation of historical events does not adhere to a strict criterion for the construction of ideas that may be generalized to events that will occur in the future or in related fields (Meyer, 2015).

There is no theoretical prescription that educates historiography about how facts signal an event or what that event is. Despite this, it is predicted that explanations of the past would have characteristics such as "non-standardized, non-detachability, and non-aggregativity" (Lemon, 2003). Also, since different narratives are used to explain different events and different causal sequences, they cannot aggregate. This means that there is no accumulation of historical knowledge. Each version of a historical story can only be evaluated on its own merits; subsequent versions cannot be built upon earlier versions (Roth, 2016). Analytical philosophers were the first to tackle the issue of historical knowledge and explanation, but the discussion has now shifted to the philosophy of science and action. The post-Wittgenstein and pragmatic

methods have kept the historicizing of philosophical analysis, as well as the philosophical concerns of history and historiography, alive.

A modern issue of philosophical significance in the field of history is the question of whether the individual or society should be given precedence. This issue is essential to the historical investigation and determination of what caused what. A full understanding of historical events may be obtained through the use of historical explanation and storytelling. The study of historical events and the explanation of those events are both done with a reasonable acceptance of causality as a legitimate instrument. A simple recounting of an event from the past is not sufficient to qualify as history, according to the theory and practice of history. As a result, we anticipate that the historical explanation will provide responses to numerous inquiries on what, why, and how events in the past transpired in the manner in which they did. The question "why" is at the heart of all of the inquiries, which brings up the issue of causality in the context of historical explanation.

Logical thinking, which in turn dictates choices and decisions, is the foundation upon which an individual's activities and relationships within society are built. In historical explanation and narrative, several reasons are attributed to historical events in order to provide a comprehensive knowledge of those events. Because a mono-causal explanation is implausible under all circumstances, multi-causality is not accepted on its own but rather in conjunction with the hierarchy of causal importance that it entails. As a consequence of this, the causes are graded and organized into categories such as remote causes, immediate causes, and trigger causes, according to their relevance to the event. When attempting to order the causes according to the value of their contributions, one runs into the difficulty of deciding which should take precedence: the individual or society.

## **2. The Concept of Primacy**

Although there may be occasional debates over its ultimate significance, the primary purpose of historical explanation is focused on a different aspect. The vast array of historical explanations serves as evidence against logical efforts to simplify complex language into clear-cut meanings. Comprehensive conceptual studies are unable to cover all possible uses of the terms they want to clarify (Novaes, 2020). Examining a few closely related instances of a specific phrase will help clarify the understanding of the connection between two terms. This study's elucidation of numerous philosophical issues comes from a precise idea that, as George Santayana astutely observed, "becomes indescribable as soon as we attempt to strictly describe it." The phrase is facing difficulties in being comprehended within a limited amount of logical space due to unjust restrictions imposed by different methods of analysis. The term 'primacy' encompasses both the word and the concept (Drucker, 2020). The use of the phrase 'it's prior to' creates confusion regarding two different meanings of 'primacy' in historical explanation (Terzi, 2021). The first sense pertains to a direct explanatory relationship that exists between specific events and other events (Cokenour, 2023). The second sense, pertaining to reliance, is only indirectly related to the explanatory relationship between a term and another term. Meeting the criteria for the latter does not necessarily mean that the phrase in issue meets the criteria for the former (Bortolan, 2022). To establish explanatory primacy in the direct sense, a two-part test must demonstrate that the events in question are both chronologically the first among all events that are connected by an explanatory relationship and that the events that are explained by the prior occurrence of the chronologically first event exist solely because of their involvement in the explanation (Agamben, 2024).

## **3. Discourse**

Different schools of thought exist when it comes to the question of what caused historical events (causation) and what part individuals and societies played in the unfolding of those events. Different philosophical perspectives might be taken into consideration while analyzing the theoretical arguments. In this way, there are three separate schools of thought: the individualist, the collectivist, and the intermediate schools. The Collectivist, also known as the Holist, argues that the individual has no reality apart from the society; the Individualist, on the other hand, argues that the individual makes up the society rather than the other way around; and the Intermediate, on the other hand, argues that neither the individual nor the society can exist in isolation from each other (Collingwood, 1999).

## **4. The Collectivist or Holist School**

The collectivist or Holist schools of thought consider social organizations to be more important than individuals. It places an emphasis on society and the many social groupings that exist within it as the most important component of the historical process. It contends that the person cannot live as an island and

that the preexisting conditions in society typically make the action and reaction of the individual unavoidable. Furthermore, it asserts that the individual cannot exist as an island. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, John Donne, and a number of other advocates of "Historical Materialism" are all considered to be members of this organization (Giddens, 1981). This viewpoint is encapsulated in a passage taken from Donne's sermon, which states that "no man is an island whole by itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a portion of the main...". The Marxists believe that historically unfolding social relations and not some "transhistorical human nature" are the primary influences on individual and social life in general (Gottlieb, 1979).

It illustrates in further detail that the individual possesses nothing that they did not get from society. Not only do individuals not acquire awareness, experiences, or even language on their own, but these things are acquired from society. These are considered to be significant aspects of human subjectivity because they are present within a social system and are subsequently communicated to the people who make up that social system (Roth, 2016). Carr views the individual in isolation from society as being both "speechless and mindless." He contends that society works to transform the human being from a purely biological entity into a social unit from the moment of birth. This process continues until the individual reaches adulthood. Through the various forms of socialization, society has communicated to the individual the numerous concepts, norms, beliefs, and values that he proclaims (Carr, 2018). The environment and the social groups in which a person participates shape his character as well as his way of thinking. When it comes to the question of whether or not an individual possesses free will, collectivist say that the range of possibilities that are open to an individual is both offered and constrained by the society in which they live. The breadth and depth of man's understanding would be precisely related to the extent and intensity of his experience of the environment in which he resides (Olorunfemi, 2011).

This school of thought contends that an individual's behaviors and emotions are the product of their exposure to and participation in society, rather than the outcome of genetic heredity. Even when a person asserts that they have free will, they still have to choose from the options that society has provided and use the judgment that society has developed. The Collectivists, for instance, view Napoleon Bonaparte's ascent to the positions of emperor of France and conquistador of Europe as a direct result of the French Revolution. He is seen more as a product of the conditions that existed at the time than as the mastermind behind his own good fortune. This school of thought supports the concept of environmental determinism and emphasizes the significance of geography. The individual's choice of profession, diet, and clothing, as well as their religious views and practices, are all influenced by their surroundings. In order to reach this conclusion, it is sufficient to assert that society is higher up on the hierarchy of causes in the context of historical explanation than the individual. This is due to the fact that society provides the enabling environment and the prerogative for the action of the individual in the historical process.

### **5. The Individualist School**

The individualist school of thought places a premium on the individual as the most significant and decisive force in the unfolding of historical events. It consists of the proponents of methodological individualism, which refers to the explanatory approach that attributes primacy to individual actions and reactions in social events (Picavet, 2001). It contends that an individual's role as a causal agent in a social event is both significant and obligatory for providing an account of historical events. It contends that the person is the most significant factor in any particular occurrence and that this aspect, rather than societal forces, ought to be granted precedence in any analysis of causality. It also argues on the side of reason and the ethics of history. The school makes a compelling case that history, as a field of study, investigates the actions that humans have carried out in the past and questions why an emphasis should be placed on society in historical explanation. It then becomes absurd to assign primacy to anything other than the individual in historical explanation.

Isaiah Berlin, Max Weber, Thomas Carlyle, Karl Popper, John Watkins, and John Mill are just a few of the renowned individuals that belong to this group. They claim that even if the person is part of society, society cannot survive without the individual since the individual is necessary to society. According to Hossain and Ali (2014), society should serve individuals rather than the other way around. The idea that "the individual cannot survive without society, while society cannot exist without the individual" places the emphasis on the individual's ability to survive rather than the individual's ability to exist without society, despite the fact that the existence of society is tied to the individual. It begs the issue of how a society that can only exist because of the contributions of the individuals inside can be the force that

decides what an individual does. Therefore, the behaviors of the individual as well as society as a whole are entirely dependent on the individual.

An individual is viewed more as a force of nature, such as a river that sweeps everything away in its current or a storm that determines the course of other things, than as a member of a community that is arbitrary and capricious. Individuals are responsible, not chance or natural processes, for the occurrence of historical events. Therefore, the French Revolution, which the Collectivist views as being responsible for the rise to power of Napoleon Bonaparte, was not the product of a meteorological or climatic condition but rather of the actions and reactions of individuals. Additionally, Napoleon was not the only person alive during the period of the revolution. Therefore, his rise to prominence was based on his attributes, choices, and decisions.

Berlin contends that a significant amount of determinism is brought into the historical process whenever historical events are explained in terms of social forces (Berlin, 2013). This school of thought maintains that determinism, also known as fatalism, which has no place in historical explanation, has taken place whenever the individual is not given prominence in the explanation of historical events. When social causes take precedence over individual causes, a person's acts can neither be commended nor criticized in any way for their significance. This would indicate that an individual participating in the historical process would have acted in the same way that any other person would have. The fact that individuals in any given society do not adhere to a particular pattern is an inherent weakness in the system. Even an individual does not adhere to a certain pattern; as a result, the choices and decisions that he makes are erratic. Mill's claim that "men are not, when joined together, changed into another type of material" (Mill, 2002) strengthens the argument. A good illustration of this can be found in the process of historical explanation, in which the historian selects pertinent facts that are suitable for the explanation. Additionally, even when given the same facts, the historian can produce a work that is unique from those of other historians thanks to his free will and individuality. This demonstrates that, despite being composed of individuals, society does not deprive any of its members of their identity. Therefore, if society were the true determinant of the activities of the individual, then all individuals in any given society should respond and react in the same way to the problems that are present in that society.

## **6. The Intermediate School**

The intermediate school serves as a compromise between the two opposing schools of thought. It has fewer proponents, but those proponents argue for both schools yet reject the conclusions of both schools. This causes them to occasionally be misclassified as members of either of the other two schools. Hegel, for example, considers the individual to be a rational and passionate agent who is not an isolated individual. In spite of the fact that individuals are dependent on their societies, it is impossible to place too much importance on the capacity of their free will (Muthukrishna et al.2021). The fact that Herodotus wrote the "Histories," which were based on the causes and developments of the Peloponnesian war, serves as an illustration of this viewpoint. It is undeniably true that, without the war, he could not have written the book. The war, a societal factor, provided Herodotus with a purpose. Though he was not the only individual in society, he wrote the book that set him apart from the others. As long as individuals continue to break barriers and boundaries set by society, society cannot be accorded primacy in historical explanation. Though the significance of societal causes cannot be overlooked in historical explanation (Goldstein, 1977).

Georg Hegel suggests that providential design instances are limited and focus on fulfilling the desires of the individual (Hegel 2001: 27). In addition, Edward Carr's reasoning considers the roles of both individuals and society. He recognizes the inherent interdependence of both entities in the unfolding of historical events. Carr contends that "by bringing individuals together and constituting them into a society, one does not necessarily rob them of their individuality." However, Carr believes that it is a fallacy to suppose that individuals existed in any sense other than biological or had any kind of substance prior to being brought together (Olorunfemi, 2011).

The Intermediate contends that there is no circumstance in which human behaviors are wholly predetermined, except in the cases of hypnosis, manipulation, or coercion. Neither are they ever exclusively based on free will. This does not discredit any of the other positions since neither the collectivist nor the individualist denies the existence of both individual and societal causes. (Anttila, 1993). Their sole point of contention is the hierarchy of these factors. Hence, the perspectives of the two schools are not entirely contradictory to those of the Intermediate. In fact, it makes a case for both schools of thought and accepts the premises presented by both sides of the debate, but it does not draw any conclusions since doing so is unnecessary. Carr regards the problem of assigning primacy between the

individual and society as a cyclical narrative that may be likened to the proverbial controversy of the primacy between "the hen and the egg." He believes that the answer lies somewhere in the middle (Carr, 2016).

#### *Different Approaches to Causality in History*

The concept being discussed is known as an individual, and the form of causality associated with it is intricately linked to a structural relationship and closely tied to theoretical or idealised abstraction. This form of causality plays a crucial role in distinguishing the objectivity of individuals in the real world from that of hypothetical atoms, whose collisions could potentially lead to real-world actions (Scholz, 2020). According to Clark and Winegard (2020), this concept is not new but rather has been a fundamental aspect of ancient philosophy. The substantial significance of contemporary scientific practice provides fresh perspectives on the cognitive shift that led humans to focus their thinking on the connections between events and the characteristics of other entities (Azoulay & Lynn, 2020; Bryan et al., 2021). The contrast between the logical framework of objective explanation and theoretical explanation is apparent, as emphasised by Doyle and Conboy (2020). The typical logic demonstrated here is our inclination to abstract from historical context without relying on concepts such as the deprivation principle or other auxiliary assumptions, and to affirm the self-identity or equivalence of individuals (Marginson, 2022). This approach establishes a connection between the concept of causation and the complex interconnections between the tangible and intangible aspects of reality. It views history as an investigation into the specific factors that account for the disparities between the actual world and the hypothetical world of atoms. This procedure is crucial for differentiating items that need to be explained from those that are solecismic (Smith, 2021; Evans, 2021).

White (2020) argues that the most basic example of the logical structure of explanation in history is quite ordinary: an event is explained by stating that it is the way it is because it is the way it is. This strategy, which is redundant and repetitive, does not succeed in proving the logical requirement of differentiating distinct events as being dissimilar. It does not contribute to history's ability to establish similarities with other fields of study, nor does it provide insight into the specific categories that make up historical issues. In order to comprehend the unique way in which history sets itself apart, it is necessary to examine another means of conveying causality (Bhat et al., 2023).

The connection between the idea of causality and modern systems is apparent when we consider causality not just in terms of rules that regulate changes in nature or society, but also in terms of its role in supporting factual explanations (Kim, 2023). Therefore, causality is attributed to an entity not only when it functions as the outcome of another causal entity, but also when it arises from the intrinsic features that govern its behaviour or, in simpler terms, determine its inherent nature (Bareinboim et al., 2022).

#### *Linear Conceptions of Causality*

Weber's social theory utilises the unilinear model as a rhetorical tool to clarify and distinguish important processes in historical sociological study (Waye et al., 2023). Jiang (2023) employs this model to highlight the diverse significance of economic and demographic elements in building human societies. This model guides societies towards certain institutional structures and generates unique patterns of class connections. Weber's utilisation of the unilinear conception of history diverges from the principle of nomothetic derivation. He does not employ it to create a model for identifying the co-responsible constitutive factors of historically observed phenomena, nor does he utilise it as a direct explanatory framework (Guhin et al., 2021; Amason, 2020).

Historiography has thoroughly examined the distinguishing characteristics of historical explanation compared to those commonly seen in the natural sciences. An essential concern revolves around the nature of linear causality, which is a defining feature of historical explanation, and how it relates to the linear causality observed in natural sciences or deductive mental structures. The subject of primacy in historical explanation is inherently connected to the concept of linear causality (Oleksowicz, 2021). Multiple passive structural approaches to linear causation represent different viewpoints on the issue of priority in historical explanation. Weber recognises several crucial notions, including the investigation of the typology and meaningful progression of historical events, the typology of interpretative frameworks necessary for ranking explanations, and the categorization of historical sciences into extensive and detailed typologies.

*Complex Systems and Nonlinear Dynamics*

Emergent characteristics are a fundamental and essential feature of complex systems. The concept that a complex adaptive system exhibits emergent qualities that are greater than the sum of its separate components is often emphasised. Emergence is a concept that is difficult to define and has thus been carefully studied (Cohen et al., 2022). Discussions on emergence frequently resonate with Samuel Butler's concept of an organic entity, characterised as a transition from "a combination of functional elements" to "cognitive entities," and ultimately to "entities that exhibit altruistic behaviour" (Benbya et al., 2020). In biological situations, emergent features often arise from the self-organizing or autocatalytic dynamics of aggregates. The amplification processes that occur naturally are a consequence of feedback mechanisms inside networks of interacting elements, where interactions give rise to intricate patterns that result in multiplicative, rather than additive, effects on the allocation of limited resources (An et al., 2021). These feedback processes are widely acknowledged as significant factors that contribute to the nonlinearity that is prevalent in such systems. The study of these specific points where emergent behaviour occurs in complex adaptive systems has been thorough and longstanding, predating their explicit recognition as separate examples of complex phenomena (Wilson, 2021; Polese et al., 2021).

*The Role of Agency and Structure in Historical Primacy*

Historically, the topic connects to inquiries on the division of time periods and the patterns of progression (Brzechczyn, 2020). Does the advent of state properties offer a vital understanding of European state formation, or did the European provinces adjust to the many forms that arose? In other important historical contexts, there is ongoing discussion on whether the emergence of capitalism, the introduction of new agricultural methods, or the advancement of industrial calculus were indicative of previous societal shifts (Epple, 2020; Rodriguez, 2022). Did these events occur due to a combination of new opportunities where human behaviour or governmental measures played a major role? Did the establishment of a liberal economic order or a nation's rise to great power status result from a mix of long-term societal changes and organised preferences that limited options to an almost predetermined state? Were the distinguishing qualities of these conjunctures the result of a scenario where possibilities remained open enough, notwithstanding social tendencies, to allow for a wider range of paths for change? (Stone et al., 2021).

The historical dispute on the supremacy of structural forces or substantial changes versus the primacy of conjunctural elements primarily concerns the explanation of social change. The topic of social order has been a fundamental aspect of sociological debates for a considerable period of time (Avelino, 2021). Once a structure has formed, it becomes important to determine if it serves solely as a prerequisite or if it also functions as a powerful influence that goes beyond the limits set by the constitution. On the other hand, the environmental background, or the "human habitat," has a significant role in shaping activities, according to Etzioni-Halevy (2024). The societal repercussions of this argument are multifaceted and inspire a wide range of disagreements in sociology. The potential for human autonomy and its consequences are as complex as the disputes surrounding the existence and development of social structures (Young, 2020).

**7. Case Studies in Historical Primacy**

In the latter section of his extensive book on *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon (2015) suggests the approach he believes should be used to answer the problem of historical interpretation (Womersley, 2022). 'The decline of Rome was a direct result of its excessive magnificence'; for instance, 'the arrival of barbarians was caused by the decline of Rome' (White, 2023). Gibbon's theme is limited to 'the establishing of his design and the measurement of his monuments', and these general truths are sufficient for it. The situation is not straightforward for modern researchers, who are still intrigued by a topic that has been extensively unraveled but has not yet been consolidated and organized in the records of tradition (Tepperman & Rickabaugh, 2023). Even though "material" explanations of the "fall" are more than a century old, they still have value. Their value lies not so much in providing positive proof for a specific situation (such as land and wealth) within the overall decline but rather in highlighting the unintended consequences of different systems. (Schaff, 2024)

The fundamental social structures and pressures that led to the steady rate of technological progress and economic growth in the West over a thousand years can be attributed to various factors (Goldstone, 2002). These include the transition from a society characterized by knighthood and mass exploitation or slavery to one that values political freedom and scientific advancement. It is important to note that the developed world does not condone suicide as a means to encourage technological and

scientific progress. Most accounts that have not examined important sources do not have a comprehensive understanding, let alone detailed knowledge, of the Industrial Revolution (Wray et al., 2011). This historical event marked a significant moment when technological progress became self-generating, possibly for the first time. It is important to acknowledge that modern Japan provides compelling evidence that the rates of technical advancement and catch-up are distinct concepts (Oldenzel, 2006).

Consider the ongoing dispute over the correlation between technical advancement and the level of human involvement in such endeavors. If the supply is bigger, indicating a larger number of individuals involved in entrepreneurial activities, the question that follows is: "What is the reason behind this increased supply? In other words, why are there more individuals aspiring to innovate, write novels, or establish businesses?" "Which organism was the precursor, the chicken or the egg?" However, the crucial inquiry revolves around determining the factors that establish the highest achievable rate, identifying the upper and lower boundaries of the system, and examining whether there exist societal and political frameworks that promote a specific rate of growth over another. Does the government, for instance, have a role in promoting progress in the United States? Has the government hindered the rate of technological advancement in pre-World War II Britain, which is now unfortunately compounded by the educational system's refusal to teach the exploration of new ideas in the field of education? It is worth noting that many Nobel laureates were outsiders in their respective fields when they made their groundbreaking discoveries, as they were not formally trained in those specific areas (Taylor, 2002).

## 8. Conclusion

The never-ending debate on the primacy of the individual versus society consists of two camps: the individualist, who believes in the preponderant role of the individual in historical processes and tends to see heroes and villains as crucial factors in historical development, and the collectivist, who sees individuals in historical processes as the by-products of society. Both camps are arguing that the individual or society is more important than the other in historical development. Although it is impossible to ignore the underlying validity of both sides of the argument, this does not make one position more compelling than the other. While both the individualist and collectivist schools have valid points, they represent opposite ends of a continuum, leading to the introduction of the intermediate school. The intermediate school is the school of enlightenment because it brings together the truth that may be obtained from both arguments but avoids coming to any conclusions. Therefore, the intermediate stands for a middle ground between the two, but it does not take a stance. Despite the fact that this school does not belittle the actions of the individual or his contributions to the historical process, it maintains the view that it is impossible for the individual to live apart from society. It is impossible to have history without the individual. Despite individual endeavors and achievements, autonomy relies on the societal context in which one exists. Therefore, a balanced consideration of the roles of the individual and society in historical processes is essential, transcending the theoretical and philosophical debates on primacy. In historical explanation, hierarchy should be granted to causal facts based on the significance and relevance they have to the historical event, rather than on whether or not they are individual or societal causes of the historical event.

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## THE HARMFULNESS OF DRUG USE AND SUPPORT MEASURES

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**Abstract:** *Drug use is considered a problem in today's society. Most people come to use drugs out of a desire to try something new, others out of curiosity, but the most common causes of drug use are family problems and the desire to belong to a particular group. The integrated programme of assistance for substance users is expressed through a varied system of therapeutic, social and psychological programmes, which materialize in an individualized plan of assistance for their reintegration. The methods used to carry out the research were a sociological survey based on an interview guide and an opinion survey which were administered to drug users. The aim of this research is to identify the perception of drug users regarding the causes that led them to consume illicit substances and the importance of family support, as well as the way in which specialists get involved and act for the social reintegration of drug users. Drug use is a growing phenomenon, which without the intervention and support of specialists will have negative repercussions both on the population, but especially on the people who use drugs.*

**Keywords:** drugs, user, addiction, social reintegration, social worker.

### 1. Introduction

Prohibited substances have been, and still are, the focus of particular attention both of people in general and of scientists, who have tried in various ways to understand the attraction that drugs exert on humans, the causes that determine their use, and not least, to identify effective recovery approaches. The majority of young people today who end up taking drugs believe that these represent a way to escape everyday life problems, that they represent the path to happiness, but all this is an illusion, because drug use has more negative than positive aspects.

Romania has confronted drug use since 1990, due to the fact that the country became a regular route for the transportation of banned substances, being even named the “Balkan Route”. With the passage of time, and as a consequence of the manifestation of numerous causes, such as the lack of information about the dangers and effects of prohibited substances, the lack of the necessary budget to implement measures to reduce the phenomenon of drug use is more than evident. Due to the factors listed above, Romania has become an open road for drug use and drug trafficking (Gheorghe, 2018: 5).

According to the authors Cojocaru and Cernomoreț (2022: 10) drugs are those substances that can be of animal, vegetable or mineral origin, which are used in the preparation of certain medicines or narcotics. From other points of view such as pharmacological, drugs are substances used in the medical industry and the excessive consumption of which leads to both physical and psychological dependence, causing various serious disorders in the brain, cognition and behaviour.

### 2. Theories on drug use and dependence

There are many descriptive theories and models of substance misuse in specialty literature. The latest theories, developed in the contemporary period, verify that only certain people become users or addicts of illegal substances. Thus, depending on the aspect dealt with, the models and theories that explain the use of illicit substances are categorized into two broad classes (Rădulescu & Dâmboeanu, 2006: 182):

- person-centred - these refer to the intrinsic characteristics of the person;
- socially centred - these refer to issues that have an external influence on the person, emphasizing the environment.

Biological theories focus on two categories of views namely (Paraschiv, et al., 2014: 38-40):

- The people's tendency to come into contact with drugs is determined by the influence of genetic factors, as they emphasize that an association of genes is found, thus leading to a propensity to abuse drugs. An example of this is the tolerance the body shows to either low or high doses.

- The people's tendency to continue with consumption once contact with the banned substances has been made has an influence on the person's metabolism, thus drug abuse is described as the result of a metabolism imbalance. In this case, people addicted to heroin are considered to suffer from certain metabolic diseases or metabolic imbalances.

In the case of psychological theories, the focus is on certain tendencies, on the individual as a person, on certain mechanisms that help to "reinforce" the behaviour of those who overindulge in substance use, on the individuality of the user, and on the tendency to adopt appropriate behaviours.

Reinforcement theory refers to people who tend to place very high value on rewards. Lefter (2013: 262-263) presents the existence of two types of reinforcers: positive ones that occur when, a person notices a pleasant sensation as a result of consuming a banned substance, motivating the person to consume once again and negative ones that refer to the appropriation of a consumer behaviour of a banned substance, they are born from people's need to feel relaxation, avoiding pain, thus causing the person to resort to consumption.

The theory of reaction to low self-esteem/self-rejection attitudes emerges as a way of satisfying the attitude of self-rejection or rejection, caused by parental neglect, exclusion from the peer group, the occurrence of school failure, physical or social condemnation (Cojocaru & Cernomoret, 2022: 51).

Sociological theories aim to classify an individual behaviour in certain situations, social relations or as an integrated piece within social systems (Dascălu 2019: 85). Social learning theory refers to all categories of deviant behaviour, behaviour learned as a result of the process of interaction with different individuals or certain social groups, structures that the person in question consider valuable for them and that cause noncompliance with social normativity. Non-respect of social normativity refers both to the various behaviours that choose to comply with the law in force and to behaviours that violate the law being socially learned as a result of inappropriate mechanisms (Gheorghe, 2018: 62-63).

### **3. Causes, effects and prevention of drug use**

There are no novelties as far as drug use is concerned, because the phenomenon among young people is becoming more and more widespread, in their view drugs are usually the only solution to get rid of some problems. Some of the external causes that determine the emergence of drug use in the category of young people are: the influence of the circle of friends, low education, non-existence of necessary information about drugs (Stanciu & Cotruş, 2014: 24).

Another cause of drug use is depression. The low chances of adaptation and integration, the impossibility for young people to get in contact with socio-professional structures, thus arising frequent failures, various disappointments coming from those close to them, certain inappropriate behaviours that may be determined by certain anxieties (Dascălu, 2019: 56).

Among the undesirable effects of drug use the following have been underlined (Ursan, 2010: 515): addiction; toxic effects on the nervous system, lungs, heart, and other internal organs; behavioural and social problems, the most common of which are: various accidents, school absenteeism, delinquency and even suicide.

Measures to reduce the demand for prohibited substances must take into account the myriad of social and medical problems caused by substance use and abuse, as well as by people who use several substances at the same time (poly-drug use), accompanied by psychoactive substances considered "legal".

The prevention of substance misuse, can be divided into different strategies, ranging from those that focus primarily on society as a whole, to strategies that focus on individual people prone to risk (Paraschiv et al., 2014: 122).

Abraham (2007: 11-12) prioritized prevention programs as follows:

- a) *Individual-focused programs* - the most widely used prevention method. These aim to develop knowledge, behaviours and attitudes towards tobacco, alcohol and substance use.
- b) *Peer group programs* - these programs are mostly targeted at young people, members of groups, with the group usually having a major influence on the individual.
- c) *Family-focused programs* - these programs are based on the family's active role in preventing substance use. They provide parents with useful information about substance use and its effects, enhance active listening, develop boundary-setting activities and recognize substance use.
- d) *Media campaigns* to prevent substance use do not have a direct effect on the formation of behaviour, but these campaigns have an important role in providing information, raising awareness and encouraging interpersonal communication.

### **5. Socio-professional rehabilitation and reintegration of drug abusers**

The integrated programme of assistance for substance abusers is expressed through a system of different therapeutic, social and psychological programmes, subsidiary, simultaneous or sequential, which materialize in an individualized plan of assistance and comprises all the therapeutic, social and psychological interventions and measures adjusted to the needs of each individual abuser. Assistance and treatment must take into account a set of services, starting from services of minimum complexity, oriented towards cases in which the problems caused by substance use are minimal, to cases of maximum complexity (Lefter, 2013: 147).

According to the American Psychiatric Association, substance use disorder care has the following goals: cessation or reduction of substance use, decreasing the frequency and rigidity of relapse, and enhancing the psychological and emotional skills essential to recovery and maintenance of personal, social, and occupational functions of substance abusers (Blume, 2011: 270).

Interventions that combine treatment with social and health protection actions can be implemented at any stage of substance misuse and are recognized by experts as the best way to achieve rehabilitation for substance misusers. The various social reintegration measures are aimed at providing solid housing, finding gainful employment, capacity-building and improving social skills. The results of these measures take into account the efficiency of cooperation between social and health care institutions (Tomita, 2013: 165).

In our country, according to the legislation in force, the strategies against the illegal use of prohibited substances are (Tomita, 2013: 176):

- *rehabilitative treatment* - involves abrupt discontinuation of the banned substance, the use of non-substitutive symptomatic modalities, substitution treatment with methadone or other products and psychotherapy;

- *medical monitoring* - is decided when rehabilitation treatment is not required and involves: various assessment and continuing medical care services, psychotherapy and psychological counselling services, psychosocial or after-care rehabilitation services and decisions aimed at reducing the consequences of substance use.

Social reintegration of substance misusers is part of a set of systems aimed at understanding the biological, social and psychological aspects of intervention in relation to the individual, the environment or the community. This must be based on the social and personal means already present or likely to be present. Reintegration and rehabilitation constitute an action to normalize the personal and social circumstances of substance users, with an emphasis on the following areas (Blume, 2011: 271):

- social and personal area - it refers to obtaining criteria for living together, developing individual freedom and social value, increasing responsibility, recovering social skills, strengthening positive behaviours towards non-consumers, and encouraging the use of community means;

- professional training area - the development of professional knowledge, practices and skills, and the development of job search practices;

- employment area - getting a rewarded job;

- cultural and educational area - the acquisition of a satisfactory educational, relational and cultural level to understand and participate in social life.

- the area of stabilization of the civil and criminal legal situation;

- community intervention area - synchronization and cooperation with social and public entities.

The reintegration of substance misusers into society is a time-consuming process that requires multiple interventions by specialized individuals (Cosma, 2022: 72).

### **6. Quantitative research**

The investigative approach consisted in carrying out an opinion survey among drug users. The aim of the opinion survey was to find out the opinion of drug abusers on the causes that led them to use drugs, the support they received from their family and the importance of professional intervention. A total of 10 questions were asked and the sample size was 55 people, aged between 18 and 55.

*The formulated objectives are:*

- to identify the causes and problems that lead consumers to abuse banned substances;

- to identify how to prevent and combat the phenomenon that leads users to abuse banned substances and the importance of specialist intervention;

- to uncover the importance of income support from the family for the social reintegration of the consumer.

*Research hypotheses:*

- if users sought help from specialists, they would identify the causes of the problems that lead them to use banned substances.
- the more informed users are about the harmfulness of drug use, the more likely they are to seek specialized help for intervention.
- if people who use drugs had family support, it would make it easier for them to reintegrate into society.

Following the application of the opinion survey, one can observe the respondents awareness of the causes and effects of drug use, their opinion about the importance of specialist intervention, as well as the support given by family members.

Thus, based on the first hypothesis, 62.5% of the people surveyed believe that the desire to join a group of friends is the main reason that leads them to use prohibited substances. In terms of the use effects, 85% of respondents consider euphoria to be the most common effect of drugs. As for the importance of intervention from specialists, 65% of those surveyed see intervention as important and consider it useful.

With regard to the second hypothesis, 80% of the interviewees perceive drug use as an addictive substance, one of the most known substances being heroin (85%) according to the answers given by the subjects. Also, 87.5% of the subjects are of the opinion that an important support comes from the social worker and that his/her intervention can lead to the social reintegration of the users.

The last hypothesis of the research emphasizes the support received from the family, thus, 77.5% of the total number of respondents stated that they receive the necessary support from their family, 75% of them considering that the relationship they have with family members is “very close” and “close”, helping their rehabilitation.

## **7. Qualitative research**

In order support the results obtained from the opinion survey, an interview guide composed of 9 support questions was also applied, 20 drug users were interviewed out of the 55 previously interviewed, who were already registered in the records of the Centre for Prevention, Evaluation and Antidrug Counselling in Caras-Severin (CPECA Caras-Severin).

The aim of the sociological survey based on an interview guide was to discover the causes that led the beneficiaries to use illicit substances, what was the degree of the family support received and which were the methods used by the specialist during the intervention.

The questions from which the qualitative research started are: *“How does the drug user evaluate the situation in which s/he finds oneself?”*; *“What does family support mean for the drug user, if this exists?”*; and *“How does the drug user appreciate the importance of the social worker’s intervention, from CPECA Caras-Severin?”*

The objectives of qualitative research are:

- discover the causes of clients' substance misuse and describe the main problems encountered during an intervention
  - description of the main methods used by the specialist during an intervention
  - the importance of income support from the family for the social reintegration of the consumer.
- Analysis and interpretation of the data obtained after applying the interview guide to drug users:

### *Thematic Unit 1 - Main causes of drug use and the effects experienced*

Buzducea (2005) presents a category of indicators associated with drug use such as: a state of irritability, the appearance of instability at both psychological and behavioural level, eye irritation, paranoid ideas, aggressiveness that cannot be explained and is not appropriate, depression, apathy, lapses and difficulty in speaking, decreased school efficiency, decreased motivation, nervousness, the appearance of interpersonal relationship problems.

The causes of drug use can be multiple. Thus, some of the external causes that determine the emergence of drug use among young people are: the influence of the circle of friends, a low education, the inexistence of the necessary information about drugs. (Stanciu and Cotrus, 2014)

The interviewees stated that the main reasons for drug use were:

- problems in the family such as the parents' divorce: *“I can't get over their separation, everything has changed and drugs have become my only comfort, my only chance to feel happiness again.”*
- going to work abroad: *“I was always a rebellious child who never listened to what I was told, because for most of my life my parents were abroad”.*
- as well as the desire to be part of a certain group of friends, the desire to be part of a group pushed them towards drug use: *“in elementary school I faced exclusion from groups, I was always lonely... Once in*

*high school, I met a group of students, but in order to be part of that group, I was asked to use drugs. I knew they were dangerous, but the desire to be part of a group was much stronger, so I accepted".*

In terms of the effects felt after drug use, the interviewees stated that euphoria, calmness and relaxation were among the most common drug-induced states: *"the first effect that I felt was euphoria, a state of happiness for no reason, but this state diminished quite quickly".*

*Thematic unit 2 - Family support and the importance of specialist intervention.*

The social worker is the specialist whose role is to promote non-discriminatory, non-accepting and compassionate behaviour at the social level, and at the individual level, to protect the rights and interests of people who are confronted with substance abuse. In addition to these aspects, the social worker will participate in and develop the interdepartmental networks responsible for the implementation and effectiveness of informational, multilateral, preventive, therapeutic and anti-drug programs.

The social worker's intervention in the case of drug addiction in comparison to his/her intervention in other cases is incomparable, because users of prohibited substances come from diverse social backgrounds, regardless of religion, gender, age or race. The rehabilitation of the person addicted to banned substances, is carried out with the support and help coming from the social worker following an assessment, following which the specialist carries out a rehabilitation plan and realizes cooperative links with various specialists. (Cosma, 2022)

The second thematic unit dealt with issues related to family support and the importance of professional intervention.

The interviewees stated that family support was very important, but from what some of the respondents said, there were families who knew absolutely nothing about their substance use (*my family did not know about it, I did not want to tell them because they would try to alienate me from my friends*), while others chose to be honest with their family and tell them what they were going through (*I chose to be honest with them because they were the only people who were always there for me and I felt they deserved to know the truth*). In terms of the importance of the specialists intervention, a good proportion of the interviewees claimed that their intervention is very important and they consider it necessary (*the help from the specialists was a relief because I was no longer alone in this struggle with addiction.*), in contrast to four people who believe that they have the situation under control but continue to come to the meetings with the social worker of the CPECA Caraş-Severin (*I believe that I have the situation under control and that I manage on my own, that is why the intervention of the specialists is not so important for me*).

The tools that the specialists use in working with the beneficiary are the initial assessment, the introduction into an integrated program for drug users by providing specialized social, medical and psychological counselling, and case management sessions in which the beneficiary's progress during the program is noted and the next steps in the program are determined. Thus, the file of a client benefiting from the services of CPECA contains the following: the beneficiary's registration form (European), a questionnaire containing questions related to the client's passions and desires, an assessment report, an individualized treatment plan, medical, psychological and social assistance agreement, the beneficiary's objectives, review of the objectives proposed in the ITP (individualized treatment plan), minutes, individual monitoring report, final interview with the beneficiaries, a satisfaction questionnaire.

*Thematic Unit 3 - Changes brought about by drug use and the desire for change and social reintegration*

The changes produced by drug use are among the most serious, because they produce negative effects on health, but especially on the central nervous system, causing behavioural problems such as aggression, paranoia, hallucinations, impulsivity, loss of control, and ultimately addiction. Substance use can even cause death, nowadays one in four deaths is caused by substance abuse. (Tomita, 2013)

The last thematic unit refers to the changes brought about by drug use, their desire to change. Thus, the interviewees stated that they very much want to change and go back to their former life, they want to lead a normal life without drug use. In terms of changes brought about by substances, most of them said that drugs affected their health, causing excessive weight loss, stomach and heart problems (*from a healthy person I ended up with weight problems because I lost a lot of weight and some heart problems but not serious*).

A good proportion of the interviewees want to give up drug use (*Yes, I very much want to get well and be the same as before, but it is a very hard process. I want to get well in order to be able to fulfil my desires, only now I realized that drugs only destroy a person, the intervention is working, I am on the right track*), they want a normal life.

The intervention of specialists is very important because the person facing drug addiction needs all the support and specialized help offered.

## 8. General conclusions of the paper

Drug use has become one of the most dangerous phenomena affecting young people in general. Nowadays 1 in 10 young people use drugs for various reasons, some young people use out of curiosity, others out of a desire to be part of a group or because of family problems. While all banned substances can cause complications, psychoactive substances have the greatest potential to cause abuse. These substances cause various damage to the brain structure, resulting in control of mood, behaviour and consciousness.

Efforts to identify the social or behavioural risk factors that lead to substance use have begun to be explored, and it is clear that there is no characteristic trigger system or incident that predicts a person's substance abuse.

The results of the opinion survey and the interview guide indicate that the causes that lead a person to use drugs can be social, educational, individual and, last but not least, family.

Specialist help is very important. The social worker is the specialist whose role it is to promote non-discriminatory, non-accepting and compassionate behaviour at the social level, and at the individual level, to protect the rights and interests of people who are confronted with substance abuse. In addition to these aspects, the social worker participates in and develops interdepartmental networks responsible for implementation and effectiveness of informational, multilateral, preventive, therapeutic and substance abuse programs.

The dynamics and diversity of the situations in which the beneficiaries may find themselves, require a broad training and a multi-field approach of the specialist in order to be able to realize an effective intervention. The CPECA Caras-Severin specialist is open to offer support and help to people who are confronted with drug use, considering that it is very important for a drug user to receive specialized help to get rid of addiction and for social reintegration.

The rehabilitation of the person addicted to substances is carried out with the support and help of the social worker following an assessment, after which the specialist will carry out a rehabilitation plan and establish cooperation with various specialists.

The role of the social worker is not only limited to intervention, in particular the rehabilitation of people who have used drugs, but also drug prevention. Together with other drug specialists, social workers have a duty to inform the public about the dangers of drug use.

Drug use can affect all ages and all social categories, it has a big social impact on the community as well as a strong medical impact.

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# INFLUENCE OF FAMILY BACKGROUND AND SCHOOL FACTORS ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRE-MARITAL SEX IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *This study examines family background and school factors on attitudes towards pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Lagos, Nigeria. A sample of two hundred (200) students (100 male students and 100 female students) were randomly selected from all four (4) senior secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State using stratified random sampling. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. The data were analyzed using a frequency table, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and chi-square. The findings of the study revealed that certain family background factors influence secondary students to participate in pre-marital sex, consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in engaging in premarital sex, and social factors that also contribute to getting involved in pre-marital sex. Also, there is a significant influence of parental education on pre-marital sex among secondary school students, there is no significant influence of socio-economic status on pre-marital sex and there is no significant influence of students-teacher relationship on pre-marital sex. It is recommended that parents should be aware of several family factors that influence their adolescents' involvement in pre-marital sex in order to avoid challenges in the students' abilities to concentrate on their studies.*

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Peer pressure, Family Background, School Factors, Attitude, Pre-Marital Sex,

## 1. Introduction

Sexual activities among adolescent students have been reported to be on the increase worldwide. Several studies in sub-Saharan Africa have also documented high and increasing premarital sexual activities among secondary school students (World Health Organization, 2004). Mehmet (2006) concluded that among the background variables considered, the mother's education, age, ethnicity, and employment status were among the most important predictors of attitudes towards young women's premarital activities. Allen (2003) had earlier reported that several polls have indicated peer pressure as a significant sexual activity predictor, while on the contrary, sexually inducing drugs and alcohol have been identified as factors that may encourage unintended sexual activities (UNICEF, 2001). In southwestern Nigeria, sex before now was regarded as sacred and limited only to adult males and females within the marriage union but today, many adolescents engage in various delinquent behaviours such as drinking alcohol, smoking drug use and drug abuse leading to premarital sexual activities (Alo, 2008). It has also been noticed that most behavioural responses of young people habitually revolve around sexual activities (Inyang, 2007).

Sexual activities among adolescents recently have been reported to have increased worldwide. Until the 1950s, "premarital sex" referred to sexual relations between two people prior to marrying each other. During that period, a number of adolescents in south east Nigeria do not see the consequences of premarital sex as serious problems because of misconceptions about sexuality. They initiate early sexual debut and continued to seek abortion with unqualified physicians where unsafe methods are used (Ojong& Samson-Akpan, 2011). It was the norm in south west Nigeria, for men and women to marry by the age of 21 or 22. The term, 'premarital sex' was used instead of fornication, which had negative connotations, and was closely related to the concept and approval of virginity, which is sexual abstinence until marriage. Owing to these problems generated from premarital sex in Nigeria, several measures have been adopted to avert these by health care providers, government and non-governmental organizations.

In spite of these, there is still clear evidence that sensitization does not achieve the desired impact. This informed the need to carry out this study. According to (Alo 2008), alternative terms for premarital sex have been suggested, including non-marital sex (which overlaps with adultery), youthful sex, adolescent sex, and young-adult sex and it has always been disapproved by most people in Nigeria. These terms also suffer from a degree of ambiguity, as the definition of *having sex* differs from one person



to another. A child learns through the mass media and from their peers mostly unguided. Children learn the important topic of sex education from informal settings due to religious and cultural orientation towards matters of sexuality. The schools system and the home appeared to have failed to give the proper sex socialization to the children citing moral and religious reasons, thus leaving the children to discover their sexuality on their own.

In modern culture, According to Asuzu (2005), social value of sexual abstinence before marriage has declined of testing a girl's fertility before marriage. Historically, a significant portion of people had engaged in premarital sex and it is common among secondary school in Nigeria, although the number of young people willing to admit to this has not always been very high.

According to a 2001 UNICEF survey, in 10 out of 12 developed nations with available data, more than two-thirds of young people have had sexual intercourse while still in their teens. In Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the proportion is over 80%. In Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, approximately 25% of 15-year-olds and 50% of 17-year-old (Manzini, 2001).

In this study, we examine changes and differentials in premarital sexual activity in Nigerian cities. Premarital sexual behaviour is important in this setting for at least two reasons. Nigerian societies have traditionally placed a strong emphasis on the importance of premarital sexual abstinence for women, as discussed below. Thus, the incidence of sexual activity before marriage indicates the lack of adherence to traditional practices by young people and in family control of young woman's behaviour in urban areas. Underlying this concern is the observation that girls and women who become pregnant outside of a socially recognized marriage are much more likely to seek or attempt induced abortion and, if they give birth, may be more likely to abandon their children or to be unable to provide basic care.

Several studies in Sub-Saharan Africa have also documented high and increasing premarital sexual activities among adolescents (World Health Organization, 2001). However, viewing youth as a specific group with their own needs is a relatively recent practice, especially in developing countries (Judith, 1999). Cultural taboos hinder young people in many developing countries to discuss sexual matters explicitly with their parents. It is considered taboo in Nepalese culture and prohibited in Hindu religion. Despite this fact, an increasing number of sexual activities are being reported by Nepalese students. In the context of a global decline in the age of sexual maturation and delaying age of marriage, the opportunity for young people to engage in pre-marital sexual relations becomes more apparent. The proportion of never married young men and women aged 15-19 is steadily increasing and this leads to more unmarried adolescents, particularly young men becoming sexually active outside of marriage. Public opinion polls have consistently shown that pre-marital sex is wrong and dangerous to health resulting in abortions, teenage mothers and sexually transmitted infections (Finer, 2007). Pre-marital sex is sex before marriage and it is generally found among the youths. It takes the form of casual sex, sexual activity without proper consent of the other person, rape, defilement, and incest. The causes behind it have been established including curiosity among the youths, proof of manhood, lust, pornography, and its adverse effects, insanity, and sexual promiscuity as well as moral decadence among the youths (Choe, 2004).

Researchers have observed that there is a prevalence of premarital sexual activities among secondary school students in contemporary society, which leads to a high incidence of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Most adults and school authorities do not condone students' indulgence in premarital sex. To the extent that certain communities carry out disciplinary actions against youths who indulge in this behaviour. The federal health management board engages in a series of campaigns to create public awareness of the danger and circulation of sexually transmitted diseases. However, in this study, the influence of premarital sexual practice among students is fast emerging as a serial social and public health problem. Why do secondary school students get involved actively in premarital sex? Are students aware of the consequences of premarital sex?

The teachers blame the government for poor salaries hence they are poorly motivated, parents also accuse the government of not equipping the schools with learning materials, the government blames parents for not doing enough at home and the students are blamed for lack of discipline and dedication to their studies.

Premarital sex among adolescents and young people seems to have occupied much of their attention. In the four decades, that have passed since the world witnessed the onset of the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic, it has grown into a pandemic that has devastated families, communities, and nations worldwide. Globally, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV and AIDS) epidemic remains a major public health, social, economic, and development challenge. These problems can be aggravated among low-income families, the lack of awareness about sexual and

reproductive health issues, and certain harmful traditional practices. Current statistics on HIV/AIDS indicate that one-half of all new HIV infections worldwide occur among young people ages 15 to 24. Every minute, five young people worldwide become infected with HIV/AIDS due to unsafe and unprotected sexual activities, hence the need for the study to examine the influence of family background and school factors on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students.

## **2. Research Questions**

1. What are the family background factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards premarital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State?
2. What are the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State?
3. What are the school factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State?

## **3. Hypotheses**

The following research hypothesis will guide the study;

1. There is no significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.
2. There is no significant influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.
3. There is no significant influence of student-teacher relationships on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Population and Sampling**

The researchers used a descriptive research survey design in building up this project work the choice of this research design was considered appropriate because of its advantages of identifying attributes of a large population from a group of individuals. The design was suitable for the study as the study sought to determine the influence of family background and school factors on attitudes towards premarital sex among senior secondary school students in Lagos State. A sample of two hundred (200) students (100 Male Student and 100 Female Student) were randomly selected from all the four (4) senior secondary schools in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State using stratified random sampling was adopted in achieving this. In each school the research selected fifty (50) respondents; twenty-five (25) males and twenty-five (25) females, making the total of two hundred (200) respondents used for the study in the four selected senior secondary schools in the study area.

### **4.2. Instrumentation**

The instrument for the study was a self-constructed questionnaire titled "Influence of Family Background and School Factors on Attitude towards Pre-Marital Sex Among Senior Secondary School Students in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A consist of items which was used to elicit information on the demographic data of the participants. Section B was used to elicit the respondents' opinions on the influence of family background and school factors on attitudes towards pre-marital sex among senior secondary school students in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. The questionnaire has adopted the Likert four-point rating scale format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) respectively. The questionnaire was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha method. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to a group of twenty (20) secondary schools students in Surulere Local Government Area, Lagos State who are not part of the sample to be used for the study. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to calculate for reliability coefficients, and the following was the result: for factor that bring about premarital sex (0.695); for consequences of premarital sex (0.721); for students' attitude towards premarital sex (0.847), and for the influence of premarital sex (0.715). However, the foregoing coefficients show the instrument is reliable. A total of 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the selected schools. The questionnaire was collected back on the spot after being filled by the respondents to avoid misplacement.

### 4.3. Data Analysis

The data gotten from the instrument were analyzed using a frequency table, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and Chi-square. Frequency tables and percentages will be used to present the demographic information of the respondents while mean and standard deviation will specifically be used for answering the research questions and Chi-square will be used for analyzing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. This is because Chi-square intends to examine the differences between categorical variables in the same population used in the study.

### 5. Results

**Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	100	50.0
Female	100	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 show that 50% of the respondents are female students and also 50% of the respondents are male. This implies that the female and male students participated equally in the study.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Class**

Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSS1	68	34.0
SSS2	90	45.0
SSS3	42	21.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 show 68 (34%) of the respondents are SSS1 student years; 90 (45%) of the respondents are SSS2 students and 42(21%) of them are SSS3 students. The respondents' age distribution shows that respondents in SS2 dominated the study.

### 6. Responses to the Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** What are the family background factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State?

To answer this research question, secondary school students respond to the items on the questionnaire that address the family background factors that influence secondary students on pre-marital sex and 2.5 is used as the cut-off because of Likert scale format used. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the family background factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex.**

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Sustained pressure from peers and friends for sexual practices	200	2.54	1.099
Inadequate knowledge on the consequences of unprotected premarital sex	200	2.58	1.089
Desire to satisfy emotional, psychological and sexual need/urge	200	2.64	1.152
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.59</b>	

From table 3, the family background factors such as the type of neighbourhood they reside in, how many rooms the family occupies, if there are separate rooms for the adolescents, and whether there's a family vehicle, influence secondary students on pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. This assertion is justified by the mean value of all items in the table above less than 2.5. The weighted mean value of 2.59 also indicated that students contributed to the family background factors that influence secondary students on pre-marital sex. Based on the average means of each of the above research questions that is greater than the average level of the items which is 2.5, it can be concluded the respondents agreed to the family background factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

**Research Question 2:** What are the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State?

In order to answer this research question, secondary students respond to the items on the questionnaire that address the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices and 2.5 is used as the cut-off because of the Likert scale format used. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
It can result in unwanted pregnancy and giving birth to unwanted baby	200	2.71	1.099
It may lead to unintended drop out and termination of schooling and career pursuits	200	2.53	1.089
It results in emotional and psychological trauma and breakdown	200	2.76	1.152
It may lead to sexually transmitted diseases and health complications	200	2.11	1.226
It can result in unplanned abortion which has health implications	200	2.82	1.021
It brings about shame to self and family name	200	2.85	1.086
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.63</b>	

It can be seen from table 4 that agreed to the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. This assertion is justified with the mean value of all items in the table above less than 2.5. The weighted mean value of 2.59 also indicated that students contributed to the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices. Based on the average means of each of the each on the above research questions that is greater than the average level of the items which is 2.5, it can be concluded the respondents agreed to the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

**Research Question 3:** What are the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State?

To answer this research question, secondary school students respond to the items on the questionnaire that address the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex and 2.5 is used as the cut-off because of the Likert scale format used. The output of the analysis reveals thus:

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards engaging in pre-marital sex.**

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Desire to get financial and other materials help from sex-partner(s).	200	2.67	1.55
Curiosity and social information at the disposal of young people.	200	2.97	1.12
Poor parental and guardians' upbringing.	200	2.35	1.53
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.66</b>	

It can be seen from table 5 above that agreed to the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. This assertion is justified by the mean value of all items in the table above less than 2.5. The weighted mean value of 2.59 also indicated that students contributed to the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex. Based on the average means on the above research questions that is greater than the average level of the items which is 2.5, it can be concluded that respondents agreed to the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

## 7. Testing of Hypotheses

### Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State.

**Table 6: Analysis of chi-square on influences of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> -Cal	X <sup>2</sup> -Tab	DF	Decision
Parental Education	200	21.98	1.85	137.44	0.000	15	Rejected
Premarital Sex	200	23.67	1.44				

**p<0.05**

In testing the hypothesis, from table 6, the X<sup>2</sup>-Tab is 0.000 is less than 0.05 with a chi-square of 137.44, 15 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, hence we reject the null hypothesis that there

is no significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This, in effect, is an indication that there is a significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State.

**Table 7: Analysis of chi-square on influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area in Lagos State**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> -Cal	X <sup>2</sup> -Tab	DF	Decision
Socio-economic Status	200	22.82	1.23	173.49	0.21	16	Accepted
Premarital Sex	200	23.75	1.49				

**p<0.05**

From table 7, the X<sup>2</sup>-Tab0.21 is greater than 0.05 with chi-square of 173.49, 16 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, hence we accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This, in effect, is an indication that there is no significant influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State.

### Hypothesis Three

There is no significant influence of students-teacher relationship on premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State.

**Table 8: Analysis of chi-square on significant influence of students-teacher relationship on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> -Cal	X <sup>2</sup> -Tab	DF	Decision
Student-teacher relationship	200	28.15	1.71	127.98	0.073	16	Accepted
Premarital Sex	200	21.53	1.35				

**p<0.05**

In table 8, the X<sup>2</sup>-Tab0.073 is greater than 0.05 with a chi-square of 127.98, 16 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, hence we accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant influence of student-teacher relationships on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This, in effect, is an indication that there is no significant influence of student-teacher relationships on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State.

## 8. Discussion

Research question one considers the various family background factors that may influence secondary students' attitudes to engage in pre-marital sex in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. Through the analysis, respondents agreed to the family background factors that most likely influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. This finding affirms the findings that children coming from different family backgrounds are affected differently by such family conditions, Eke (1999) noted that with some families, the background way varies from time to time for the same individuals. Formal education, therefore, remains the vehicle for human development which must start from the family. There are different categories of families. The major categories of families according to Anderson and Taylor (2000) include traditional families – where the father is the major breadwinner, and the stay-at-home mother raises the children; divorced families–families that have been reconstituted following the break-up of marriage; single-parent families–likely headed by women; stepfamilies–with new siblings and new parents as a result of re-marriage.

Research question two. What are the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. Through the analysis, respondents agreed to the consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex

practices within Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. This finding affirms the findings of Asuzu (2005), social value of sexual abstinence before marriage has declined and led to the recent cases where young woman's fertility came under scrutiny as to be tested a condition for marriage. Historically, a significant portion of people had engaged in premarital sex and it is common among secondary school students in Nigeria, although the number of those willing to admit to this has not been realistic. This has been attributed to numerous causes, including the increasing median age at marriage and the widespread availability of efficient contraceptives, pornography, music, and social media.

Research question three states: what are the social factors that influence secondary students on pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. Through the analysis, respondents agreed to the social factors that influence secondary students' attitudes towards pre-marital sex in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. This finding affirms that sexual activities among adolescents have been reported to be increasing worldwide. Until the 1950s, "premarital sex" referred to sexual relations between two people prior to marrying each other. During that period, a number of adolescents in South East Nigeria do not see the consequences of premarital sex as serious problems because of misconceptions about sexuality. They initiate early sexual debut and continued to seek abortion with unqualified physicians where unsafe methods are used (Ojong & Samson-Akpan, 2011). It was the norm in southwest Nigeria, for men and women to marry by the age of 21 or 22, and there were no considerations that one who had sex would not marry. The term was used instead of engaging in casual sexual activities, which had negative connotations, and was closely related to the concept and approval of virginity, which is sexual abstinence until marriage. Owing to these problems generated from premarital sex in Nigeria, several measures have been adopted to avert these by health care providers, government and non-governmental organizations. In spite of these, and the statistics that indicates increase in STIs and HIV/AIDS among young people age 15 – 24, there is still clear evidence that sensitization has not achieved the desired impact.

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. The hypothesis was rejected in the study as the result shows that there is a significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This finding disagrees with the findings made by Yoloye (1989) who conducted a study to see if the family background variables might be useful in explaining the students' academic achievement. Some aspects of family background variables examined in the study include family size and parents' educational status, the type of neighbourhood the family resides in, and whether adolescents have separate rooms. His findings were that the polygamous family sizes which were naturally large reduce the chances of children going to school in the first instance. In addition, children from such backgrounds who are in schools have reduced chances of achieving their goals. Thirdly, parents from such families are mostly illiterate and incapable of providing adequate motivation for their children to strive to do well in school as compared with the literate nuclear families. The economic implication of large family size is better explained in Okuniyi (2004) who observed from his study that as families get larger, parents cannot give their children the adequate amount of individual attention. They could not afford to provide them with so many of the things which will help them to make the best possible use of their years at school such as educational aids, and quiet comfortable rooms in which to do homework undisturbed by the television, outings to places of interest, leisure time pursuits, and opportunities for traveling.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant influence of socio-economic status on premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This hypothesis was accepted as the result shows that there is no significant influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This finding is in line with the findings of Okwulanya (2003) which opines that motivation from educated parents strengthens the academic aspiration and language development of their children to perform better in their academic work. According to the scholar, some children may come from homes where academic achievements are valued, where there are books around them and they see their parents reading regularly. They encourage them to read many books and to take advantage of the public or state library. The author went further to emphasize that some children may come from homes, where no importance is attached to reading or education.

Hypothesis three states that there is no significant influence of the student-teacher relationships on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This hypothesis was accepted as the result shows that there is no significant influence of

student-teacher relationships on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This finding is in line with the findings of Braekan & Cardinal, (2008) who opined that educating young people about reproductive health and teaching them skills in negotiating, conflict resolution, critical thinking, decision making and communication improves their ability to make informed and responsible choices. Schools are the ideal places where adequate and accurate information can be provided along with the formal education. Moreover, pressure from peer groups in school play a great role in information dissemination and help students internalize the facts that lead to behavioural change. This needs the integrated effort of students, schoolteachers, the family, and other relevant bodies. Despite a few local studies conducted in different parts of the country, there is no sufficient study that has tried to identify the prevalence of premarital sex and associated factors in the study area. Hence there is a need to carry out more studies to show the correlations and more pieces of evidence.

### 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research work, it was recommended that; Parents should be aware of several family background factors that influence their adolescents' involvement in premarital sex and take steps to reduce the effect of such negative influence. Similarly programs and seminars can be organized regularly to train and educated them on life topics such as how to deal with peer pressure, how to be assertive and respect other people's boundaries, adolescent health and reproductive health rights issues, personal hygiene, and explaining some of the consequences of engaging in Premarital sex. Also students should be aware of the influence of various family backgrounds of their peers and school factors that lead them to engage in premarital sex, with consequences for disruption of their academics leading to poor performance. In addition school management should provide appropriate facilities in the school while focusing on ways to productively engage the students so their time is used up efficiently, Furthermore, school counsellors collaborating with non-governmental organizations should create a vast awareness of the consequences of premarital sex on the health of the students in secondary schools by providing them with the necessary tips on how to resist peer pressures to engage in premarital sex.

### 10. Conclusion

This study intends to establish the influence of family background and school factors on attitudes towards pre-marital sex among secondary school students in Alimosho local government area of Lagos state. Furthermore, the findings show respondents agreed that certain family background factors influence secondary students' attitudes towards engaging in pre-marital sex, consequences of secondary school students' indulgence in premarital sex practices, and social factors that influence secondary students' involvement in pre-marital sex. Also, there is a significant influence of parental education on attitudes towards premarital sex among secondary school students. There is no significant influence of socio-economic status on attitudes towards premarital sex and there is no significant influence of student-teacher relationships on attitudes towards premarital sex. Therefore, there must be measures that can control the rate of premarital sex among secondary school students by establishing the necessary policies that can help students, parents, teachers, and other members of the public to control factors that can lead to premarital sex among students.

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS PREDICTOR OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** *The American Psychological Association (APA) defines Community engagement as the efforts made by individuals and groups to address public issues. This includes activities such as volunteering, joining political parties, collaborating with others, and working with institutions to find community solutions. In the field of developmental psychology, Community engagement is seen as an essential aspect of positive youth development. There has been a growing interest in studying the factors that promote and enhance civic participation, emphasizing its role in contributing to civil society. The current study involved an assessment of psychological wellbeing of university students who volunteer in community activities. The study sample comprising 508 college students between 18-24 years of age were assessed. Psychometric assessments included measuring Community engagement as Civic engagement in 2 factors namely civic attitudes and civic behaviours. Psychological well-being is measured as 6 factors namely civic autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance and Overall PWB. Civic engagement Scale (Doolittle, 2013) and psychological well-being Scale- Short form (Ryff, 2007) was used to study the variables. The hypothesis that Community engagement will significantly predict high levels of psychological well-being was supported. The results revealed a significant high level of psychological well-being of its 6 factors among students who engaged in community activities. Civic Attitudes ( $\beta = 0.35, p = .001$ ) and Civic Behaviours ( $\beta = 0.30, p = .008$ ) are significant predictors of Overall Psychological Wellbeing. The conclusion of the study is that Community engagement has the potential to impact changes on psychological well-being and its dimension and it emerges as a major predictor.*

**Keywords:** Community Engagement, Psychological well-being, College students, Civic engagement Scale, Psychological well-being Scale

### 1. Introduction

Integrating community service and public affairs into the undergraduate experience has become increasingly prevalent in colleges and universities in Tamilnadu. This shift aims to enhance not only academic learning but also the holistic development of students. This study identifies the impact of community engagement on the psychological well-being of college students in Tamil Nadu, with a specific focus on understanding how participation in community activities can enhance their overall psychosocial health.

Community participation, a key concept in Community Psychology, involves bringing individuals together for collective problem-solving and decision-making. This participation is associated with various positive outcomes, such as enhanced well-being and developmental gains. Civic engagement, defined as the process of believing that one can and should make a difference in enhancing the community, not only benefits communities but also promotes individual well-being by reducing isolation and fostering connections.

Globally, community engagement among students includes activities like joining clubs, volunteering, and participating in youth groups. Research indicates that students involved in these activities are less likely to engage in negative behaviors and more likely to experience positive outcomes, such as higher self-esteem, better relationships, and improved academic achievement. These benefits can extend well into adulthood, emphasizing the long-term significance of community engagement.

The primary purpose of community engagement in higher education is to leverage academic knowledge and resources to benefit public and private sectors, enhancing scholarship, research, curriculum, and teaching. It prepares engaged citizens, strengthens democratic values, addresses critical societal issues, and contributes to the public good. The National Education Policy (NEP) emphasizes community work, and theories suggest that volunteering enhances well-being. Universities often mandate community work for degree credits. The outcomes of community engagement include positive impacts on academic learning, problem-solving skills, interpersonal development, reduced stereotypes, and

improved social responsibility. These experiences foster lifelong engagement in community service and create connections for career opportunities.

Community engagement, encompassing various forms of participation such as volunteering, civic involvement, and local activism, has been increasingly recognized as a potential contributor to psychological wellbeing. This relationship is of particular interest given the complex developmental stage of students, who navigate significant academic, social, and personal transitions.

Psychological wellbeing, defined by factors such as emotional stability, life satisfaction, and personal growth, plays a crucial role in academic success and overall life satisfaction. Recent studies suggest that engagement in community activities can significantly enhance psychological wellbeing by providing a sense of purpose, social support, and fulfillment (Keyes, 2007; Schieman, Bierman & Gundy, 2006). Community involvement has been linked to lower levels of stress and higher levels of life satisfaction among various populations (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Research specifically focusing on students has highlighted the unique benefits of community engagement during this formative period. Students who participate in community service or civic activities often report increased psychological resilience and a stronger sense of belonging (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Strage, 2004). These benefits are thought to arise from the enhanced social networks and personal growth opportunities that community participation activities provide.

Moreover, community engagement may serve as a protective factor against the mental health challenges often faced by students. The transition to higher education is frequently accompanied by stress and anxiety, and involvement in community activities can offer a buffer against these challenges by fostering supportive relationships and providing meaningful outlets for stress relief (Pancer, Pratt & Hunsberger, 2000; Plante et al., 2006).

Despite the growing body of evidence supporting the positive impact of community engagement on psychological wellbeing, there remains a need for more focused research within student populations.

This research paper aims to explore the role of community engagement as a predictor of psychological wellbeing among university students. The findings will contribute to the development of effective support programs and strategies that promote both academic success and personal development in higher education settings.

## 2. Literature review

Michal Mužík, Jan Šerek & Dana Seryjová Juhová (2024) Existing literature generally frames civic engagement positively, highlighting its benefits for young people's well-being. However, there is a lack of summarized evidence on how various forms of youth civic engagement affect different dimensions of well-being. In a scoping review by Mužík, Šerek, and Juhová, 35 studies were analyzed, revealing that social engagement, such as volunteering, positively impacts psychological, social well-being, and mental health. Conversely, the effects of protest actions, conventional, and online engagement were more varied. Emotional well-being showed mixed results, often predicting civic engagement rather than being influenced by it. This review underscores the need to differentiate between forms of civic engagement and dimensions of well-being in future research.

Ligaya Taliana's (2023) research explores the significant impact of community involvement on psychological well-being, highlighting the critical role of social support in mental health. The study emphasizes how strong community connections can protect against stress and foster a sense of belonging. It also examines effective community engagement strategies in reducing mental health stigma, promoting open dialogue, and fostering awareness. By addressing barriers to seeking help, these initiatives enable communities to create inclusive, safe spaces. The abstract underscores the need for continuous effort and innovative approaches, demonstrating how community engagement can significantly enhance mental well-being across diverse cultural contexts.

McGarity-Palmer, R., Saw, A., & Keys, C. B (2023) his systematic review assesses the involvement of Asian refugee communities in psychosocial interventions. Of the 43 studies reviewed, 36 involved community members in various phases, such as intervention delivery and data collection. However, only 25 studies allowed community influence on the interventions, with just one including community input from conception to conclusion. The review highlights the need for increased community engagement in both the early and final stages of intervention research. Recommendations include providing detailed accounts of community involvement, maintaining strong research partnerships, and addressing the challenges faced during community-engaged research. This approach aims to enhance the cultural relevance and efficacy of psychosocial interventions for refugees.

McGarity-Palmer, Rebecca Saw, Anne Keys, Chris B. (2023) This qualitative study explores the impact of the EnCoRE intervention on Veterans with schizophrenia and negative symptoms. The research identified three key themes: acquiring new skills increased comfort in social interactions and activity planning; this comfort boosted confidence in trying new experiences; and group support provided a crucial environment for practising and refining skills. Findings suggest that learning and applying these skills in a supportive group setting helped participants overcome low motivation and engagement. The study highlights the importance of integrating confidence-building and avoidance strategies into recovery programs to enhance social and community participation for individuals with schizophrenia.

Hyojin Im & et al (2023) This study evaluates a community-based mental health and psychosocial support (CB-MHPSS) intervention for refugees resettled in the U.S., focusing on its implementation and adaptability. Using a realist evaluation approach, researchers analyzed data from 11 refugee agencies, including fidelity reports, process reflections, and surveys from staff and facilitators. The findings highlight the importance of adapting interventions to socio-ecological contexts, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Balancing fidelity with curriculum refinement proved essential for meeting refugee needs. The study underscores the value of community partnerships and local knowledge in successfully implementing psychosocial interventions, ultimately enhancing refugee mental health and well-being.

Prof Wietse A Tol, Phuung Thao D Le, et al (2023) This effort developed a consensus-based research agenda for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in humanitarian settings for 2021–30. Engaging stakeholders through qualitative studies in Indonesia, Lebanon, and Uganda (n=101), consultations by humanitarian agencies (n=259), and an expert panel (n=227) led to the generation and prioritization of 20 research questions. The agenda highlights a shift from efficacy research to systems-oriented implementation research, focusing on workforce strengthening, monitoring, evaluation, multisectoral integration, and sustainability. This shift underscores the need for enhanced partnerships among researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and affected communities, alongside more equitable funding for MHPSS research in low- and middle-income countries.

Baxter L, Burton A & Fancourt D (2022) Community and cultural engagement can significantly aid recovery, symptom management, and social connection for individuals with mental health conditions. Despite these benefits, many faces substantial barriers to participation. This study by Baxter, Burton, and Fancourt aimed to explore these barriers and enablers through qualitative interviews with 23 individuals with mild-to-moderate mental health conditions. Thematic analysis revealed themes related to Capability (physical skills, psychological traits, health limitations), Opportunity (affordability, accessibility, group structure, support), and Motivation (creative identity, recovery, enjoyment, connection, and planning). Addressing these barriers through peer support, structured environments, and funding can enhance participation and support mental health recovery.

Alexandra N. Kelter Shirely, Kaitlyn & et al (2022) This collaborated study emphasized the importance of building trust and maintaining respectful relationships between researchers and community members. Engaging personally with participants provided invaluable insights into the mental health grievances faced by these communities. The Mental Health Research Advisory Committee (MHRAC) contributed by developing a local mental health resource website, supporting ongoing research, and distributing focus group (FG) summaries. Addressing the stigma around mental illness was crucial, highlighting the need for collaborative partnerships to disseminate findings respectfully. This project aims to inform policy and reform, improving mental health care access in rural areas.

Alexandra N. Kelter, Shirely, Kaitlyn & et al. (2011) Community engagement is key to promoting health and reducing inequalities, especially in disadvantaged populations. However, the impact on individuals' lives remains under review. This article summarizes a rapid review of 22 studies, guided by NICE's public health methods manual, exploring the subjective experiences of community engagement. The review found that most participants reported benefits such as improved physical and psychological health, increased self-confidence, self-esteem, personal empowerment, and better social relationships. However, there were also unintended negative consequences, including exhaustion, stress, and financial strain. The physical demands were particularly challenging for individuals with disabilities, and some experienced consultation fatigue and disappointment. This complexity highlights the need for a balanced understanding of community engagement's impacts.

Constance Flanagan & Matthew Joseph (2011) Community-engaged learning (CEL) is emerging as a potent strategy for enhancing student mental health and well-being in higher education institutions (HEIs). By integrating educational activities with community partnerships, CEL fosters positive outcomes such as improved decision-making, problem-solving, and social relationships. Research consistently highlights CEL's benefits, including increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and emotional health (Attree et

al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Flanagan & Bundick, 2011). Participants often report reductions in depression, loneliness, and anxiety, as well as lower substance abuse rates (Checkoway, 2007; Conway et al., 2009). Furthermore, CEL contributes to enhanced socially responsive knowledge and moral development (Swaner, 2007). These findings suggest that HEIs should prioritize CEL as a strategic approach to support student mental health and improve retention.

Fancourt, Daisy Bhui, Kamaldeep & et al. (2020) The relationship between social, cultural, and community engagement (SCCE) and mental health has been increasingly studied across various disciplines. SCCE activities, such as engagement in the arts, sports, volunteering, and community groups, have shown positive effects on preventing and managing mental illness. However, the relevance and urgency of current research questions to policy and practice remain unclear. Funded by the UK Research and Innovation cross-disciplinary mental health network programme, this project aimed to co-produce a new research agenda on SCCE and mental health. Involving over 1000 stakeholders, the study identified four core themes: mode, process, impact, and infrastructure of engagement. This agenda is crucial, especially in light of the mental health service demands anticipated post-COVID-19. Civic engagement not only benefits our communities but also has positive benefits for us as individuals, reducing isolation and creating connections with people and institutions beyond ourselves. When students are engaged in making the world better, in addition to advancing student learning, there is the added benefit of improving individual well-being.

Numerous studies, inclusive of diverse participants of all ages, show strong links between community engagement and psychological well-being. Adolescents involved in school or community-based civic activities have elevated psychological well-being, increased academic engagement, and more involvement in activities than peers who were not involved in these activities. Elderly individuals who more frequently volunteer and involvement in civic society lead to higher ratings of life. Thus, present study on community engagement and psychological well-being among college students is necessary to develop responsible future citizens with better individual traits.

### **3. Need for the study and Research Gap**

Community engagement among college students in India is increasingly recognized for its dual benefits of personal growth and societal improvement. Engaging in community activities helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, enhance interpersonal skills, and gain practical experience that complements their academic learning. In India, where socio-economic disparities are prevalent, community engagement plays a crucial role in bridging gaps and promoting inclusive growth. The University Grants Commission promotes community engagement through its "Guidelines on Social Responsibility and Community Engagement of Higher Educational Institutions in India," encouraging institutions to integrate community service into their academic programs. These guidelines advocate for experiential learning, community-based research, and the inclusion of social responsibility in the curriculum. The National Higher Education Framework stresses the importance of holistic and multidisciplinary education, including community engagement as a core component. It aims to foster a sense of citizenship and responsibility among students, encouraging them to actively participate in community development initiatives. The National Education Policy 2020 highlights the importance of integrating experiential learning and community service into the curriculum. It encourages the implementation of service-learning programs and community-based projects as part of higher education, aiming to build a sense of civic duty among students. NEP 2020 also supports the creation of platforms and networks to facilitate community engagement and development activities. The need for this study arises from the necessity to empirically validate the benefits of community engagement on psychological well-being. While community engagement is recognized as a vital component of a healthy society, its impact on an individual's psychological well-being warrants further exploration. Empirical studies that quantitatively assess this relationship are sparse, and this study seeks to fill that gap by providing concrete data on how community involvement influences mental health. By examining the community engagement levels of students, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how different facets of well-being are influenced by community participation. The findings can inform the design and implementation of community programs and policies in educational institutions, integrating community engagement into therapeutic practices and mental health strategies. It also aims to provide valuable insights into supporting the mental health and development of youth. Overall, this study aims to explore how community engagement influences the psychological well-being of students.

#### **4. Objectives**

1. To evaluate the levels of community engagement among college students.
2. To measure the psychological well-being and its dimensions namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.
3. To examine the relationship between community engagement and psychological well-being and its dimensions.
4. To determine if community engagement can significantly predict psychological well-being and its dimensions.

#### **5. Hypotheses**

1. There will be a significant positive relationship between community engagement and psychological well-being of college students.
2. Students with higher levels of community engagement will have higher levels of psychological well-being.
3. Community engagement will be a significant predictor of psychological well-being, indicating that greater involvement in community activities is associated with higher levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

#### **6. Methodology**

##### *6.1. Tools used:*

6.1.1. Civic Engagement Scale (CES), a 14-item scale developed by Doolittle, 2013 aimed at assessing civic attitudes (8 items; e.g., “I feel responsible for my community”) and behaviours (6 items; e.g., “I help members of my community”) was used to assess Community engagement. Items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree) for the Civic Attitudes subscale and from 1 (never) to 5 (always) for the Civic behaviours subscale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of civic attitudes, behaviours and overall civic engagement. The internal consistency is good with Cronbach’s  $\alpha = 0.81$ .

6.1.2 Ryff’s Scales of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) scale (18-item version) developed by Ryff, 2007 was used to assess psychological wellbeing. The scale measures psychological well-being and is constructed to measure its six dimensions, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The modified and shortened (18-item length) version of the PWB scale consists of 6 3-item scales. Response formats include responses namely: strongly disagree (1), disagree somewhat (2), disagree slightly (3), agree slightly (4), agree somewhat (5), and strongly agree (6). The final scoring procedures include negative scoring in the case of reversed questions. Each dimension scale scored from 3 to 18 (with overall scores from 18 to 108), while the higher the number of points, the higher the level of the PWB (overall and in terms of its dimensions). The internal consistency of the PWB scale has Cronbach's alpha  $\alpha = 0.762$ .

##### *6.2. Sampling technique and data collection methods:*

Data collection involved a combination of online surveys and in-person questionnaires. The online survey was administered using a secure platform Google Forms, and it included sections on demographic details, parental education, occupational status, and tools used. The survey was distributed through university email lists, departmental mailing lists, and student social media groups, with participants given two weeks to complete it, during which they received two reminder emails. In addition to the online survey, in-person questionnaires were distributed during class breaks, in common areas of the university, and at student organization meetings to ensure maximum participation. These questionnaires mirrored the online version and were administered with the assistance of trained field enumerators to address any questions and ensure proper completion. The data collection period for the in-person questionnaires lasted seven weeks to accommodate varying students from different colleges. The sampling technique employed was stratified random sampling, dividing the student population into strata based on academic year, namely first-year, second-year, and third years of Arts and Science colleges only, with random sampling conducted within each stratum. The goal was to obtain a final sample of approximately 500 students, allowing for sufficient statistical power while accounting for potential non-responses and incomplete data. Students were recruited via university communication channels, including email announcements and social media, as well as through in-person surveys. Inclusion criteria required

participants to be currently enrolled students aged 18 to 24, with exclusions applied to those who declined participation or provided incomplete data.

### 6.3. Participants:

The sample consisted of 522 college students from various academic disciplines affiliated to universities located in Chennai, India were surveyed. After removing 5 cases with missing data on gender and 9 incomplete questionnaires, the final sample included 508 participants (42% males and 58% females), aged between 18 and 24 years ( $M = 20.50$ ,  $SD = 1.98$ ). Participants were enrolled in different years of their university program: 19% were in their first year, 32% were in their second year, 49% were in their third year. Regarding parental education, 35% of fathers had completed high school (12 years of education), 45% had a bachelor's degree (16 years of education), and 20% had a master's degree or higher (18 years of education or more). For mothers, 30% had a high school diploma (12 years of education), 50% had a bachelor's degree (16 years of education), and 20% had a master's degree or higher (18 years of education or more). In terms of occupational status, 78% of fathers were employed, 13% were unemployed, and 9% were retired; 48% of mothers were employed, 37% were unemployed, and 15% were retired.

## 7. Results and Discussion

**Table 1:**  
**Descriptive analysis of the scores on dimensions of Community engagement namely civic behaviours and civic attitudes among college students**

Community Engagement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Civic Attitudes	508	34.93	9.49
Civic Behaviours		18.72	8.35

From Table 1, It is observed that students' civic attitudes and behaviours indicate moderate to high levels of community engagement. Civic Attitudes, with a mean of 34.93 and a standard deviation of 9.49, reflect the degree to which individuals hold positive views towards civic engagement and responsibilities. The relatively high mean suggests that on average, participants have favourable attitudes towards civic duties. The standard deviation indicates a moderate level of variability in these attitudes, suggesting differences in the degree to which individuals value civic engagement. Civic Behaviours, with a mean of 18.72 and a standard deviation of 8.35, represent the extent to which individuals actively participate in civic activities such as volunteering, voting, and community service. The lower mean compared to Civic Attitudes suggests that while individuals may hold positive views towards civic engagement, this does not always translate into action. The standard deviation indicates considerable variability in participation levels, reflecting differences in opportunities, motivations, and barriers to civic engagement.

**Table 2:**  
**Descriptive analysis of the scores on the dimensions of Psychological wellbeing and Overall PWB**

Psychological Wellbeing (PWB)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Autonomy	508	15.94	2.35
Environmental mastery		13.23	2.42
Personal growth		16.01	2.24
Positive relations with others		14.24	2.67
Purpose in life		14.65	2.58
Self-acceptance		14.97	2.98
<b>Overall Psychological wellbeing</b>		<b>89.04</b>	<b>16.39</b>

From Table 2, it can be observed that scores of dimensions and overall psychological wellbeing indicate high levels of psychological wellbeing among students. Autonomy has a mean of 15.94 indicates that on average, students feel moderately independent and capable of resisting social pressures to think and act in certain ways. Literature indicates that autonomy is crucial for well-being as it fosters self-determination and personal growth (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Individuals with higher autonomy tend to have better mental health outcomes and are more likely to engage in behaviors that align with their values and interests.

Environmental Mastery, with a mean of 13.23 reflects how well individuals manage their life situations and environment. The lower mean suggests that students may experience challenges in controlling their external world. Environmental mastery is linked to higher life satisfaction and lower stress levels, as individuals who feel in control of their environment can better navigate life's challenges (Ryff, 1989). Personal Growth shows a mean of 16.01, indicating that students generally perceive themselves as continually developing and realizing their potential. Personal growth is a critical component of psychological well-being, associated with higher life satisfaction and resilience (Ryff & Singer, 2008). It reflects a person's ability to adapt to changes and pursue meaningful goals. Positive Relations with others dimensions examine the quality of relationships and the ability to form close, meaningful connections. The mean indicates moderately positive relationships, while the higher standard deviation suggests considerable variability among students. Strong positive relations are essential for emotional support, reducing feelings of isolation, and enhancing overall well-being (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Purpose in Life reflects the extent to which students feel their lives have meaning and direction. The mean suggests that students have a moderate sense of purpose, and the moderate standard deviation indicates variability. Having a clear purpose in life is associated with numerous positive outcomes, including better mental health, increased motivation, and a sense of fulfillment (Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). Self-Acceptance measures the extent to which individuals accept themselves and their past experiences. The mean indicates a moderate level of self-acceptance, while the higher standard deviation suggests variability among participants. High self-acceptance is crucial for psychological well-being, as it promotes self-esteem and reduces negative emotions such as guilt and regret (MacInnes, 2006).

Overall Psychological Well-Being (PWB) provides a holistic view of an individual's mental health, encompassing all the dimensions. The mean indicates that, on average, students have a moderate to higher levels of overall PWB. Overall PWB is essential for a fulfilling and balanced life, influencing various aspects of health, productivity, and social relationships (Ryff, 1989).

**Table 3:**  
**Pearson correlation coefficients of study variables (n = 508)**

Variables	Civic Attitudes	Civic Behaviours	Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive relations	Purpose in Life	Self acceptance	Overall PWB
Civic Attitudes	<b>1</b>								
Civic Behaviours	0.48*	<b>1</b>							
Autonomy	0.53**	0.38*	<b>1</b>						
Environmental Mastery	0.46**	0.41*	0.54**	<b>1</b>					
Personal Growth	0.57**	0.53**	0.51**	0.62**	<b>1</b>				
Positive relations	0.52**	0.49**	0.58**	0.64**	0.68**	<b>1</b>			
Purpose in Life	0.34*	0.29*	0.31**	0.40**	0.55**	0.57**	<b>1</b>		
Self acceptance	0.42**	0.38*	0.41**	0.46**	0.49**	0.51**	0.61**	<b>1</b>	
Overall PWB	0.62**	0.60**	0.58**	0.62**	0.64**	0.58**	0.62**	0.61**	<b>1</b>

\* p < 0.05. \*\* p < 0.01

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients between the variables Civic Attitudes, Civic Behaviors, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations, Purpose in Life, Self-Acceptance, and Overall Psychological Well-being (PWB). The analysis reveals significant correlations that suggest important relationships between civic engagement and psychological well-being. The significant positive correlations highlight the important connections between civic engagement and aspects of psychological well-being, supporting the hypothesis that active civic engagement improves psychological well-being and its dimensions.

The correlation between Civic Attitudes and Civic Behaviors (0.48\*) suggests a moderate relationship, indicating that individuals with positive attitudes towards civic engagement are more likely to participate in civic activities. Zaff et al. (2010) demonstrated that positive civic attitudes in youth are predictive of future civic engagement, suggesting that fostering positive views on civic responsibilities can translate into actual behavior.

Autonomy shows a significant positive correlation with both Civic Attitudes (0.53\*\*) and Civic Behaviors (0.38\*). This indicates that individuals who feel a sense of independence and personal control are more likely to hold positive civic attitudes and engage in civic activities. Self-determination theory



(Deci & Ryan, 1985) posits that autonomy is a crucial factor for intrinsic motivation and well-being, which is reflected in the positive correlations found in this analysis. Chirkov et al. (2003) support the findings by showing that autonomy is associated with higher levels of personal well-being and engagement in meaningful activities.

The positive correlations between Environmental Mastery and both Civic Attitudes (0.46\*\*) and Civic Behaviors (0.41\*) suggest that individuals who feel competent in managing their environment are more likely to have positive civic attitudes and engage in civic activities. Environmental mastery, a key component of psychological well-being as defined by Ryff (1989), reflects one's ability to effectively manage life situations. This competence can enhance one's confidence in participating in and contributing to community activities.

Personal Growth is significantly correlated with Civic Attitudes (0.57\*\*) and Civic Behaviors (0.53\*\*), indicating that individuals who perceive themselves as growing and developing are more likely to engage in and value civic activities. The concept of personal growth involves a continual process of realizing one's potential, which aligns with findings by Keyes (1998) that link personal growth to active engagement in life activities, including civic participation.

The significant positive correlations between Positive Relations and both Civic Attitudes (0.52\*\*) and Civic Behaviors (0.49\*\*) highlight the role of social connectedness in fostering civic engagement. Positive relations, which involve having fulfilling and supportive interpersonal relationships, are essential for psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2000). Individuals with strong social networks are more likely to be involved in civic activities as they often have greater social support and motivation to contribute to their communities (Putnam, 2000).

Purpose in Life shows a weaker but significant correlation with Civic Attitudes (0.34\*) and Civic Behaviours (0.29\*). This suggests that while having a sense of purpose is related to civic engagement, it may not be as strong a predictor as other factors. Meaning in life and a sense of purpose are complex constructs influenced by various life experiences and personal goals (Steger et al., 2006). Despite the weaker correlation, the positive relationship indicates that those who perceive their lives as meaningful are more likely to engage in civic activities, as supported by research linking purpose in life to prosocial behaviour (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009).

Self-Acceptance is positively correlated with Civic Attitudes (0.42\*\*) and Civic Behaviors (0.38\*), suggesting that individuals who accept themselves and their qualities are more inclined towards positive civic engagement. Self-acceptance, a crucial aspect of psychological well-being (Ryff, 1989), involves recognizing and accepting one's strengths and limitations, which can foster a sense of self-worth and motivation to contribute to society (Neff, 2011).

The strong correlations between Overall PWB and both Civic Attitudes (0.62\*\*) and Civic Behaviours (0.60\*\*) indicate that individuals with higher overall psychological well-being are more likely to engage in civic activities and hold positive attitudes towards civic engagement. Psychological well-being includes factors namely autonomy, personal growth, and positive relations, which are all positively linked to civic engagement. The findings support the broader literature suggesting that psychological well-being and civic engagement are mutually reinforcing (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

**Table 4:**  
**Regression analysis for Community engagement and Psychological wellbeing scores**

Predictor	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
<b>Civic Attitudes</b>	0.32	0.1	0.35	3.2	0.001
<b>Civic Behaviours</b>	0.24	0.09	0.3	2.67	0.008
<b>Autonomy</b>	0.28	0.09	0.26	3.11	0.002
<b>Environmental Mastery</b>	0.22	0.1	0.22	2.2	0.028
<b>Personal Growth</b>	0.31	0.11	0.29	2.82	0.005
<b>Positive Relations</b>	0.27	0.09	0.25	3	0.003
<b>Purpose in Life</b>	0.18	0.08	0.2	2.25	0.024
<b>Self-Acceptance</b>	0.23	0.1	0.22	2.3	0.021
<b>Overall PWB</b>	0.5	0.012	0.52	4.17	0.001

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient, SE B = standard error of B,  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient, t = t-value, p = p-value

From Table 4, it can be observed that Civic Attitudes ( $\beta = 0.35, p = .001$ ) and Civic Behaviours ( $\beta = 0.30, p = .008$ ) are significant predictors of Overall Psychological Wellbeing. These findings suggest that

individuals with higher civic engagement and more positive attitudes towards civic responsibilities are likely to experience better psychological wellbeing.

This supports existing research highlighting the role of civic engagement in enhancing psychological health. Keyes (2007) found that engagement in community activities is positively associated with higher levels of wellbeing, as it fosters a sense of purpose and social support. Schieman (2006) found that civic involvement contributes to better mental health outcomes, likely due to the social and psychological benefits derived from community engagement.

Personal Growth ( $\beta = 0.29, p = .005$ ) has a substantial positive effect on Overall Psychological Wellbeing. The correlation ( $r = 0.57$ ) supports this, indicating that individuals who perceive themselves as growing and developing experience higher levels of overall wellbeing. The results are consistent with Ryff's (1989) model, which posits that personal growth is a critical dimension of psychological wellbeing, contributing to life satisfaction and a sense of purpose.

Positive Relations with Others ( $\beta = 0.25, p = .003$ ) also significantly predicts Overall Psychological Wellbeing. The correlation ( $r = 0.52$ ) reinforces the importance of social connections. Cohen and Wills (1985) suggests that supportive social relationships are crucial for maintaining mental health, as they provide emotional support and a sense of belonging.

Autonomy ( $\beta = 0.26, p = .002$ ) and Environmental Mastery ( $\beta = 0.22, p = .028$ ) contribute positively, though their effects are smaller. The correlations ( $r = 0.53$  for Autonomy and  $r = 0.46$  for Environmental Mastery) highlight the role of feeling in control and managing one's environment effectively. Ryff (1989) emphasized these dimensions as essential for psychological health, as they reflect the ability to navigate and control one's life effectively.

Purpose in Life ( $\beta = 0.20, p = .024$ ) and Self-Acceptance ( $\beta = 0.22, p = .021$ ) have significant but smaller effects. The correlations ( $r = 0.34$  for Purpose in Life and  $r = 0.42$  for Self-Acceptance) suggest that having a sense of purpose and self-acceptance are beneficial for overall wellbeing. This aligns with findings from Ryff and Singer (2000), that emphasize that these variables contribute to a holistic sense of psychological health.

Overall Psychological Wellbeing ( $\beta = 0.52, p < .001$ ) significantly predicts its dimensions, with a strong correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ). This confirms that individuals who report higher levels of overall psychological wellbeing are likely to have better scores across all dimensions, highlighting the interconnected nature of these dimensions.

The regression analysis confirms that Civic Attitudes and Civic Behaviours are significant predictors of Overall Psychological Wellbeing and its dimensions. Civic engagement, through both attitudes and behaviours, positively impacts psychological health, reinforcing the importance of community involvement and personal growth. The analysis also highlights the crucial role of personal development and social relationships in enhancing psychological wellbeing, aligning with Ryff's (1989) model and supporting existing literature on the benefits of civic engagement and social support (Keyes, 2007; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Schieman et al., 2006).

## 8. Conclusion

The regression analysis reveals that Civic Attitudes and Civic Behaviours are significant predictors of Overall Psychological Wellbeing and its dimensions. Specifically, individuals who exhibit more positive civic attitudes and engage in civic activities tend to experience higher levels of overall psychological wellbeing. This relationship underscores the importance of civic engagement as a factor in promoting mental health.

The analysis also highlights the critical role of Personal Growth and Positive Relations with Others in contributing to overall psychological wellbeing. These dimensions, along with Autonomy and Environmental Mastery, are integral to fostering a sense of psychological health and fulfilment. The findings align with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of personal development and social connections in enhancing wellbeing.

Overall, the results suggest that strategies aimed at increasing civic engagement and fostering personal growth and social support can be beneficial for improving psychological wellbeing. By promoting positive civic attitudes and behaviors, along with encouraging personal development and supportive relationships, individuals and communities can enhance overall mental health. The findings highlight the interconnectedness of civic engagement and psychological well-being. Positive civic attitudes and behaviors are associated with higher levels of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and overall psychological well-being. These findings signify the importance of fostering civic engagement as a means to enhance individual mental health and

social well-being. Future research can explore the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships and develop interventions that promote both civic engagement and psychological well-being.

### **9. Limitations of the Study**

The study does not include a detailed demographic analysis of participants, such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, or educational background. These demographic factors can significantly influence psychological wellbeing and civic engagement. This limits the ability to generalize the results across various populations and may obscure important interactions between demographic characteristics and the variables of interest.

The study does not explore the specific nature or type of community engagement activities. Different forms of civic engagement, such as volunteering, political activism, or community service, may have varying impacts on psychological wellbeing. This limitation restricts the depth of understanding regarding how specific community involvement contributes to psychological outcomes.

The study utilizes a cross-sectional design, which provides quick relationships between civic attitudes, behaviours, and psychological wellbeing at a single point in time. However, it does not employ an interventional study design to examine causal relationships or the effects of specific interventions on wellbeing. Intervention studies can study the possibilities to determine whether changes in civic attitudes or behaviours directly lead to improvements in psychological wellbeing, or whether other factors may mediate this relationship.

### **10. Implications of the study**

Universities and colleges can develop and promote programs that encourage community engagement among students. These programs can include structured volunteer opportunities, service-learning courses, and community-based projects. By integrating community engagement into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, institutions can enhance students' psychological wellbeing.

Counselling centres and mental health services can incorporate community engagement strategies into their therapeutic approaches. Encouraging students to participate in community service or group activities could serve as a complementary intervention to traditional counselling methods.

Higher education institutions should consider adopting policies that facilitate and incentivize community engagement. Policies might include granting academic credit for community service, providing funding for student-led community projects.

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### **Conflict of interest**

*The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest, either financial or personal, that could have appeared to influence the research, results, or the content of this article. The research was conducted with complete impartiality, ensuring that the findings presented are solely based on the data and analysis carried out during the study.*

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## SATISFACTION AND PROCRASTINATION AMONG PROGRAMMERS

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**Abstract:** *The current study investigates the existence of a correlation between satisfaction and procrastination, as well as between their subscales, among programmers. Data collected from a sample of 30 Romanian programmers were analyzed to assess this possible relationship, using the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire and the Job Procrastination Scale. The main results indicate the absence of a significant correlation between overall levels of satisfaction and procrastination. However, the analysis of the subscales reveals significant correlations between certain aspects of satisfaction and procrastination. In particular, the Soldering Subscale presents a significant correlation with the Organization and Communication Subscale, and the Cyberslacking Subscale correlates significantly with the Leadership and Interpersonal Relations Subscale. These findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between satisfaction and procrastination in the context of programmers and suggest that certain aspects of satisfaction may influence how they manage procrastination.*

**Keywords.** Satisfaction, Procrastination, Programmers, Correlation, Subscale Analysis, Soldering, Organization, Communication, Cyberslacking, Leadership

### 1. Introduction-Procrastination

Procrastination is a form of self-regulatory failure in which we voluntarily postpone an intended course of action, despite the expectation that we will suffer more from the delay' (Steel, 2007: 66). For example, a common form of procrastination is postponing funding a personal retirement plan, with over 80% of Americans admitting that they do not save enough for their retirement needs, according to their own confessions (Byrne, Blake, Cairns, and Dowd, 2006; O'Donoghue and Rabin, 1999; Venti, 2006). Procrastination is especially chronic in the world of work. Approximately 25% of the adult population consider their procrastination to be a defining personality trait (Ferrari, Diaz-Morales, O'Callaghan, Diaz and Argumedo, 2007; Steel, 2007). Procrastination, as reviewed by Steel (2011), is associated with lower wealth, health, and well-being. However, as Partnoy (2012) documents, there is still considerable debate about whether procrastination can be an adaptive work strategy, with some suggesting that procrastination may be in our best interests (Fischer, 2001). For example, Berg and Gigerenzer (2010) argue that irrational behavior itself, which would include procrastination, has no established impact, stating that "a significant lack is the investigation into whether individuals who deviate from axiomatic rationality face significant economic losses" (133) and "the normative interpretation of deviance as errors does not follow from empirical investigation linking deviance to negative outcomes" (Nguyen et al., 2013).

Procrastination can be defined as delay that is due to the avoidance of implementing an intention (Van Eerde, 2000: 375). It is considered to be a common behavior, as no less than 25% of the adult population considers themselves procrastinators (Ferrari, Diaz-Morales, O'Callaghan, Diaz and Argumedo, 2007). Although it is a common behavior, the degree to which people procrastinate can vary across different domains, for example, academic, professional, leisure and family domains (Klingsieck, 2013). Procrastination in the workplace, referring to a failure to self-regulate work tasks, is associated with high

costs (Nguyen, Steel and Ferrari, 2013). Studies report that employees spend an average of 1.5 to 3 hours on personal activities during working hours (Metin et al., 2016).

Procrastination is often defined as the postponement, delay, or postponement of work or action that should ideally be accomplished in the present (Steel, 2007). The word itself is derived from Latin, in which *pro* means before and *cras* suggests tomorrow (Bauman, 1999). Procrastination typically has a negative connotation attached to it. People who are procrastinators are often perceived as bad, harmful, or unwise in nature (Van Eerde, 2003). Individuals who see themselves as procrastinators often want to reduce it by setting realistic goals and deadlines to complete tasks within a reasonable time frame (Ariely and Wertenbroch, 2002). Procrastination is also typically seen as volitional in nature – that is, it involves the voluntary choice of a behavior or task over other competing options.

In the workplace, procrastinators may focus their energy differently on short-term goals, often to the detriment of completing key long-term tasks. Ideally, employees should strive to balance their personal energies in a way that maximizes productivity and reduces inefficiency so as to maximize corporate resources (Pollay, 1970). Unfortunately, procrastinators often leave themselves too little time for thoughtful consideration, leading to suboptimal work performance (Gupta et al., 2012).

People who prefer to procrastinate leave themselves little time for serious thinking, which leads to poor performance at work. In fact, the relationship between procrastination and personal performance suggests that those who put off tasks perform poorly overall (Delgado-medrano, 2011). However, procrastination affects the productivity of organizations and employees, so it is important to understand the factors that influence it. In addition, procrastination at work is also linked to non-work-related actions, which occur when employees engage in personal activities at work instead of dealing with work-related activities. For example, this form of workplace procrastination may involve someone shopping for personal items online during the workday instead of doing the work they are supposed to be doing. According to Delgado-medrano (2011) and Pasha (2017), there are other reasons why people procrastinate at work, including:

- Lack of time management skills. When people cannot manage time effectively, everything planned is delayed and the time allocated for each activity is extended.

- People prefer perfectionism. The fear of making mistakes is real and leads people to abandon important tasks. This means that they avoid performing certain tasks for fear of making mistakes and appearing incompetent. They expect their work to be impeccable. This is because they believe that if the task does not match the talent provided, they will fail, so it is better to postpone it for a while.

- Lack of motivation. This is the main reason for procrastination at work. This happens because, anyone feels hurt because they are not motivated when faced with a task that they do not really want or are not interested in. This situation occurs when an unpleasant or unattractive task at work can have the same effect. Therefore, the Human Resources department should always organize programs that can boost the morale of employees and make them love every task they do.

- Lack of necessary skills at work. Employees are more likely to procrastinate due to the lack of necessary skills, which makes the task difficult to complete. For example, if someone is a novice carpenter, the employee may postpone building the project that needs to be built. Also, if an employee does not understand how to complete a project, it might seem easier to delegate it to another department, but this will only lead to continued procrastination.

- Lack of interest. Procrastination can also be caused by a lack of interest. For example, the boss may have asked the employee to research a topic that the employee did not find interesting, or the employee may have been assigned a task that is simply boring. Due to the employee's lack of interest in the current topic, it is easier to ignore it until the last possible moment (Ismail et al., 2022).

## **2. Job Satisfaction**

Employee satisfaction encompasses various aspects of the work experience, such as compensation, work-life balance, career development, and company culture. By focusing on satisfaction, we address the multiple factors that contribute to an employee's sense of fulfillment, rather than just aiming for momentary happiness.

When employees are satisfied with their job and company, they are more likely to stay employed and be committed to the company's goals. This, in turn, can lead to lower employee turnover rates, higher engagement, and a more productive and cohesive team.

Satisfied employees are more motivated to excel in their roles because they feel valued and supported by their employer. This, in turn, can lead to higher levels of productivity, innovation, and overall performance.

Satisfaction supports employee well-being: By focusing on the factors that contribute to satisfaction, we also support the overall well-being of our employees. This can translate into a healthier work environment where employees feel more motivated, less stressed, and better equipped to tackle challenges (Long, 2023).

Despite its widespread use in scientific research as well as in everyday life, there is still no general agreement on what job satisfaction is. In fact, there is no definitive definition of what work is. Therefore, before a definition of job satisfaction can be offered, the nature and importance of work as a universal human activity must be considered.

Hoppock defined job satisfaction as any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that lead a person to honestly say, "I am satisfied with my job" (Hoppock, 1935). According to this approach, although job satisfaction is influenced by many external factors, there remains something internal that relates to how the employee feels. In other words, job satisfaction is a set of factors that determine a state of satisfaction.

Vroom (1964), in his definition of job satisfaction, focuses on the employee's role in the workplace. Thus, he defines job satisfaction as the affective orientations of individuals towards the job roles they currently occupy.

Job satisfaction is a worker's sense of accomplishment and success in the workplace. It is generally perceived to be directly related to productivity as well as personal well-being. Job satisfaction involves doing a job that a person values, doing it well, and being rewarded for their efforts. Job satisfaction also involves enthusiasm and happiness regarding one's work. Job satisfaction is the key ingredient that leads to recognition, income, promotion, and the achievement of other goals that lead to a sense of fulfillment (Aziri, 2011).

Confucius is credited with the statement "choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines job satisfaction as "the pleasurable feeling you get when you have a job you enjoy." Job satisfaction is subjective because employees will have their own perceptions of their work. How you feel about your job is unique to you, and your feelings can fluctuate from day to day. Many aspects of a person's role influence the measurement of job satisfaction. Managerial appreciation, pay, and the level of challenge affect how each person feels about their role. When employees experience high levels of job satisfaction, they perform better. When employees perform better, they generate more output for the organization.

Employees with high levels of job satisfaction tend to look for more ways to help their team. They will exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors and find additional tasks outside of their job description. Job satisfaction also helps with employee retention. When employees are happy with their work, absenteeism will be reduced. Employees will stay with the organization, reducing staff turnover. Professional relationships will be stronger when employees are satisfied with their roles. Signs of workplace deviance will be absent (Swofford, 2023). Craft, service, and kinship orientations are especially likely to be meaningful because they all point to something beyond the individual, says Pratt. And Steger has also focused on the idea that meaningful work is bigger than oneself. He and his colleagues recently created an instrument for measuring meaningful work (Journal of Career Assessment, 2012). This "Work and Meaning Inventory" assesses three components, he says: the sense that work has purpose, evidence that the meaning derived from work contributes to the meaning you feel in life as a whole, and the idea that work in some way benefits a greater good (Weir, 2013).

### **3. Research Methodology**

To understand how job satisfaction and procrastination of IT employees are correlated, we pursued the following objectives:

- a. Identifying a positive correlation between procrastination and job satisfaction;
- b. Identifying a positive correlation between soldering procrastination and job satisfaction of organization and communication;
- c. Identifying a positive correlation between cyberslacking procrastination and job satisfaction of leadership and interpersonal relationships.

Therefore, we formulated the following hypotheses with the hope of answering curiosities related to the work climate in which IT employees find themselves, and whether it influences them negatively or positively through procrastination, which may remain to be seen in future research:

- a. It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between procrastination and job satisfaction;
- b. It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between soldering procrastination and satisfaction with organization and communication at work;

c. It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between cyberslacking procrastination and satisfaction with leadership and interpersonal relationships at work.

The sample was composed of 30 participants, aged between 20 and 50 years, of which 26 were male and 4 were female. Most of them came from urban areas (93.5%). The sample was of convenience, with participants being recruited through an internet advertisement.

Among the instruments used was the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (T. Constantin, 2004), which consists of a set of 32 questions that evaluate four main factors:

- Remuneration and promotion: expresses the employee's degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the reward and advancement opportunities related to his work.

- Leadership and interpersonal relations: reflects the employee's level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the relations with colleagues and management, as well as the general atmosphere in the work environment.

- Organization and communication: measures the employee's degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the organization of work, the definition of tasks, communication and feedback within the organization.

- Overall satisfaction: indicates the employee's general level of satisfaction with the work performed, the way it is organized, the rewards received (material or moral) and the interpersonal climate in the work environment.

To measure procrastination, another instrument used was the Procrastination at Work Scale Procrastination, which revealed two sub-dimensions of the Procrastination at Work Scale (PAWS), namely "soldiering" and "cyberslacking", reflecting the fact that procrastination at work can be empirically differentiated from similar conceptual concepts such as counterproductive workplace behavior, general procrastination, and boredom. It represents a valid instrument that can be used to assess activities that are not related to the specific job during work hours.

The research was conducted in the city of Constanța and took place over a period of approximately two months. The instruments were administered online.

#### 4. Data analysis and interpretation

*Hypothesis 1:* It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between procrastination and job satisfaction.

In the first phase of the analysis, we examined the normality of the variables. We observe from the table that the Sig. values associated with these variables are greater than 0.05, which suggests that the variables have a normal distribution.

**Table 1. Analysis of the normality of data distribution for the procrastination and satisfaction variables**

	Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
procrastination	.134	30	.178	.955	30	.224	
satisfaction	.089	30	.200*	.978	30	.764	

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.  
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Given the normal distribution of the variables, we applied the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results indicate a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.152, which is higher than the significance threshold of 0.05, suggesting that there is no significant correlation between procrastination and satisfaction. Also, the Pearson coefficient of -0.268 indicates a negative correlation between the two variables, which means that when one of the variables increases, the other decreases, and the hypothesis is not confirmed.

**Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficient between procrastination and satisfaction variables**

Correlations			
		procastination	satisfaction
procrastination	Pearson Correlation	1	-.268
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.152
	N	30	30
satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	-.268	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.152	
	N	30	30



The analysis revealed an interesting and seemingly counterintuitive result: no significant correlation was found between the level of procrastination and the level of job satisfaction. This result contradicts initial expectations and is consistent with findings from other similar studies, including the work of Tudose and Pavalache-Ilie (2021). In other words, the fact that employees procrastinate on work tasks is not directly related to their level of satisfaction with their work. Thus, a person could frequently procrastinate on work tasks without this having a significant impact on how they feel about the work they are doing. It is important to understand that these two aspects can be independent of each other and that it is possible for an employee to be satisfied with their work but also have a tendency to procrastinate on certain tasks (Ferrari and Pychyl, 2012). This is probably due to the fact that procrastination may not be related to job satisfaction due to the fact that it is distinguished from it for many reasons, such as: different time management styles, as an employee could postpone tasks for various reasons, such as personal habits or the way they manage time, without this influencing their level of job satisfaction; external factors, as procrastination can also be determined by external factors such as lack of clarity in tasks, time pressure or lack of resources, and these factors may not have a direct impact on the employee's job satisfaction (Steel and Klingsieck, 2016).

It is possible that an employee procrastinates for reasons other than dissatisfaction or dissatisfaction with their work. This may be due to lack of motivation, bad habits, or other personal aspects that are not necessarily related to the level of job satisfaction. Thus, procrastination and job satisfaction may be two distinct aspects of workplace behavior that are not necessarily correlated with each other. Among these, there are also other explanations for the fact that organizational job satisfaction is not necessarily important in determining procrastination, for example, different levels of involvement, in which an employee could be involved and do their job successfully even if they are not completely satisfied with the work environment or conditions. Thus, the level of procrastination may be influenced more by the individual's degree of involvement and responsibility than by the level of job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2013).

**Hypothesis 2:** It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between soldering procrastination and satisfaction with organization and communication at work. Also, the analysis of the normality of the variables was performed, and from the results obtained it can be seen that the Sig. values associated with these variables are greater than 0.05. This suggests that the variables follow a normal distribution.

**Table 3. Test of normality of data distribution for the soldering subscale and the organization and communication subscale**

	Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
soldering	.108	30	.200*	.969	30	.510	
Organization and communication	.113	30	.200*	.986	30	.959	

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

In light of the normal distribution of the variables, we applied the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results reveal a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.026, below the significance threshold of 0.05, indicating a significant correlation between the soldering subscale and the organization and communication subscale. Also, the Pearson coefficient of -0.405 indicates a negative correlation between the two variables, suggesting that when one of the variables increases, the other decreases.

**Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficient between the soldering subscale and the organization and communication subscale**

Correlations			
		soldering	organizare.si.comunicare
soldering	Pearson Correlation	1	-.405*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	30	30
Organization and communication	Pearson Correlation	-.405*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	30	30

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Makrov (2011), there is an interesting idea that a high level of communication in organizations can lead to a high level of procrastination. However, when we analyze the nature of the work done by programmers, which often requires intense concentration and focus on code and technical tasks, we can see that the level of communication is often lower compared to other fields. In the case of programmers, communication is often focused on exchanging technical information and solving specific problems related to their projects. This may involve more written than verbal communication and may be more structured and directed towards clear goals. Thus, in this specific context of programmers, we cannot automatically assume that a high level of communication would lead to an increase in procrastination. In fact, due to the nature of their work and the need for concentration, an adequate level of effective and clear communication could even reduce the risk of procrastination and improve efficiency in completing tasks. Therefore, in this particular case of programmers, we cannot positively correlate the level of communication with the level of procrastination, but it could be the other way around - effective and well-targeted communication could help reduce procrastination and improve individual and team performance. Moreover, the perspective of personal habits and behaviors also matters, as procrastination may be more related to these than to the degree of job satisfaction of communication and organization. An employee may have a tendency to postpone tasks due to bad habits or inefficient time management, regardless of how satisfied he is with his job. Procrastination may also be the result of high time pressure or incorrect prioritization of tasks, which may be more related to a lack of adequate self-knowledge, personal values. Satisfaction in organization and communication may also be influenced by the work environment, organizational culture or support provided by management for the development of organizational and communication skills. Thus, procrastination may be the result of personal or circumstantial factors, which may not be directly related to these aspects. Therefore, these aspects may influence the decision to postpone certain activities, regardless of the individual's level of job satisfaction in terms of organization and communication (Spector & Jex, 1998).

### 1.1. Cyberslacking subscale and leadership and interpersonal relations subscale

**Hypothesis 3:** It is assumed that there is a negative correlation between cyberslacking procrastination and satisfaction with leadership and interpersonal relations at work.

Again, we examined the normality of the variables. The data in the table indicate that the Sig. values associated with these variables are greater than 0.05, which suggests that they have a normal distribution

**Table 5. Test of normality of data distribution for the cyberslacking subscale and the leadership and interpersonal relationships subscale**

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
cyberlacking	.146	30	.100	.961	30	.326
Leadership and interpersonal relationships	.117	30	.200*	.973	30	.618

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.  
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Given the normal distribution of the variables, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient. The results reveal a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.023, below the significance threshold of 0.05, thus suggesting a significant correlation between the cyberslacking subscale and the leadership and interpersonal relations subscale. Also, the Pearson coefficient of -0.414 indicates a negative correlation between the two variables, meaning that when one of the variables increases, the other decreases.

**Table 6. Pearson correlation coefficient between the cyberslacking subscale and the leadership and interpersonal relationships subscale**

		Correlations	
		cyberlacking	conducere.si.relatii.interpersonale
cyberlacking	Pearson Correlation	1	-.414*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.023
	N	30	30
Leadership and interpersonal relationships	Pearson Correlation	-.414*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	
	N	30	30

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Cyberslacking, which involves postponing work tasks through online distractions, can be negatively correlated with management satisfaction and interpersonal relationships at work for reasons such as negative perceptions of productivity: cyberslacking can lead to a decrease in employee productivity, which can be negatively perceived by management. If employees spend a lot of time online instead of completing their tasks, management may consider them to be ineffective. Cyberslacking can indicate a lack of responsibility on the part of employees in completing their tasks. This behavior can affect relationships with colleagues and management, generating a climate of distrust. The impact on collaboration reflects constant distractions in the online environment that can affect collaboration and effective communication between team members. This can lead to tensions in interpersonal relationships and a negative perception of the work environment. Therefore, cyberslacking can contribute to a decrease in management satisfaction and the deterioration of interpersonal relationships at work, having a negative impact on team efficiency and organizational climate (İnce and Gül, 2011).

Cyberslacking and management and interpersonal relationship satisfaction at work can be considered distinct aspects that are not directly related to each other, precisely because procrastination is an individual behavior, where cyberslacking is more of an individual employee behavior, which can be influenced by personal habits, level of self-control or time management. On the other hand, management satisfaction and interpersonal relationships are more the result of interactions between employees and management or colleagues (Canaan Messarra et al., 2011). Also, the factors that influence management satisfaction are diverse, as satisfaction with management can be influenced by several factors, such as leadership style, communication, recognition of efforts or clear direction of objectives. Cyberslacking may be just one of many factors that can affect performance and relationships at work. Thus, communication problems can be separated from procrastination; while procrastination can affect productivity and teamwork, communication or interpersonal relationship problems can have different roots, such as a lack of transparency, unresolved conflicts, or a lack of an appropriate organizational climate.

**Conclusions**

Our study investigated the relationships between procrastination, satisfaction, and other subscale variables such as soldering, organization and communication, cyberslacking, and leadership and interpersonal relationships in a sample of 30 participants. Our results make valuable contributions to the existing literature by highlighting complex correlations between these variables.

Our analysis indicated that there is no significant correlation between the level of procrastination and the level of job satisfaction. This result suggests that, in the IT sector, procrastination does not directly influence employee satisfaction. Thus, employees may postpone certain tasks without this necessarily affecting their perception of work. This phenomenon can be attributed to factors such as individual time management styles or external pressures, which are not directly related to job satisfaction.

We identified a significant negative correlation between soldering skills and organizational and communication skills. This indicates that excellence in precise technical tasks may be associated with deficiencies in communication and organizational skills. This finding is crucial for professional development in IT, highlighting the need for training programs that balance technical and interpersonal development.

The results also showed a negative correlation between cyberslacking and leadership and interpersonal skills. This suggests that employees who engage in cyberslacking may have poorer performance in team management and interpersonal relationships. This finding may motivate organizations to adopt policies to minimize online distractions in order to improve the effectiveness of team leaders. The study results highlight several important directions for organizations in terms of employee training and professional development.

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# MANIFESTATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIETY BETWEEN WESTERN THOUGHT AND ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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**Abstract:** *The relationship between the individual and society holds a significant and essential place in sociological studies due to the various paradoxes and complexities it entails. Socio-analytical perspectives have varied depending on the intellectual frameworks and references of scholars and researchers. In Western thought, this relationship has sometimes been characterized by the glorification of individualism and the need to enhance it, while at other times, the role of society is exalted, highlighting its influence in shaping individuals through a unidirectional perspective. In contrast, the Islamic vision of thinkers emphasizes functional integration and social harmony that serves the relationship between the part and the whole. The individual-society relationship is seen as one of mutual influence, where the well-being of society is tied to the well-being of its individuals and vice versa.*

**Keywords:** individual, individualism, society, relationship

## 1. Introduction

Sociology is concerned with the study of social phenomena, which are its primary focus. It examines the forms, types, and structures of these phenomena, how they are formed, the patterns they take, the systems they build, and the harmony, conflict, or change that occurs between them. The relationship between the individual and society has long been one of the key topics in sociology, especially as it relates to social control. Understanding social life in all its complexities is impossible without delving into this relationship.

It has become clear that the diversity of schools of thought, approaches, and theories in sociology has led to a variety of perspectives and analyses regarding the nature of this central relationship and the mechanisms of its deconstruction and examination. Sociologists and thinkers have approached this in two main directions: one concerning Western sociology and how its thinkers viewed the nature of the relationship, and another that encompasses the perspectives of certain Muslim thinkers, deriving from an Islamic intellectual framework.

In this article, we will attempt to clarify the concepts of the individual and society, and then explore the manifestations of the individual's relationship with society from the viewpoints of both Western sociology and Islamic sociology, following this outline:

1. Concept of the individual
2. Concept of society
3. The relationship between the individual and society in Western thought
4. The relationship between the individual and society in Islamic thought

## 1. Concepts of study

### A. Linguistic definition

According to the Al-Munhaj Dictionary, the term "individual" (Individu) refers to a person, a human being (an individual of any kind, a rational being with free will, as opposed to a being devoid of reason and choice. (Idris, 2013: 65)

In the Arabic language dictionary, the word "fard" (individual) appears in different contexts. The verb \*farda\* means to spread or lay something out in front, such as spreading a sheet on the bed, laying out a newspaper on the table, or spreading playing cards on a surface.

The verb \*farda\* with prepositions (such as "bi," "an," or "fi") has various meanings. For instance, \*farda bi al-ra'y\* means to have an exclusive opinion or decision without involving others (e.g., "he made a decision on his own"). \*Farda an asdiqa'uhu\* refers to someone distancing themselves from their friends or isolating themselves. In a different context, \*farda fi makan mun'azil\* means to be alone or secluded. (Omar, 2008: 168)

The verb \*afrada\* means to separate, distinguish, or isolate something. For example, \*afrada hadha al-mawdu'a\* means to dedicate a special chapter to a specific topic, or \*afrada talamidh al-mutafawiqin\* means to place outstanding students in a special class. In other uses, \*afrada al-antha\* refers to a female

giving birth to a single offspring, or *\*afrada fi al-ihram\** means to perform a solo pilgrimage without combining it with Umrah. (Omar, 2008: 168)

Additionally, "Al-Fard" is one of the Names of Allah in Islamic tradition, meaning the One who is unique in power, creativity, and management, distinct from all things, and self-sufficient. The term "hukm al-fard" refers to an autocratic rule where absolute power is vested in a single individual. (Omar, 2008: 168)

### **B. Terminological definition**

In terminology, the "individual" refers to a unique and singular human being. This concept also carries another meaning, that of totality, something that cannot be divided into smaller components. The Latin term *\*individuum\** parallels the Greek term *\*atom\**, both of which mean indivisibility. The concept of the individual applies only to humans, whereas for inanimate objects or things created by humans, the Latin term *\*exemplum\** is used, meaning a sample or object. (Al-Kahlani, 2004: 18). Ibn Sina (Avicenna) defines "unity" as that which is said of anything as being one, referring to something that cannot be divided by reason. He explains that numbers are a collection of units, and an odd number is one that cannot be equally divided into two. (Al-Kahlani, 2004: 18)

In psychology, the term "individual" is synonymous with a natural person, distinguished from others by their identity and unity, or by possessing special traits that set them apart from others of the same species. In sociology, the individual is a unit within the society, much like a citizen in a state. (Al-Kahlani, 2004: 19)

Based on the above definitions, we can operationally define the individual as a unique biological being, distinguished by specific traits and characteristics from all other creatures, indivisible in all aspects. The individual has their own identity and existence, and is the most important unit forming society, ensuring its preservation and continuity.

#### **A. Linguistic definition : "society"**

The term "society" has its linguistic roots and meanings in Islam. Several derivations of the root *\*jama'a* (جمع) \*meaning "to gather" or "to come together," are mentioned in the Qur'an. For instance, in the verse, {Say: 'If all mankind and jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce its like'} (Qur'an 17:88). Linguistically, it is derived from the verb *\*ijtima'a* (اجتمع) \*which means to gather or come together, and refers to something that has united or formed an assembly. (Ali Bin Hadiya, 1991: 14)

#### **\*\*B. Terminological definition\*\*:**

In terms of terminology, society refers to a network of social relationships among people. This definition emphasizes the importance of social relationships in forming human communities, which are considered essential for the survival of humankind.

Additionally, society is defined as "a specific model of a group distinguished by a comprehensive social coordination that includes all the basic social institutions necessary to meet essential human needs. It is characterized by its independence, not in the sense of complete economic self-sufficiency, but in terms of having all the necessary organizational structures to ensure its survival and continuity over an extended period". (Gheith: 416)

This definition highlights society as a specific model of a social group, indicating that there are multiple models differing from one group to another. These groups are characterized by a general social system or structure, which includes various subsystems that work to preserve and sustain the broader system. These subsystems provide the necessary conditions and resources to meet the demands of the time, or perhaps to achieve prosperity. According to the social systems theory, any imbalance in one of the subsystems leads to imbalances in other subsystems, resulting in a lack of equilibrium in the overall social structure.

Malek Bennabi adds to the previous definitions by stating, "Society is a group that continuously changes its social characteristics by producing the means of change, while being aware of the goal it seeks behind this change". (Bennabi, 1974: 15)

From Malek Bennabi's concept, it becomes clear that constant change is a fundamental characteristic of society. However, he does not specify the nature of this change, and it is commonly accepted that social characteristics tend to be stable. Additionally, he does not clarify whether the goal that the group pursues is a shared one. On the other hand, the importance of change as a key element in

the life of any human group striving to continuously transform its characteristics is evident. This depends on the effectiveness of the tools available to achieve such change.

Based on the aforementioned definitions, society can be defined as a human group with its own culture and diverse systems that contribute to its survival within a network of social relationships, governed by behaviors, norms, values, and roles shared and socially agreed upon by individuals.

### **3. The relationship between the individual and society in Western thought**

Many researchers have delved into the issue of the individual-society relationship through various intellectual schools and approaches. Maclver and Page considered the relationship between the individual and the social system as the starting point and focus of sociological research. The success of sociological research is often measured by how well it addresses the problem of the relationship between the individual and society. Thus, this relationship occupies the attention of researchers, philosophers, and thinkers, who have proposed two main perspectives in defining it:

**The First Perspective:** This relies on the theory of the social contract, which posits that society is formed based on a real agreement among individuals themselves, or between the people and the government. Proponents of this theory believe that individuals are the source of customs, traditions, values, and systems. They often cite inventors, scientists, and reformers as examples. According to this view, society is considered antagonistic to the individual, as individuals are born inherently good, while society corrupts them with evil. Prominent supporters of this view include Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, Vilfredo Pareto, Lester Ward, and John Stuart Mill.

#### **The Second Perspective:**

This perspective is divided into two approaches:

**Approach A:** This approach is led by the proponents of the organic theory, which views society as a biological system or a large living organism similar to a human being. According to this theory, society produces individuals and prepares them to become leaders, thinkers, or innovators. Associated with this theory are other concepts such as the theory of the collective mind or universal mind, which emphasize society's role in shaping individuals.

**Approach B:** This approach is supported by proponents of Marxist theory, who also liken society to a body, with individuals as the cells of this body. They emphasize the idea of society's precedence over individuals, asserting that society has intrinsic value beyond the services provided by individuals. They argue that individuals are naturally opposed to anything that helps maintain society's stability. (Zaimi: 288-290)

Another perspective comes from Max Weber's theory of social action, where he indicated that individuals are influenced by social institutions such as the family, school, workplace, and mass media. However, he did not view the analysis of these influences and their effects as the sole or primary purpose of sociology. For Weber, understanding the meanings that individuals experience in their social lives is more important than merely analyzing what drives or influences them to act the way they do. Despite Weber emphasizing that individual action is a unique experience for each social actor, he believed that it is possible to generalize about social action, as there are, in fact, common patterns of social behavior. Individuals may act rationally, emotionally, or ideally, and it is possible to categorize their actions accordingly. Despite his focus on individual experiences and subjective meanings, Weber remained committed to a scientific approach to sociology (Baghrish, 2018: 143).

From another perspective, Norbert Elias, in his book *\*The Society of Individuals\**, points out that the individual human is the product of other people. Regardless of who a person's ancestors were, they see only a series of fathers and sons, with each becoming a father in turn. Thus, every person is born into a group of people that existed before them.

Nature has imposed the need for each individual to rely on others who came before them in order to survive. Additionally, human existence includes the simultaneous presence of many other individuals connected through relationships. In this context, Elias states, "We cannot gain a clear understanding of the relationship between the individual and society unless we integrate the formation of individuality into the core of social theory. The history of individuality and the phenomena of youth and maturation hold a central place when exploring what we call 'society.' A true understanding of societal integration in humans cannot be achieved unless we comprehend what relationships with others mean for a young child. (Elias, 2014: 36, 42-43.)"

He further adds, "Since the helpless child needs a social formation around them to become a distinct and clearly individual being, understanding the individuality of an adult requires knowing the extent to which their relationships and the structures of the society in which they grew up shaped them. While it is certain that every human being is a complete entity in themselves, an individual who directs their own path and cannot be controlled by others as long as they are capable of self-direction, it is equally certain that the overall shape of their conscious and unconscious self-directed orientations is a complex product. It emerges from the give-and-take of relationships with others. Furthermore, it is well established that the mature individuality of a person is a specific societal form". (Elias, 2014: 43)

Thus, Norbert Elias clarified the existence of an element of interaction in the relationship between the individual and society, based on a system of prevailing norms, values, roles, and expectations within the society. This interaction contributes to shaping both social and individual behavior.

In contrast, Michel Foucault's view of the relationship between the individual and society, as presented in his work *\*The History of Sexuality\**, focuses on exploring the intellectual, social, political, and moral backgrounds that govern this relationship in Western thought. Foucault aimed to revive the Greek and Roman concept of an individual's ability to lead oneself. He believed that the highest achievement of a philosopher's wisdom lies in the ability to direct one's behavior among others. If a person is unable to control their emotions, desires, and conditions, they are not truly autonomous. Foucault's interest in individual behavior, or what he termed "the techniques of self-practice," aimed to deeply explore the external techniques imposed on the individual self, which restrict its internal autonomy (Moussa, 2009: 142).

Foucault also highlighted that the mechanisms of power produced by civilization have led only to the suppression of individuals through constant surveillance, employing precise techniques to discipline bodies and regulate them, or to extract the truth hidden within the individual. This is evident through the classification imposed by power structures on individuals. Foucault believed in the individual's ability to shape their self independently of any authority, thus being capable of freeing themselves from its dominance. He supported this argument by referencing the Greek system, which was based on ethics not tied to religion, science, or law—a system free from any overarching reference that imposes itself as a standard for individual or collective behavior. (Moussa, 2009: 142-145)

From the aforementioned discussion, it becomes clear that all perspectives were, in some way, limited or extreme. While society welcomes the individual and assists them in many aspects, it is the individual's abilities and talents that ensure the continuation, survival, and fulfillment of society's functions. Furthermore, humans are inherently social beings, and their lives, personal development, and lifestyle patterns cannot be fully realized except through interaction with others.

#### **4. The relationship between the individual and society in Islamic thought**

In Islamic ideological and religious thought, the concept of society transcends the purely materialistic or abstract theoretical view by grounding itself in moral and spiritual foundations. Social relationships within this framework are built on human bonds of love and compassion, rather than solely on material connections. This is emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his saying: "The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body; when any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever" (narrated by Bukhari). Without a doubt, these moral relationships, based on affection and mercy, are the foundation upon which human communities are built, creating the bonds that tie individuals together.

In contrast, a society purely based on material interests, such as economics, can be likened to bricks stacked beside each other without strong connections between them, making it incapable of being truly unified. However, a moral society is built on spiritual relationships that bind its parts, creating a cohesive structure that does not fall apart easily. This cohesion is sustained as long as it is nourished by faith and religion. Islam strives to establish this ideal society across the world, as it is a religion that addresses all of humanity. (Morsi, 1989: 6-7)

Abdul Latif Hassan Faraj draws a parallel between the relationship of the individual with society and the workings of a beehive. In a beehive, each bee performs its role precisely and without deviation, and this accurate performance of roles by all bees ensures the success of the hive in achieving its overall goals. Similarly, the advancement of society is dependent on the continuous interaction of the thoughts, emotions, and wills of its members. The notion of collective intellect, collective orientation, and collective will is clear sociological evidence that the progress of society is contingent on the interaction between the minds, orientations, and wills of individuals. Here, the importance of fostering a spirit of loyalty to society



becomes apparent, ensuring that the sense of belonging to the community outweighs the tendency toward individual self-interest.

Ismat Adly adds, "One of the primary conditions for a healthy society, which is self-sufficient economically and thriving culturally, is the presence of cohesion among its members. Each individual should feel a strong sense of belonging to their homeland and society, forming a living organic unit that interacts with the nation's life, grows with its growth, and develops its identity. Belonging is a fundamental pillar of social life, inevitably tied to belonging to the land—that is, to the homeland and society. Every individual should feel that the homeland and society are theirs, and they are responsible for the well-being and continuity of the social structure". (Faraj, 2008: 237).

This highlights the importance of the individual's social role, which sociologists emphasize must be nurtured from childhood. When developed properly, this role becomes a motivating force for the individual, giving meaning to both their individual and social existence. It guides them toward contribution and creativity, and when a person feels they have a functional role within their society, it instills in them a sense of belonging and attachment to their community. This strengthens the bond between members of society, creating unity and, consequently, reinforcing societal cohesion as a unified human entity. This in turn fosters a collective sense of affinity among the citizens of a single nation, which is essential for social security.

Thus, the Islamic perspective resolves the sociological debate surrounding the relationship between the individual and society by asserting that God has created humans with a dual nature—both individual and collective. There is no inherent contradiction between these two inclinations within a person. The reality of society is deeply rooted in human nature through the innate need for belonging. Society is first formed in the consciousness of individuals, and its structure emerges from the internal nature of humans. By their very nature, instilled by God, humans feel the necessity of living alongside their fellow human beings, cooperating, supporting one another, and working in solidarity to achieve beneficial goals. The true essence of individuality is closely tied to society. Despite a person's vast innate potential and the marvel of their creation, they cannot fully exercise their functions without undergoing processes of training and development, which are carried out by society. On one hand, society shapes individuals, and on the other hand, real-world observations affirm that humans possess two sides: one in which they are independent individuals with their own abilities and capabilities, and another in which they are integrated members of a social entity to which they are tightly bound. This connection cannot be severed or dispensed with unless either the individual becomes corrupt or the society to which they belong deteriorates. Collective perceptions, customs, traditions, morals, laws, and systems are common factors shared among individuals. Even though these do not belong to any one individual within society, they represent an extension of the collective ideas and beliefs of its members. Therefore, the interaction between the individual and society is a constant, ongoing process in which both influence and are influenced by one another (Zaimi: 294-295).

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## HRM AND RATIONALIZATION PROBLRMATIC IN ALGERIAN ENTERPRISES

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**Abstract:** *The article offers a comprehensive analysis of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices in Algerian companies, incorporating insights from local work sociology, field observations, and a review of relevant literature. The findings reveal a significant gap between the formal HRM policies and their actual implementation, which is shaped by informal customs and traditional power dynamics. The interpretation thoughtfully places these practices within the context of existing studies on the cultural differences between Western models and Algerian realities. This analysis provides valuable perspectives for understanding Algerian organizations in a more dynamic way, moving beyond rigid or static views.*

**Keywords:** HRM, culturalism, Algerian sociology, work, enterprise

### 1. Introduction

This article presents a theoretical analysis alongside field notes on HRM practices within an Algerian mining company. It draws on contributions from Algerian sociology of work and organizations, a field that since the 1970s has explored the confrontation between imported Western managerial models and Algerian socio-cultural specificities related to work and management. Although this line of inquiry remains relevant, it requires a more dynamic approach that acknowledges the complexities of contemporary Algerian organizational logic.

### 2. Problematic and context

Following independence in 1962, Algeria embarked on an extensive industrialization effort, with factories and industrial complexes built through cooperation with socialist countries. This shift aimed to overcome the economic stagnation inherited from colonization and to structure a modern national economy (Harbi,1980). However, the transition to an industrial economy, along with its accompanying social changes, marked a significant break from the rural lifestyle that still characterized much of Algerian society.

Understanding HRM and management practices in Algeria is inseparable from the broader sociological and anthropological frameworks analyzing development and modernization. Specifically, the concepts and practices of general management and human resource management in Algeria are products of the development projects initiated after independence. These projects in return, aimed to modernize Algeria, and according to the dominant modernist paradigm of the time, this modernization was to be achieved through industrialization.

The modernist proposition advocates for the idea of modernity and the potential to transition Algerian society from a traditional cultural system to a more advanced position based on the Western cultural pattern, an argument articulated by decision-makers after independence. This vision is reflected in the constitutional discourse of the 1976 Constitution and the National Charter, which affirm that:

"The Industrial Revolution brought about significant changes in the mindsets of workers, peasants, and various members of society, in addition to propelling development; all of which contribute to the overall advancement in science and technology and facilitate the introduction of modernized methods of work and organization" (El-mithaak Elwatani, 1976: 18).

As stated in Article No. 21 of the 1976 Constitution and the National Charter, the Industrial Revolution is intended not only to foster economic development but also to transform individuals by enhancing their technical and scientific capabilities and altering the social structure. Additionally, it aims to change the overall image of the country. This revolution is grounded in a socialist framework, which provides it with deeper meaning and political significance (Algerian Constitution, 1976).

This evidence from official and leadership discourses clarifies the direction of the development and modernization process. However, the social sphere is mainly controlled by what can be described as: the patriarch, tribal chief, or political leader. These figures view social responsibilities through the lens of the "people," which gives them the authority to understand the social, economic, political, and cultural needs of the population. Consequently, they have the right to implement projects and policies from a top-down perspective, often overlooking grassroots choices and opinions. Therefore, this situation requires a thorough understanding of human resources and HR management in Algerian society, necessitating a multidimensional analysis that considers various socio-anthropological factors.

### 3. Literature Review

In Algeria, management models, particularly global human resources management, often convey rational, bureaucratic principles that conflict with local practices rooted in community values and traditional power relations. Numerous studies in Algerian labor sociology have highlighted these discrepancies, often attributing them to cultural incompatibility or identity-based resistance to modernization (El Kenz et al., 1982). While this culturalist perspective has some validity, it should be expanded to include a more comprehensive approach that places the actors at the center of the analysis. In practical terms, how do workers, managers, and HRM professionals negotiate the relationship between modern management principles and local social realities on a daily basis? What specific organizational culture is emerging in Algerian companies at the intersection of global influences and entrenched traditions? These questions will guide our analysis.

In practical terms, how do workers, managers, and HRM professionals negotiate the relationship between modern management principles and local social realities on a daily basis? What specific organizational culture is emerging in Algerian companies at the intersection of global influences and entrenched traditions? These questions will guide our analysis.

The sociology of work and organizations in Algeria began to develop in the 1970s, coinciding with the country's extensive industrialization after independence. This development was also informed by Pierre Bourdieu's studies on work, workers, and peasantry in Algeria, both before and after independence (Bourdieu, 1958; Bourdieu et al., 1964; Bourdieu and Sayad, 1964). For instance, the pioneering research by El Kenz, Guerid, and Chikhi at the El Hadjar Steel Complex illustrated the gap between imported industrial culture and the traditional values of Algerian workers (El Kenz et al., 1982). Additionally, subsequent studies by Guerid (1997), Kadri and Benguerni (2014), and Mebtoul (1986) demonstrate how Algerians blend community values with professional requirements. Madoui (2009) analyzes how Algerian entrepreneurs draw on both managerial modernity and traditional relational resources.

Moreover, further research has expanded this cultural analysis, revealing how the paternalistic practices of Algerian managers often contradict Western HRM models (Mercuri et al., 1997; Bachir, 2007) and highlighting the persistence of community logic within Algerian public companies (Merani, 2005; Madoui, 2009). However, some scholars have critiqued the excessive focus on culture, proposing four main arguments: First, that Algerian society is experiencing a redeployment of ancient cultural values, suggesting a traditionality of society. Second, that traditional values characterize only part of Algerian society while another part is modern, representing a dualistic framework. Third, cultural ambivalence posits that Algerian society is both traditional and modern. Finally, Abdelkader Djeghloul argues that while Algerians are "inevitably" moving towards modernity, traditions are still preserved (Mezouar, 2012).

Despite the call to reintegrate economic and political dimensions to understand the evolution of work in Algeria—emphasizing the impact of public policies and legal frameworks on organizational practices—the socio-anthropological approach remains more relevant. This approach incorporates economic and political dimensions, linking society, economy, and state. Ultimately, these works provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of contemporary Algerian organizations at the crossroads of global influences and local traditions, encouraging the development of a sociology of work that is rooted in the empirical realities of Algeria, as well as its cognitive and historical construction.

### 4. Methodology

The methodological component of this research involves a comprehensive review of the available literature on the topic, including socio-anthropological studies related to companies and human resource management in Algeria. Additionally, field observations were conducted during intermittent visits to a mining company from 2018 to 2022. These observations were analyzed thematically to extract key conclusions, which will be discussed in this research. This discussion is supported by a cognitive

framework that includes socio-anthropological theories and concepts relevant to organizations, businesses and human resources.

Only then, a thematic analysis of the findings from both the field data and the literature review will be presented. This analysis will help develop critical themes that enhance our understanding of the subject. Theoretical frameworks will also be applied to analyze the data and provide a clearer and more coherent understanding of the results.

## **5. Discussion of The Results**

The results highlight a significant discrepancy between local human resource management (HRM) practices and imported formal models. The bureaucratic negotiating management principle is based on "social power," where managers are in a hierarchical relationship with other members of the organization. In this context, a position is more about defining responsibilities than exercising power. In conflicts among parties at equal levels, such as with the syndicate, relationships shift into negotiations and exchanges of interests. This situation reflects a strong doubt about managers and executives' competence, which also applies to other levels of the hierarchy. This observation is linked to the concept of "historical non-compromise" identified in earlier studies (El Kenz et al., 1982).

At various stages in the human resources development process, the failure to enforce official rules regarding attendance and promotions highlights the dominance of informal logic over rational bureaucratic procedures. For instance, favoritism in promotions based on community affiliation reflects the persistence of traditional social regulations within the workplace. Additionally, supervisors' tolerance of workers' shortcomings reveals a paternalistic approach aimed at maintaining balance in a challenging work environment.

However, Algerian society is evolving, fostering a collective consciousness that embodies a culture of resistance. This culture is one of the dominant forces in organizations, influenced by elements such as "Bailek ownership" and tribal or geographical ties (Bachir, 2007). Furthermore, empirical observations indicate that HRM's lack of attention to the difficult conditions faced by workers, particularly miners, contributes to social reactions directed at supervisors. Consequently, this gap illustrates the divide between formal managerial logic and the realities on the ground, highlighting the unique nature of studying HRM in this context.

The findings confirm analyses within Algerian labor sociology that identify a persistent gap between imported modern principles and local practices rooted in community values and power relations. However, the culturalist interpretation requires qualification. Workers do not totally reject modernization; rather, they seek recognition for their contributions and specific needs (Guerid, 1997; 1994; 1990).

This study illuminates the complexities of management and culture, particularly in the context of importing Western HRM models into Algeria. It demonstrates that local practices arise from an ongoing negotiation between professional requirements, socio-cultural heritages, and specific structural workplace constraints.

Moreover, there is a necessity for a more open approach to other methodologies. A dynamic and comprehensive framework is needed, one that places the actors at the center of the analysis rather than relying solely on holistic approaches, such as culturalism. This perspective often suggests a deterministic view of behavior based on cultural factors (Pesqueux, 2020: 02). It assumes individuals share similar personal traits, leading to a passive acknowledgment of social conditions while minimizing their active role. In fact, culturalism can inadvertently develop into an ideology (Pesqueux, 2020).

Therefore, moving beyond this perspective opens research opportunities to study how Algerian workers actively construct meaning around their professional practices at the intersection of global and local influences. Managers, supervisors, and workers are not merely custodians of tradition; they are mediators who strive to find viable compromises between modern management principles and deeply rooted social realities. Such diverse approaches to studying social reality can enrich HRM research through socio-anthropological perspectives, providing valuable insights and recognizing the specificities of the Algerian context. Ultimately, HRM must shift away from purely bureaucratic logic to accommodate the unique characteristics of the Algerian field.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study highlights the importance of recognizing an Algerian sociology of organizations that focuses on the roles of actors, deeply rooted in local contexts and responsive to the changing dynamics of management, labor, and organization. Furthermore, it is essential to move beyond the simple opposition

between tradition and modernity. Instead, we should aim to understand the unique socio-professional practices in Algerian enterprises, which are shaped by a complex mix of diverse and evolving socio-cultural influences.

In addition, insights from our field notes, literature review, and theoretical framework support the significant contributions made by sociologists and anthropologists in Algeria. Their work confirms the strength of their approaches and concepts. Finally, scholars interested in labor, management, and organizational studies now have the necessary conceptual and theoretical tools to explore these areas and expand into new fields.

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## **TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH ERASMUS+: BETWEEN ACADEMIC MOBILITY AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY**

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**Abstract:** *This article analyzes the influence of the Erasmus+ program on formal education in Romania. Taking a multidisciplinary perspective, the study integrates theories from educational sciences and social sciences, such as experiential learning theory, European identity theory, academic mobility theory and multiculturalism theory. These theoretical frameworks provide a deep understanding of the complex and multidimensional impact of Erasmus+. Methodologically, the paper adopts a documentary analysis and a comparative case study, evaluating the program through a SWOT analysis. This analysis highlights the contributions of Erasmus+ to the internationalization of education and the development of intercultural, linguistic and social competences. At the same time, limitations of the program are addressed, such as dependence on external financing and unequal distribution of benefits. The study's findings underline the role of Erasmus+ in shaping well-informed and aware European citizens with relevant skills for the global labor market. Strategies are also recommended for enhancing the impact of the program in Romania, such as improving access and inclusion, promoting digital skills, supporting sustainability and sustainable development, recognizing qualifications and promoting active European citizenship.*

**Keywords:** Erasmus+, European identity, academic mobility, internationalization of education, educational transition, interculturality, European funds.

### **1. The theoretical framework**

To establish a theoretical scaffolding for the Erasmus+ initiative, we shall harness a panoply of seminal concepts originating from the domains of pedagogy and social sciences. Amongst these, David Kolb's experiential learning theory takes center stage, accentuating the pivotal role of unmediated exposure and introspection in the acquisition of knowledge. Concomitantly, European identity theory delves into the forging of self-perception within the continental milieu, while academic mobility theory underlines the significance of scholarly interchanges in the globalized educational landscape. Moreover, the theory of multiculturalism champions the recognition and valorization of cultural heterogeneity. This theoretical arsenal shall illuminate the multifaceted ramifications of Erasmus+ on its partakers and the pedagogical ecosystem at large (Kolb, 2014).

Kolb's experiential learning paradigm proves exceptionally germane and apposite in the dissection of Erasmus+, a scheme that offers profound and metamorphic educational prospects via international immersion. This framework, positing learning as an engaged procedure emanating from the alchemization of lived occurrences (Kolb, 2014), can supply an all-encompassing lens to fathom how Erasmus+ molds the individual and vocational growth of its beneficiaries.

At a later stage, reflective observation becomes crucial. After experiencing various experiences in the context of the Erasmus+ programme, participants take time to reflect on them. This reflection can be personal or shared with peers and mentors. Through reflection, participants can better understand different cultural and educational contexts and analyze how these experiences relate to their prior values and knowledge. This process of reflection is essential to transform direct experiences into meaningful learning (Kolb, 2014).

As participants process and reflect on their experiences, they reach the stage of abstract conceptualization. In this phase, they begin to formulate theories or adjust their preexisting concepts in light of their new understandings (Kolb, 2014). In the context of Erasmus+, this may mean developing a new perspective on intercultural relations, comparative education systems or professional practices. This abstract conceptualization allows them to synthesize and integrate their new experiences with prior knowledge, leading to a deeper and more nuanced understanding.

The last stage of Kolb's cycle is active experimentation, where participants apply their new acquisitions and knowledge in other contexts (Kolb, 2014). In the case of the Erasmus+ programme, this could involve applying the intercultural and linguistic skills acquired in their professional career or further studies. Participants could also share the knowledge and experiences gained with their home communities, thus extending the impact of experiential learning beyond themselves.

European identity theory, which finds its roots in the works of thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Anthony D. Smith, is central to understanding the impact of the Erasmus+ program on individual and collective perceptions of European identity. This theory, which deals with how individuals construct and express their identity within a wider European context, can provide a deep insight into how Erasmus+ experiences shape the sense of European belonging (Stråth, 2002).

Jürgen Habermas, one of the most influential theorists of European identity, discussed the concept of "European public space", suggesting that European identity is formed and manifested through transnational dialogue and communication (Gestrich, 2006). The Erasmus+ program embodies this idea by facilitating broad cultural and academic exchanges that allow participants to engage in dialogues and build a common understanding and a shared European identity.

Conversely, Anthony D. Smith, renowned for his treatises on nationalism, might posit that the edifice of European self-perception rests upon the shared cultural and historical fundamentals (Smith, 1992). Through the lens of Erasmus+, this notion would imply that immersion in the variegated tapestry of European national heritages and chronicles enables partakers to valorize the collective continental legacy and forge an identity that surpasses the confines of national boundaries.

The analysis of the Erasmus+ program through the lens of European identity theory reveals how cross-border intercultural and educational experiences can influence participants' perception of their own identity and their belonging to a European community. Through interactions with various cultures and education systems within the European Union, participants are exposed to a variety of perspectives and ways of life. This exposure can lead to a reconsideration of one's own values and identity, allowing participants to develop a broader perspective on Europe.

Erasmus+ experiences also offer opportunities to observe and participate in democratic and governance practices at the European level. Participants may come to appreciate more the principles and values that underpin the European Union, such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This can lead to a stronger identification with Europe as a political and cultural entity.

In addition, the Erasmus+ program promotes the development of a sense of European solidarity and cooperation. This is achieved by encouraging active participation and collaboration in various educational and cultural projects, which allow participants to experience the benefits of transnational cooperation and develop a sense of shared responsibility for the future of Europe.

Academic mobility theory, explored by theorists such as Philip G. Altbach and Hans de Wit, focuses on the dynamics and impact of transnational movements of pupils, students, teachers and researchers (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). This theory is highly relevant for understanding and analyzing the Erasmus+ program, a program that facilitates academic and cultural exchanges at the European and international level.

Hans de Wit, a distinguished scholar in the realm of educational internationalization, underscores the pivotal role of academic mobility in cultivating intercultural competence and global understanding (De Wit, 2010). Within the framework of Erasmus+, this notion manifests through the opportunities afforded to partakers to study and work in diverse cultural milieus, thereby acquiring vital aptitudes such as adaptability, cross-cultural communication, and problem-solving in heterogeneous contexts.

Philip G. Altbach, a preeminent researcher in the domain of international education, emphasizes the significance of educational mobility in the globalization of pedagogy. He illuminates how exchange programs like Erasmus+ transcend the mere expansion of the academic and cultural horizons of the partakers, instead contributing to the development of international professional networks and the augmentation of collaboration between educational institutions (Altbach & Engberg, 2014). Through Erasmus+, students and teachers find themselves immersed in novel teaching-learning methodologies, leading to the improvement of the quality of education and research.

Academic mobility theory also suggests that such international experiences can have a significant effect on participants' academic careers (De Wit, 2010). This is due not only to the accumulation of knowledge and skills, but also to the acquisition of a deeper understanding of cultural diversity and educational practices. In this way, Erasmus+ contributes to the training of teachers and researchers who are well equipped to navigate the global education and research landscape.

Applying the theory of academic mobility to the Erasmus+ program, it can be seen that this program plays a crucial role in promoting the internationalization of education and research. Erasmus+ not only provides opportunities for learning and personal development, but also contributes to creating a generation of academics and professionals with a broad perspective, able to contribute to the academic and professional community globally.

Multiculturalism theory, an essential field of study in the social sciences, explores how societies can integrate and celebrate cultural diversity. Theorists such as Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka have made significant contributions to this field, providing relevant perspectives for the analysis of the Erasmus+ programme.

Charles Taylor, in his work on the politics of recognition, argues that societies must recognize and respect the cultural diversity of their members (Taylor, 1994). This principle is vital to understanding how Erasmus+ promotes multiculturalism. The program encourages participants to explore and value diverse cultures, not just in a passive way, but through immersion and direct interaction. Thus pupils, students and teachers participating in Erasmus+ have the unique chance to experience and learn about European cultural diversity in a deep and personal way.

Will Kymlicka highlighted the importance of cultural rights and autonomy within diverse societies (Kymlicka, 1995). This perspective is relevant to the Erasmus+ program as it encourages participants to understand and respect the different cultural and political contexts in Europe. Through their experiences, students and teachers are exposed to different ways of life and value systems, which can lead to a greater appreciation of pluralism and a better understanding of how different cultures can coexist and collaborate.

Analyzing the Erasmus+ program through the lens of multiculturalism theory, it becomes evident that it not only provides educational opportunities, but also plays a crucial role in promoting the understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity. Erasmus+ helps participants develop essential intercultural competences such as empathy, intercultural communication and the ability to navigate diverse cultural environments. These skills are fundamental in a globalized world where cross-cultural interactions are frequent.

## **2. Research methodology**

The Erasmus+ program, initiated in 1987, has become an essential element in the European educational landscape. It is a program that has continuously evolved, becoming today a symbol of education and mobility in the European Union.

The general objective of the study is to comprehensively evaluate the Erasmus+ program, exploring its history, development, current priorities and impact on education and professional training within the European Union, with a specific focus on Romania. The historical analysis shows a transition from one-off educational initiatives to an integrated program encompassing education, vocational training, youth and sport. This development reflects the EU's continued commitment to education, adapting to the needs and challenges of contemporary society.

The research incorporates five distinct aims, each contributing to the holistic examination of the initiative. The inaugural objective seeks to delve into the chronicle and evolution of Erasmus+, furnishing a backdrop for grasping its current state and developmental trajectories. The second aim hones in on the present-day structure and goals of the program, illuminating how it fosters educational mobility and inter-institutional collaboration, with a special emphasis on inclusion and diversity.

A tertiary objective lies in appraising the repercussions of Erasmus+ on the internationalization of education in Romania. This encompasses an analysis of how the initiative has contributed to the cultivation of linguistic, intercultural, and social aptitudes among Romanian partakers. Moreover, it investigates the manner in which Erasmus+ has impacted innovation and the exchange of best practices between institutions.

The fourth specific objective focuses on identifying the challenges and opportunities associated with the Erasmus+ program in the Romanian context. This involves exploring dependence on external funding, uneven distribution of benefits, and logistical and administrative challenges.

Finally, the fifth objective is to carry out a SWOT analysis of the Erasmus+ program in Romania, to highlight the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This analysis provides a clear perspective on how the program can be improved and adapted to maximize its benefits in the Romanian context.

## **3. Presentation of the Erasmus+ program**

The European Parliament's 2019 clarion call to reimagine the Erasmus+ initiative and exponentially augment its financial resources signaled a bold vision for the future landscape of pedagogy across the continent (European Parliament, 2019). Ursula von der Leyen echoed this resounding appeal, underscoring a profound dedication to bolstering education and training throughout Europe. Yet, the fiscal compromise forged by European leaders in the summer of 2020 allocated a more modest sum of €21.2 billion for the nascent generation of programmes, markedly below the initial proposition. In the wake of



this concession, legislators from diverse parliamentary factions, united by their zeal for educational matters, penned an open missive to Chancellor Angela Merkel, imploring for a more generous endowment for Erasmus+ (Cotidianul, 2018).

Set against the canvas of these metamorphoses, a watershed moment materialized in 2014 when a constellation of EU endeavors in the realms of education and youth were woven together under the aegis of the trailblazing Erasmus+ integrated program for education, training, youth, and sport. This encompassed the perpetuation of erstwhile initiatives under the novel nomenclature of Erasmus+, such as Erasmus for Higher Education, Erasmus for Masters and PhD Mobility, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Comenius for School Education, Leonardo da Vinci for Vocational Training, and Grundtvig for Adult Education (Grisoni, 2010).

On the Romanian stage, the pivotal mantle of shepherding this program of European magnitude is bestowed upon the National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Professional Training (ANPCDEFP). This organization shoulders a panoply of vital and multifaceted duties, encompassing the stewardship and apportionment of European pecuniary resources earmarked for the education and vocational training sectors. ANPCDEFP also assumes a seminal role in buttressing organizations and individuals in their ontogenesis, while championing the forging of stalwart partnerships and facilitating the interchange of experiences, best practices, and expertise. Through its manifold undertakings, the agency contributes to the molding and transfiguration of attitudes and mentalities, embracing and promulgating cardinal European values, while interweaving Romanian indigenous values into an expansive continental tapestry. At its core, ANPCDEFP is steadfastly committed to nurturing a culture of excellence, a dedication mirrored in the mission it espouses (National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational Training, 2022).

At its core, the Erasmus+ initiative is steadfastly committed to fostering inter-institutional cooperation and facilitating cross-border academic and professional mobility. As per the European Commission (2017), this program caters to a wide spectrum of beneficiaries, encompassing students, apprentices, foremen, teachers, educators, and administrative staff within educational institutions.

Firmly rooted in the tenet of lifelong learning, Erasmus+ presents an array of opportunities for transnational educational and professional engagements, including study visits, student and apprentice placements, teaching and training activities, exchange of experience, as well as youth and sports initiatives. These prospects transcend the boundaries of the European Union, extending beyond the continent's borders, subject to the stipulations outlined in the program guide (European Commission, 2017).

The Erasmus+ program distinguishes itself through the diversity of its mobility modalities, differentiating between short-term and long-term mobility, as well as individual and group mobility. By means of these mechanisms, the initiative seeks to empower participants to enhance their professional, linguistic, social, and intercultural competencies. Concurrently, Erasmus+ contributes to the fortification of a profound awareness of European unity in diversity, a foundational principle of the union's construction. Thus, the program not only reinforces the sense of belonging to a shared European cultural and educational space but also underscores the rich cultural tapestry of the continent, thereby bolstering European identity within the context of this diversity (European Commission, 2017).

The Erasmus+ program weaves together three distinct yet interconnected specific objectives, each with a well-defined scope of action, all contributing to the realization of the overarching vision, under the umbrella of its general objective:

1. The inaugural specific objective places emphasis on fostering individual and group mobility for educational purposes while simultaneously nurturing cooperation, quality, inclusion, equity, excellence, creativity, and innovation at both the organizational level and within the realm of educational and training policies. ("promote the mobility of individuals and groups for the purpose of learning, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion and equity, excellence, creativity and innovation at the level of organizations and policies in the field of education and training;" European Commission, 2022).

2. "To promote mobility for the purpose of non-formal and informal learning, the active participation of young people, as well as cooperation, the quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of youth organizations and policies" European Commission, 2022).

3. "To promote the mobility of sports personnel for the purpose of learning, as well as cooperation, quality, inclusion, creativity and innovation at the level of sports organizations and sports policies." European Commission, 2022).

The Erasmus+ program, as outlined in the European Commission's 2022 documentation, endeavors to tackle four horizontal priorities, each playing a pivotal role in molding and perpetually enhancing the European educational and social landscape.

Foremost among these is the program's steadfast dedication to championing an agenda of inclusion and diversity. This entails an unwavering focus on equal opportunity and access, inclusion, diversity, and equity across all its initiatives. The program places particular emphasis on organizations and participants confronting limitations in accessing opportunities, providing them with specialized resources and mechanisms. This commitment necessitates that organizations partaking in Erasmus+ embrace an inclusive approach in crafting projects and activities, ensuring their accessibility to a wide spectrum of participants, thereby mirroring the rich tapestry of European society (European Commission, 2022).

The Erasmus+ program demonstrates a strong commitment to excellence in education through various initiatives. These include the establishment of European universities, joint master's degrees, and centers of professional excellence, which promote cross-border collaboration, integrated study, and the cultivation of professional skills. Additionally, the program features Jean Monnet actions focused on European studies and Erasmus+ academies for training teachers and administrative staff, further reinforcing the understanding and appreciation of EU values and principles in an educational context. (Samuk et al., 2022). The program also harbors a lofty aspiration to engender a far-reaching systemic impact, striving to fortify the sustainable horizontal internationalization of national education systems. This process of internationalization permeates the entire educational continuum, from the formative years of primary and secondary education, across all forms and types of schools, to the realm of lifelong learning in adult education (Samuk et al, 2022). The program's aim transcends merely bolstering national political priorities in the educational domain; it also encompasses the promotion of tools for transparency and recognition of qualifications, as well as the cultivation of networks at the European level. This holistic approach contributes to the creation of a coherent and interconnected European educational space, where educational mobility and knowledge exchange are facilitated and valued. The program emphasizes the necessity of leveraging digital technologies for teaching and learning, fostering universal digital competences, and engaging learners, teachers, youth, and organizations in this transformative process to ensure a relevant education that prepares citizens for an increasingly digitized world. (European Commission, 2022).

The Erasmus+ program acknowledges the significance of addressing environmental challenges and promoting eco-friendly behavior through education and training, encouraging educational institutions to work together with various stakeholders to reach climate neutrality goals by 2050. Additionally, the program aims to tackle the issue of low citizen engagement in EU democratic processes and insufficient understanding of the EU by fostering active participation in communities and EU political and social life, utilizing formal education and non-formal learning to enhance citizens' comprehension of the EU and cultivate a sense of belonging. (European Commission, 2022).

Thus, through these four horizontal priorities, the Erasmus+ program aims to shape a more inclusive European educational and social landscape, one that is more adapted to the digital age, more cognizant of ecological challenges, and more engaged in democratic life. It represents a comprehensive and integrated approach that reflects and promotes the fundamental values and objectives of the European Union.

In the realm of pre-university education, the Erasmus+ program plays a pivotal role in facilitating and strengthening cross-border cooperation between educational institutions, including schools, kindergartens, and other educational entities. It stimulates the European mobility of students, teachers, educators, and administrative staff of pre-school and school educational institutions (Saraiva et al, 2022).

Furthermore, virtual projects between schools and kindergartens can take place within the eTwinning platform (European Commission, 2023a). This online platform facilitates the development of online cross-border projects and supports the creation of national and international networks of trainers through European courses and conferences. Thus, the Erasmus+ program contributes significantly to the creation of a European educational network characterized by cooperation, innovation, and cultural exchange. Through these mechanisms, the program not only enriches the educational experience of students, teachers, and administrative staff but also favors the development of innovative educational approaches and promotes a sense of belonging and European identity among young people.

The Erasmus+ program provides two distinct types of cooperation partnerships: Cooperation Partnerships, which are geared towards experienced organizations or more extensive projects, focusing on enhancing the quality of activities, promoting transnational and cross-sectoral collaboration, and tackling shared needs and priorities; and Small-scale Partnerships, which are specifically designed for grassroots organizations or those new to the program, aiming to increase accessibility and offer valuable international cooperation experiences. Both types of partnerships are structured to generate results that

can be transferred and scaled up, enabling organizations to enhance their activities, develop their capacity, address common needs, and create positive and enduring impacts on the participating organizations, political systems, and individuals involved, while simultaneously contributing to the modernization and adaptability of education and training systems and youth policies in response to global challenges (European Commission, 2023a, (European Commission, 2023b).

#### **4. SWOT analysis of the Erasmus+ program in Romania**

The Erasmus+ program in Romania stands as a beacon of educational transformation, illuminating a path towards unparalleled opportunities for growth and development. Its strengths are manifold, weaving a tapestry of internationalization that has forever altered the fabric of the nation's educational landscape. At the heart of this metamorphosis lies the program's unwavering commitment to providing pupils, students, and teachers with a portal to a world beyond their own, a chance to immerse themselves in the kaleidoscopic beauty of diverse cultures and educational systems through exchange programs that transcend the boundaries of the ordinary. This transformative journey has given birth to a generation of linguistically adept, interculturally savvy, and socially empowered graduates, armed with the tools to navigate the labyrinthine global job market with the grace of a seasoned explorer.

Yet, amidst the program's myriad triumphs, there lurk shadows of weakness that threaten to dim its radiance. The specter of external funding dependency looms large, casting a pall of uncertainty over the program's future, particularly in the face of the capricious tides of European Union budgetary fluctuations. Moreover, the fruits of the program's labors may not be evenly distributed, with smaller school units or those in less developed regions at risk of being relegated to the margins, their voices drowned out by the cacophony of larger, more privileged institutions.

Nevertheless, the Erasmus+ program is a wellspring of untapped potential, a font of opportunities waiting to be seized. As the world hurtles towards an increasingly digitized future, where distance education reigns supreme, the program stands poised to serve as a crucible for the forging of digital skills, both for students and teachers alike. Furthermore, the program's unwavering focus on sustainability and sustainable development opens up new vistas of research and innovation within the hallowed halls of educational institutions, inviting scholars and visionaries to dare to dream of a greener, more equitable world.

However, the path ahead is not without its perils. The specter of political and economic instability, both at the European and global level, casts a long shadow over the program's funding and strategic direction, threatening to derail even the best-laid plans. Moreover, the labyrinthine web of logistical and administrative challenges that ensnare some schools can prove to be an insurmountable barrier, limiting access to the program and denying countless students the opportunity to partake in its transformative power.

In the final analysis, the Erasmus+ program stands as a beacon of hope for the Romanian educational system, a luminous testament to the boundless potential of international collaboration and exchange. It is a clarion call to all stakeholders, urging them to band together in common cause, to surmount the challenges that lie ahead and to harness the program's transformative power to shape a brighter, more enlightened future for education in Romania. The road may be long and the obstacles many, but with the Erasmus+ program as our guide, we can dare to dream of a world where every student, regardless of background or circumstance, has the opportunity to soar on the wings of knowledge and to drink deeply from the well of human understanding.

#### **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

The Erasmus+ program has been a catalyst for profound and far-reaching transformations in the Romanian education system, as revealed by a thorough analysis of its impact. By applying seminal theories from the realms of education and social sciences, we can gain a deeper understanding of how this program has succeeded in molding both individuals and educational structures.

David Kolb's theory of experiential learning takes center stage within the Erasmus+ program, as the international experiences it offers transform learning into an active and deeply personal process. Romanian pupils, students, and teaching staff who participate in Erasmus+ go beyond the mere accumulation of theoretical knowledge, engaging instead in a learning process rooted in direct experience. These experiences provide them with the opportunity to confront new ways of thinking, explore diverse educational and cultural systems, and develop a more nuanced understanding of the world around them. By reflecting on these experiences and integrating them into a broader conceptual framework, participants engage in meaningful and enduring learning.

The impact of the Erasmus+ program on European identity is evident in the way participants construct and express their sense of self within a wider European context. European identity theory suggests that the Erasmus+ program contributes to the formation of a sense of belonging to a united European community. This is achieved by exposing participants to a rich tapestry of European cultures and histories, enabling them to appreciate their common European heritage and develop an identity that transcends national boundaries.

The Erasmus+ program stands in stark contrast to the communist period in Romania, when academic mobility and international collaboration were virtually non-existent. During the communist regime, access to international education and research was severely restricted, with occasional academic exchanges tightly controlled by the party-state. Students and teachers were often isolated from the trends and innovations of the rest of the world, limiting their opportunities for professional and personal growth. For students, international mobility was an impossibility.

In addition to its impact on individual learning and identity formation, the Erasmus+ program makes a significant contribution to the promotion of multiculturalism and transcultural understanding. Through immersion in different cultures, participants gain a deep appreciation of cultural diversity and develop crucial intercultural competencies. This approach aligns with the theory of multiculturalism, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing cultural diversity in contemporary societies.

The promotion of multiculturalism in Romania through the Erasmus+ program is particularly significant given the country's unique socio-cultural context. As part of Eastern Europe, Romania has undergone significant political and social transitions, opening the door to greater cultural diversity and deeper integration into the European context. In this framework, Erasmus+ serves as a vital tool for enriching cultural understanding and tolerance in a society that is constantly evolving. Romania faces challenges related to the integration of ethnic minorities and migrants (Trofimov & Maximiuc, 2022), and the Erasmus+ program offers a unique opportunity for Romanians to interact with and learn from people from diverse cultural backgrounds. This positive interaction can help reduce prejudices and stereotypes, promoting mutual understanding and reducing ethnic or cultural tensions.

Therefore, the Erasmus+ program significantly influences the education system in Romania, not only by offering educational opportunities, but also by contributing to the formation of an integrated European perspective. By promoting intercultural understanding, developing global skills and stimulating international collaboration, the Erasmus+ program plays a vital role in preparing young Romanians to become active and aware citizens of Europe and the world.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the Erasmus+ program in Romania, it is essential to address some strategies specific to the national context.

The first recommendation focuses on expanding access and inclusion. This implies the implementation of proactive strategies to attract students and teachers from less developed regions of Romania and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. For example, we can initiate mentoring programs where students from top schools collaborate with their peers from underrepresented regions. This could include counseling and guidance sessions, thus providing support and encouragement to participate in the Erasmus+ programme.

Second, promoting digital skills and online education is vital in the current context. This can be achieved by developing dedicated digital platforms that facilitate virtual exchanges, online conferences and remote collaborations between students, students and teachers. In addition, information and communication technology training programs can be integrated into the Erasmus+ curriculum, thus ensuring that participants are well prepared for an increasingly digitized world.

A third direction focuses on supporting sustainable development and climate action. In this sense, Erasmus+ in Romania could encourage projects and initiatives that address ecological challenges specific to the region, such as biodiversity conservation in the Carpathians or projects related to renewable energy. Exchange programs may include modules or research projects focused on sustainability and environmental protection.

A fourth strategy involves improving the recognition and transferability of qualifications obtained through Erasmus+. This could involve close collaboration between Romanian schools and European partners to ensure a common framework for the recognition of credits and skills acquired. It is also important to develop an effective system for the validation and recognition of non-formal skills acquired through participation in Erasmus+ programs.

Finally, promoting active participation and European citizenship is crucial. This can be achieved by organizing events, workshops and projects that encourage intercultural dialogue and civic participation.

For example, annual Erasmus+ forums can be organized in Romania, where participants can share their experiences and debate topics related to European citizenship and global challenges.

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# THE DUALITY OF MUSIC AND INTERACTIVE POETRY. "AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTERPRETIVE READING OF VISIONS AND DIMENSIONS".

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**Abstract:** *This study seeks to demonstrate the emerging relationship between literature and music as the world of magic and mystery, expressing cases and referring to experiences that it tries to embody in sound, with great impact on its owner's psyche, and that music has now and foremost addressed all areas; These include the literary sphere, accompanying literary creativity, especially in our digital era, which has eliminated the boundaries between races and the arts; Thus, the poetry to the music, taking some of its essential characteristics away from it, and perhaps the interactive digital blog "No Fiery Wall Infinite" has absorbed the specificity of the relationship between poetry and music, and the poet has used pieces of music that correspond to the number of texts of the blog, based on literal connotations, because it is not an abstract version. The study found that the relationship between literature and music is in harmony and convergence, serving each other through the terrible integration we find in the poetry blog. This convergence between them was developed by digitization and expanded its prospects for technology, to pave the way for new creations documenting this duality in a digital world and with artistic creativity that reflects the world of artistic beauty.*

**Keywords :** digital poetry, music piece, note, interpretation

## 1. Introduction

Literature and music are the manifestations of an important psychological aspect of human beings. Since time immemorial, music has gained a special place among intellectuals and philosophers and even when people darken. Some have regarded it as an important element of understanding of existence. The voices are: "Collectors are inherently subjective... they depend on the subjects they receive. and sends us a feeling that they emanate from our inner depths, not an indication that thinking in turn a completely esoteric process, taking a temporal template of successive ideas behind each other, But it's impossible to take a place template, that is, to see ideas externally. Music on this basis glued the arts to the depths of human subjects." (Zakaria, 1956) This is a preference for music over other arts, given that both painting and sculpture of arts that formulate spatial sensations for us, such as visuals and tangents, are perceived to be independent exterior of us. As if we feel an external world parallel to us, as opposed to music that has its own connections, that is to say, a sense of the world itself, through ideas that come into being while hearing music, and therefore a chronological nature that depends on the idea of succession and the messaging of ideas in the depths of oneself.

## 2.Problem of the study

Literary creativity has witnessed a sober work of text in a digital world, where literature has borrowed various multimedia services to denote the letter, opening the areas and horizon of receipt and interpretation. Perhaps one of the most prominent arts is the convergence with literature in a digital world. We find a binary with an interconnected chemistry that combines music art with literature. The infinite interactive blog of Miss Abbas Ma 'an was a wide-ranging work of music in the folders of poetic texts. The problem of the paper therefore centred on the following questions: How did art bring music to the world of literary creativity? How did music affect digital poetry? What are the manifestations of this? Has the digital blog for firewall finishes created global word and note cohesion? Has the interpretive curriculum succeeded in reading them? Reach the desired connotations?

## 3.Study Objective

This paper aims to try to answer a problem that embodies the binary of music and literature in the digital text, specifically the interactive code of firewall finishes of Mushtaq Abbas Maan, as to the impact of music on poetry, was the blog really able to create a successful image that reflected the

smooth blending between them, Has the interpretive curriculum succeeded in reaching similar and parallel reading results in both literary and musical terms.

#### **4.The importance of the study**

This study draws its relevance from its theme, which addressed the relationship between literature and music in the latest digital poetry creations, and the extent to which poetry succeeds in creating synergies that reflect uniform connotations, produced by art blends, both of which are servants of the other and reveal insights behind them.

#### **5.Study curriculum**

Through the problem raised, and in view of the subject matter of the study, the study relied on the interpretive curriculum, while identifying what resonates behind words, and what resonates behind the voices, notes and pieces of music employed. The study also used the descriptive curriculum and analytical mechanism to reach its desired goals.

#### **6. Duality of literature and music**

Music has a close relationship with human beings and breaths. It has begun as simple as imitating the sounds of nature, or from the puff and the knock of a hand: "In an inflator it comes out of the mixed breath in the chest, and if it is rhythmic, it transports something from within it and performs it to become a material independent of it, but it still contains part of itself." (Al-Laham, 1997)

The relationship of literature, especially poetry, to music, is old. They are important creative sources. Poetry's interest in weights is a direct statement of the importance of music in poetry. They have been paying attention to the musical harmony of poetry pieces until they reach their purpose in influencing that they realize that: "Poetry has other aspects of the meaning of poetry, its imagination and new imaginations that have never been felt, it affects emotion." (Anis, 1952)

Poetic music of all kinds enters the marshes of human breath, and it comes into light. Our grief and joy, memories and aspirations, even because they increase in vigour, readiness and footing So, pairing music with the word, especially poetry, and their compassion with each other will inevitably have a wide impact and a profound effect. And so much to ask for, so nowadays, music doesn't just follow hair. But they are at one level of importance, and one complements the other. Together, they contribute to intensifying meaning, enriching connectivity and connecting intent brilliantly.

Perhaps the most prominent musical attempt of the twentieth century was by the musician (Skriaben), who created a new art formula in which he combined voice and melody in: "His symphony poem Prothius was called double, because it combines color expression with color-suggestive soundtrack value." (Ali, 1985) This convergence of artists has evolved further with the prominence of the electronic revolution, so that the music then became intimate with literary work and is in our hands without the availability of an actual sensory means other than a computer, This is what interactive literature has achieved through the direct cast of poems or through music accompanying poems that interacts in an interconnected network of various other elements of images, colors, movements and hyperlinks, so that the voice in interactive poems is quite parallel to them. So the poet in the interactive poetry has to strive to: "Invest all the sonic rhythms, invest the pulse of all the sounds from his chanting voice to the music, to the sounds of the nature from Ra's, Khirr's water, the descent of rain, the gusts of wind, the rhythm of an hour or the movement of a car or plane" (Grkan, 2010, p. 81)

It should be noted that the use of a voice of its kind is not arbitrary, but must accompany and share one aspect of the poem, thereby serving as a key component of the poem's interaction. It is not merely: "an audible background of interactive texts, but an essential element thereof, which cannot be dispensed with, except by dispensing with a part of the meaning that it offers, and whose absence cannot be compensated for by another element or a adjacent component." (Grkan, 2010, p. 82)

The poet must therefore exploit the voice's suggestive wealth, especially music, in his creations because of the enormous tributes that the latter endured; They do not translate a single language. Because they are the tongue of all languages and are understood by all in their different nationalities and levels, they mean that they are of a broad language, and the space of their influence is limitless, not enough to dive into the caves of selves to get them out into the light and dial the setter from their hidden veins in their stubborn spheres.

#### **7.Music influences and their relationship to literature**

The influence of music on breath, beyond that of the rest of the arts, is the world of magic and mystery, and being an independent art style: "Don't imagine or imitate anything; While painting is

graphic, sculpture is related to the portrayal of external reality through its three dimensions, literature represents reality through linguistic symbols; Music is neither imitating nor representing anything." (Zakaria, 1956, pp. 9-10)

This means that music suggests and does not imitate, it conveys to us the natural sounds and psychological states, having been polite, improved and brought to us in an influential way; Because natural sounds have irregular oscillations, such as the sounds of a musical instrument that is subject to a strict technical system, and necessary for the voices to come out of that body, and we take an example: The impossibility of imitating the instrument of human voice and, therefore, that self-contained language of rhythm, melody and vocal consensus, to reflect the cases of its owner, or to refer to experiences that attempt to embody it, has had a significant impact on its owner's psyche, and music has now and foremost accentuated all areas; They are: "Their place, composition, manifestations, weight and unity control everything in this life" (MoFtah, 2010), and the poetry is not far from it; It itself is straight with the array of regular weights and harmonious sounds, which constitutes a musical tune, palatable by hearing taste; The relationship between them is embodied in: "In tandem with words, it gives it a vivacity and a diagram of its path, or the ones it requires, and it gives a high expansion of its exchange with the spoken language that it forms, in the first it initiates the poet and in the second it initiates the musical" (Karim, 2002), after which the music is an independent shroud itself, accompanying literary creativity, and the sober step, the playwright. (Kakner 1813-1883), in such a way that opera art was accompanied by poetic performance, (Karim, 2002, pp. 76-87) followed by experimentation, until we reached our present age, this digital age that eliminated the boundaries between races and the arts; The arts have vin (MoFtah, 2010) dicated and blended into literature, serving each other, singing it, enriching and expanding its connotations, imbuing it with brilliant aesthetics, meticulous intentions and introducing music as a text and influence parallel to literature: "It possesses a great influential power, capable of provoking various and varying emotions". (Karim, Music & Poetry, 2015)

### **8.Second. Music and digital literature (infinite firewall model)**

Poetry to music, he looked forward to having some of its intrinsic characteristics in it so that he could: "Get away through the sensor to the absolute, get away through the time to the non-chronological, and look for the expression of a new emotion, generated by beauty deeper than the rapidly diminished emotions, and get away from partial to total." (Karim, Music & Poetry, 2015, p. 62)

The interactive digital blog "Infinite Firewall" may have absorbed the specificity of the relationship between poetry and music. Mushtaq used the author and music distributor Ali Suhail Najm to compose pieces of music that correspond to the number of texts of the blog, based on literal connotations. From my personal composition and imagination, and that was after the perpetuation with Dr. With regard to the purposes of the texts, the quality of the instrument used " (Najm, 2020), the number of composite pieces says: "The total number of pieces came in the number of windows, that is, twelve windows containing twelve pieces, in addition to the facade piece, a total of one hundred and forty-five " (Najm, 2020) But after browsing through the blog's illustrative files, we find six pieces per hour, In a total of 72 pieces of music, plus a piece of facade, perhaps after the installation of music on the texts in a digital manner, the intervention of the technical assistant Mustafa Mahmoud Shakir Rebezar Al-Sha 'ar a change in the upload of accompanying pieces, and the selection settled on the number borne by the digital blog.

The music pieces used in each poem varied, due to the nature of each text, and thus the instruments used varied, as follows: Piano, violin, guitar, cello, trombet, string, inflatable machines, as well as sound effects used as natural sounds, the sound of a turboprop, human groans (men/women) through the sampler, the sound of war drums, the sound of clock minutes, the sound of the steamer whistle, the characteristics and impact of the most important pieces employed will be shown as follows:

#### **8.1 First piece: Frontal Music (Maan, 2017)(Terror and Intimidation Orchestra)**

Once the blog interface opens, until the ear is targeted by a loud symphony, Length (1.42), predictable and tense, as if to give the recipient some time or opportunity in the need for movement to show a change of status She's been wanting him over time through the hour's unstoppable beats. In this piece, the author used both the sound of the hour's beats. sounds of war drums, a combined orchestra of string instrument sounds, violin sound and trombet sound.

This music was accompanied by the following poetic text:

*Unemployed bread*



*Eat Enough*  
*Bites young lip wounds*  
*It takes care of all the remnants of fear.*  
*sweeps from all over the soul*  
*Patience straw*  
*Bomb!*  
*Bear since a brown lean.*  
*The secret of death.*  
*Take time off a little bit.*  
*The casualties are moaning.*  
*After Victims*  
*After Victims*  
*Long Ghavin Mahad Wood Qan*  
*Embrace from the branches of my comrades a flogger.*  
*Dripping here*  
*Above Red Step Pores*  
*He knows. That*  
*Time call:*  
*Leftover dagger*  
*Open an eyelid*  
*To fall asleep between the throats and the throats. (Maan, 2017)*

The clock's sound came in the sense of continuity and flow of time and five minutes towards the end of the estimated waiting time. Before the dawn of a new day, she is promising Iraqi danger, urging him to quickly enter the new world and emerge from the Jerusalem in which he flops, enticing him to enter the scale of the Gilded Age and keep up with his updates before all the sand atoms descend from the hour. And the gate closed to the new world, and that's all in a terrifying atmosphere. with the sounds of the drums of war that were beating nonstop and dead, Foreseeable doom and a frightening future. It's the war that must be fought. He fights for victory, surrenders, eats raw, or dumps his body on the margins of history. This is accompanied by the sounds of string machines, most notably violins, which are characterized by: "Its soundtrack potential makes it one of the most capable instruments of simulating human voice and its different musical techniques give it the ability to perform many different musical colors " (al-Saad, 2000), The latter, who expressed the bemoaning poetry, transported himself and his groans on lost glory, And a golden future in the hands of the West. Intimidation from the war and its consequences, which led to the loss of Iraqi glory and promise a future of anaemia and anaemia, and the need to accelerate entry into the alphabets of Latin time and restore the composition of the time by retrieving lost glories after finding the secrets of the bumps in which the Arabs fell, granting Alawi and progressing on a gold plate for his Azzali crime (Western), the latter who took full advantage of this and stepped away from his margin and decline, and joined the center squared on the throne of control in the world, after being abandoned by the Arab because of his ignorance and lack of resourcefulness, but the hope of the poet remains indefinite, dreaming of returning to the centrality of the world and the restoration of glory lost its features, but inscribed his secrets into the conscience of those enveloping their souls.

Let's say that this musical orchestra formed with a platform: "Extension, distribution of movements, Utilizing orchestral coloring for a more blend service and feelings, whims and thoughts " (Karim, Music & Poetry, 2015, p. 154), have been able to influence the recipient and give him all the current intentions But the role of accompanying music is one of the highest of this influence. and deepened the sense of the depth of tragedy and the need for change, so I accelerate his search for the path of salvation by choosing to enter a trail before the time of the only chance to get out of the dark prison runs out.

### **8.2 Second piece (Maan, 2017) (tractor traitor with thirst drunkenness)**

Repeat the following symphony poetry twice, finding it in the third poem, the nine-hour poem of the first hour (poverty), the length of (1.00d), and make the poet the following text accompanying it:

The poet says:  
*I wear the jars shy and bad*  
*The heavy zipper with the connector distances*  
*Drought still waters my roots.*  
*And my lean fruit of death filled*

*Stimulates Ankles*  
*Fast horizontal*  
*And my lazy spring is getting slower.*  
*Autumn appeals to me in the pale.*  
*The cactus is slowly sipping on me. (Maan, 2017)*

The piece begins with quiet short notes that soon expand and increase in tone and rhythm. The poetry in this piece employed the piano machine, and a set of overlapping sounds of string machines. The piece began with a quiet tap on the fingers of the piano keys, without being accompanied by the sound of any other instrument. But the piano soon thickens, and other musical sounds of stringed instruments intervene. to reflect a kind of tension and anxiety derived from the country's situation. The Earth is thirsty, the wells are dry, and the tractor is a traitor who has not done her usual job. I climbed out of the well empty, just like I first entered it, you won't recount the drought. And I even announced the dismissal of drunkenness, and the player resorted to a distinctive musical technique. In the first and last piece, solo, where it appears: "The piano sound clearly without any melodic accompaniment from other instruments in a role akin to a simple melodic stunt." (al-Nimri, 2019) The same thing with the end of the piece, when the string machines stop, making room for the piano by ending the piece that started quiet, It ended quietly until it disappeared as if it were an indication of surrender and acquiescence to the force of the crescent who watered the roots. And he filled the lean fruits with the spirit of death, so we conclude that the piano contained the connotation of decay and weakness. Having contributed to the further sensing of the future threat of death and erosion, The decline in soundbites may have signified submission to and surrender to death after the body's fear of the spirit of life. and the accompanying string machines worked to: "Bring out different and varied tones that increase the beauty of the machine's sound" (Belbashir, 2019)

### **8.3 Third piece (Maan, 2017): Homeland and the Traveller's Concerto**

The fifth poem from the first hour was memories on the pages of a miserable memoir, in which the poet recalled his distant homeland; He remembers him in exile, bringing back the tape of his happy memories. His mother's features as she lovingly and warmly craved the garden of her home, and the cardamom scent that labels his father's morning coffee, memories invading his grandparents, says:

*National. And the exiles break in my fairways. Two cheeks in love. And they explode in my palms. Mom. She crossed her features on the willow. Wipe her rural tear off my grandfather. And you print good. The walls of our walled village are grassed with cardamom. I can't, Dad. I got away with your nostalgia. Stabbing her heart the days. She cheated. And lengthened. And I poured on her crazy barrages. It's pale time. (Maan, 2017)*

This poem is accompanied by a piece of music with a length (0.28s), soloing of the piano machine, the so-called concerto, in which the single instrument reviews: "Its potential is at its utmost potential, in the hands of an accomplished player who can perform everything he writes for the particular machine no matter how difficult it may be" (Belbashir, 2019, p. 44). The choice of piano for this work was very successful, because it is the most prominent instrument capable of: "Play multiple tones in a very large acoustic space, including the space of all the sharp-decked musical instruments, and the high-decked on both" (Belbashir, 2019, p. 42), and the player must be distinguished and genius in playing, so that he or she can: "The various other instruments of the orchestra show that this dialogue may even culminate in the incarnation of ideas and the soloist proves his ability to dialogue the orchestra with his musical ideas." (Musa, Ahmed Mohamed Abd Rabbo, 2008)

And the player did that because he could keep up with the purposes of the words. which formed an orchestra to run with a single instrument, capable of proving itself in broad dialogue with the rest of the instrument performing its function to the fullest. The quiet piano was able to take us to the poet's home, where he was relaxed, quiet and seen the moments of his passing diaries, in a cinematic scene in which events clash between three characters. (Mother/Father/Poet) In a unified space with an authentic identity, but we also feel a kind of sadness emanating from musical notes, which is the woke sadness of memories past and will not return, rising as a beautiful dream in the space of alienation, but being brutally slapped from the shoulder of a bitter reality.

### **8.4 Fourth piece (Maan, 2017): (waiting for Godot flavor)**

The piece of music was 0.44s, starting with prominent tunes of the harp machine, accompanied by the piano machine and a group of sounds of stringed instruments combined, for a text whose sad skies were filled by clouds covered in its vacant desert clock, a text that was waiting for its title, waiting long for it to come, but does it arrive? The poet says:

*The Rain Burden of the Zipper*  
*Stolen by Faghat deserts*  
*While he shone.* (Maan, 2017)

The player chose the harp machine to express the time of waiting because: "Very romantic machine insensitive, heart-touching, helped by the fact that the colour of the voice is soft and low... so they wrote her pieces full of love, passion and feelings" (Hamdi, 2022) and waiting always for the loved one, for the party to which he will bring life back. In it, please salvation, and waiting for the poetry is a wait for the rain that has tormented and warmed the ukulele tunes so that it may lean and shed the tears of Ghaith on the dystopian desert. But waiting for him was in the flavor of Godot. And this is highlighted by the sounds of stringed machines that cracked the ukulele quiet, She began to amplify her notes to break the romantic monotony and to sow sorrow, promising her that the Godot curse accompanied the clouds of Iraq's skies.

#### **8.5 Piece 5 (Maan, 2017): "The Earth Does Not Be a Phoenix"**

The seventh text of the fourth hour opens to the poetry:

*Captivating death in the soreness of the remains*

*Hellenic ego from every coming*

*His shadow is blatantly tearful.*

*All languages are wounded.*

*Let's stay patient.*

*His path is pronounced silent by the parties.* (Maan, 2017)

Accompanied by a piece of music with a length (0.41 w) that transforms us into authenticity, this is through the sound of a prominent violin, Accompanied by human sound effects derived from Sampler's program against the background of a picture of a land that has made ash impossible It's like the land of the past that locked the phoenix in a steel prison, preventing it from regenerating and bringing about life. And this broadened the connotation of violin tunes, the ancient instrument that strikes at the roots of cultural history, is the instrument that: "Move the emotions of the listener, the passion of the passion in them along with the other kinds of human feelings" (Researchers, 2022), this is its close proximity to the human voice on two levels: the raw level, and the level of time extension.

The violin was able to impose a state of setback, gloom and distrust on a land that decided to lock the phoenix in its guts forever. to increase the existence of a rupture, and to increase the death and fracture of its people, as expressed by the human mothers accompanying the violin, Kwaman has persisted, perhaps healing her bloody boiler. And these groans were very in harmony with the sound of the violin, as well as the frequency of the sounds of the stringent machines, and formed the impending death sympathy in the recipient's hearing taste.

#### **8.6 The sixth piece (Maan, 2017): "The Conflict between the Dark and the Light"**

After sensing death in the previous piece, here is the piece of the sixth poem from the fifth hour long (1.17 D), beating the drums of war, foreshadowing the end, talking about an imminent conflict, a struggle to which words have been referred, it is the eternal conflict between the dark and the light, the poet says:

*Conifer Sky.*

*Fermented your Lipas stars*

*How to grow on your forehead sucking hearts*

*My land is smoky with salt and lichens?* (Maan, 2017)

The trombet's voice is loud in this piece, the blowing machine that crushed the feeling, inserted breath into a state of tension and fear, awaiting the alphabets of conflict between the dark and light world; Here are the selves that she has hoped to limp into the light, find herself governed by the Earth's darkness, dragging her into the eternal darkness, with the beats of a damn war drum, sharp trombet exhales, and choosing this machine to keep pace with the poet's sensual state: "Cover the brass puffers", which narrowed the breath and forced the self to obey the word darkness, and at the end I went to the darkened catapults, to remain in the cheating of the pure sunset, and any life envisaged in the darkness is ravaged by nowhere.

#### **8.7 Seventh piece (Maan, 2017): "Explosion and reconstruction"**

The fourth text of the third hour was an acclaimed speech, consisting of a message from the flash pole as a reprimand for his homeland and urging him to explode, an explosion that would restore his lost power, and bring him to rebuild himself from his wreckage by collecting a diaspora of his authenticity,

away from all the impurities that it had adhered to; He was returned by a lifeless body surrendering the dust, which says:

*You walk-in.*

*Seal Back*

*My road is full of pillars of bloody wind.*

*And you're shading a barrage from a fire.* (Maan, 2017)

This text was accompanied by a calm, nostalgic piece of music, which came with a length (0.41s), formed by the sounds of the highest-contact musical instrument, namely, flute, violin cello, violin, and the machine of cello, which emits: "Big voices, called motherhood in Europe" (Al-Hanafi, 1987), have been made symbolic by poetry of the mother who backs her baby. and urges him to rely on himself, as well as the poet, to urge his homeland to explode to rebuild its structure again. The cello tones accompanied the continuous voices of Nai, who touched the reader's conscience, Because she came out of the breath, she drank the situation, and she's trying to bring it closer to the other. Let the voice of the violin come mostly the sense of grief to which the homeland came. and then the sensory situation exploded, awaiting the nation's explosion to reshape itself, rejecting all forms of submission.

### **8.7 Eighth piece (Maan, 2017): "Sacrifice and Freedom"**

*The poet sealed his gratitude with a poem from the flash column, saying:*

*Look at me.*

*Oh, and the gift of the dream.*

*I had my blood in you.* (Maan, 2017)

In his poem, the poet expresses the enormous sacrifices that accompanied the resistance scenario, the Earth twisted in the blood of testimony, until the hands of its monolith people, like the two sons, became cloaked with freedom. The poet addressed his home country, which was blasted by the explosion to rest because freedom was realized, accompanied by a long piece of music 1.05 and came by playing solo through the use of the piano, which brought calm and spiritual peace to its regular, blunt and non-heavy sequences, accompanied by an auditory effect of the sea waves, as if the poetry was resting on the banks of a quiet sea listening to its careful hits on the rocks of the harbour, which saw the right to return to the stream, and the strugglers cladding to retrain; Because the goal had been achieved, and Iraq was back on track, after it had entered time and exploded and then rebuilt itself. and gathering his children, and here he is today rest quiet because the causes of oppression are gone. And the sea waves returned to their tides and islands did not succumb to the salt of divisions, life returned to normal and control over time. And hence the return of the clock's scorpions to its proper direction, the joy of the homeland restores its past and reforms its present, and looks forward to a future that is unsatisfied with darkness and absurdity.

Here we say that music is the language that has performed its role properly, it has been able to communicate to the hearing the proper understanding and understanding of the purposes of the blog, and what it aims, in a more effective and effective manner, to be not: "Mere tunes and sounds matched in a blurry manner and in corresponding, repetitive and weighted arrangements only. They resonate with voices coming from the damaged visual or hidden nature, and with the echo and meanings of the mother tongue, that innate language based on sounds and tones that express basic and instinctive situations and needs that translate into sounds such as sadness, pain, malaise, anxiety, anger, anger and instinct. (al-Sabbagh, 2018)

## **9. Conclusion**

Music and literature are identical creative drinkers who meet in sound technology as a focus of attention and action. The association of music with literature has been since time immemorial, and this is to express man's emotional and psychological states. The creator and his interest in voicing his knowledge of the latter's effects on human breath. Technology expanded the use of the world of sounds in literary creativity and facilitated their access to literature in a serious technical way. Digital literature is the first and forthright business to employ the world of real voices in digital blogs. Soundtracks (musical/soundtrack), a blogger (for firewall finishes), created their effects on the recipient. The blogger's music pieces were parallel to the poetry text, which is described as a moral and aesthetic pillar of the letter. Mushtaq Abbas Ma 'an succeeded in combining creative arts (music/literature), emphasizing that literature is able to absorb all creative stereotypes and keep pace with each new.

### Recommendations

These research papers found a number of recommendations, including:

- a. Creators need more attention to digital literature.
- b. Sober and effective integration of the rest of the arts into digital literature
- c. Literary creativity must learn the basics of digitization, to write seriously in the world of digitization.

To keep pace with the world of digitization, the necessary flooring must be provided to receive constructive configurations, enabling literature to break into the field of digitization and successfully integrate the arts into digital blogs.

Finally, any new must be encouraged and pushed forward as long as it keeps pace with globalization in its positive aspects, moving away from rejection and frustration movements.

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# BRIDGING THE GAP: EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TRANSITIONING TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *This article explores the educational needs and social support mechanisms for high school students transitioning to higher education in Romania, with a specific focus on rural and urban disparities. Using quantitative data from a sociological survey conducted among students from two high schools in Craiova, the study identifies critical factors influencing academic aspirations and barriers to higher education. The findings emphasize the importance of financial aid, educational counseling, and preparatory programs in mitigating educational inequalities. Policy recommendations are provided to address systemic challenges and promote equitable access to higher education.*

**Keywords:** educational transition, social support, higher education, rural-urban disparities, Romania.

## 1. Introduction

The transition from high school to higher education represents a very important stage in students' lives, significantly influencing their career trajectories and socio-economic opportunities. In Romania, socio-economic inequalities and regional disparities exacerbate barriers to higher education, particularly for students from rural areas or families with low educational attainment. Despite existing national strategies like the 2022–2027 inclusion plan, challenges persist in ensuring equitable access to educational resources. Socio-economic disparities in education not only hinder individual achievement but also perpetuate systemic inequalities across generations. The intersection of socio-economic status with other marginalized identities—such as race, ethnicity, or disability—creates compounding disadvantages that extend beyond academics. For instance, research shows that children from low-income families are more likely to experience chronic stress, which negatively impacts cognitive development and school performance (Evans & Kim, 2013). Additionally, limited access to healthcare, nutrition, and safe learning environments further exacerbates these challenges. As Duncan and Murnane (2011) argue, "educational inequities are not isolated phenomena but are deeply embedded in broader social and economic structures that perpetuate cycles of disadvantage." This intersectional lens underscores the urgency of addressing these disparities holistically, through policies that integrate education with healthcare, housing, and community development initiatives, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive comprehensive support. This study builds on these frameworks, examining students' needs and perceptions to inform targeted interventions.

## 2. A brief literature review

Socio-economic background is a well-documented determinant of educational attainment. Studies reveal that students from low-income families often face financial constraints, lack of parental support, and limited access to quality educational resources (OECD, 2019). In Romania, this dynamic is accentuated in rural areas, where students encounter additional challenges like geographic isolation and underfunded schools. Studies consistently reveal that students from low-income families face significant barriers, such as financial constraints, limited access to quality educational resources, and lack of parental support (Mitchall&Jaeger, 2018; Engberg & Allen, 2011, Alexe, Hâj & Murgescu, 2015 etc.). For instance, Reardon (2011) notes that "income inequality has led to a widening achievement gap in education, with students from affluent families consistently outperforming their low-income peers." This disparity is particularly stark in countries with less equitable educational systems, where socioeconomic status (SES) is a stronger predictor of academic achievement.

Educational counseling has been shown to improve students' academic outcomes and career planning. Research highlights the importance of tailored counseling sessions in helping students navigate complex educational landscapes (Judijanto, et.al. 2024). However, in Romania, access to professional counseling remains uneven, particularly in under-resourced schools (Enachescu & Rosca, 2014: 321). One of the most immediate impacts of low SES is the financial inability to access high-quality education. According to UNESCO (2021), over 260 million children worldwide are out of school due to financial barriers. Even in developed nations, where public education is ostensibly free, associated costs like transportation, materials, and extracurricular activities create significant disparities. As Lareau (2011) argues, "the hidden costs of education disproportionately affect low-income families, limiting their children's access to enrichment opportunities that foster academic success." This financial strain also affects post-secondary aspirations, as students from low-income families are less likely to pursue higher education, fearing debt or feeling unprepared for the transition. Scholarships and subsidies play an important role in reducing dropout rates and encouraging higher education participation among disadvantaged students, and evidence suggests that such interventions are particularly effective when combined with mentorship and preparatory programs (Chen & DesJardins, 2008: 12). In Romania, initiatives like social scholarships have made progress, but gaps remain in coverage and accessibility (Ministry of Education, 2023; Toc, 2018; Garaz & Torotcoi, 2017).

Educational resources—both material and human—are often less available to low-income students. Schools in underprivileged areas are more likely to lack well-trained teachers, updated curricula, and technological tools (Darling-Hammond, 2010; DuBois et.al, 2011). In a comparative study, Schleicher (2019) highlights that "schools in affluent areas are twice as likely to have teachers with advanced degrees and specialized training compared to schools in low-income areas." Furthermore, disparities in funding exacerbate these issues, as wealthier communities often supplement public funding with local taxes, creating a cycle where low-income schools remain underfunded.

International comparisons shed light on the systemic nature of these inequities. For instance, in the United States, Kozol (1991) documented the stark contrasts between urban schools serving low-income students and suburban schools in affluent neighborhoods. Similarly, in South Africa, Chisholm (2012) describes how the legacy of apartheid continues to affect educational resource allocation, with rural and low-income schools receiving fewer resources despite policy commitments to equity.

Disparities between rural and urban education systems have been widely studied in Eastern Europe. Rural students often lack access to qualified teachers, extracurricular activities, and technology, limiting their academic potential (World Bank, 2018). In Romania, rural students' transition to higher education is hindered by systemic inequities, necessitating comprehensive policy responses (Niță, Motoi & Goga, 2021; Zamfir, Militaru, Mocanu, & Lungu, 2020).

Romania's education policies, including the 2023 Higher Education Law, aim to enhance access and inclusivity (for more details see Otovescu, 2015). However, effective implementation requires addressing localized challenges and fostering collaboration between schools, families, and policymakers. The impact of SES on educational attainment is further exacerbated when intersected with other forms of marginalization, such as race, gender, or disability. For example, in the United States, Black and Hispanic students are more likely to attend underfunded schools due to the historical legacy of segregation and systemic inequities in housing policies (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Similarly, Indigenous communities in Canada and Australia face compounded disadvantages, with students often attending schools with fewer resources and culturally insensitive curricula (Oakes et al., 2013).

### **3. Research objectives and hypothesis**

The research employed a quantitative sociological approach to identify the educational needs and perceptions of high school students regarding their transition to higher education. Specific objectives included:

1. Identifying the needs and perceptions of students about transitioning to higher education and the factors influencing continuation.
2. Evaluating the impact of various support interventions such as information dissemination, counseling, and scholarships.

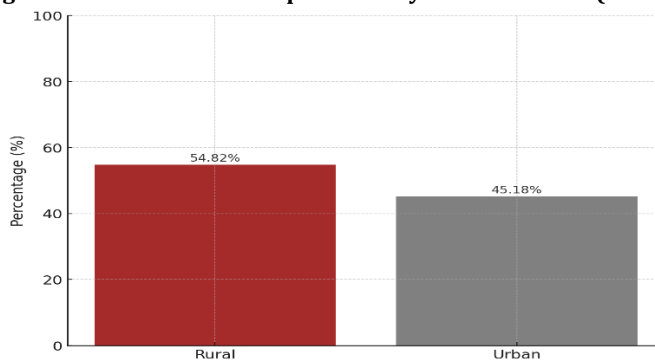
The study was guided by three hypotheses:

- H1: Students from families with low educational levels require more support to continue their studies post-high school.
- H2: Adequate information and educational counseling are essential for increasing university continuation rates.
- H3: Scholarships and financial aid are essential in reducing school dropout rates and facilitating access to higher education.

The study used a structured questionnaire covering the following themes: Demographic and contextual information, Intent to continue studies, educational support priorities, Participation in support activities, Specific opinions and needs

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms for ease of access and rapid data collection. The link was distributed via official school communication channels and social media platforms targeting students. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained before survey completion. Responses were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods.

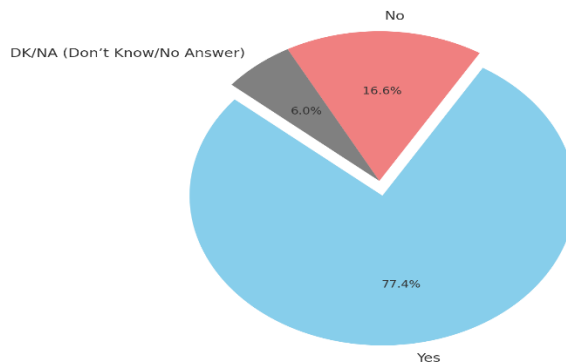
**Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by residence area (N= 156)**



#### 4. Results

The study revealed a strong inclination among respondents to pursue higher education, with 77.41% expressing their intent to continue their academic journey after high school. This high percentage underscores the value placed on higher education by students, even in the face of substantial barriers. It reflects a widespread belief in education as a pathway to improved socio-economic opportunities and personal development. Students' aspirations are likely driven by the increasing demand for higher qualifications in the labor market, as well as societal perceptions of higher education as a critical step toward career advancement and financial stability.

**Figure 2. Desire to continue studies after high school (N=156)**



However, the remaining 22.59% of respondents either showed reluctance to continue their education or expressed uncertainty, pointing to significant challenges that hinder their educational progression. Among these, 16.59% explicitly indicated a lack of intention to pursue higher studies.



Financial constraints emerged as a predominant factor, with many students unable to afford tuition fees, transportation, or living expenses associated with higher education.

This finding aligns with existing research that highlights the role of economic hardship as a major deterrent to educational attainment. Furthermore, logistical barriers such as the unavailability of nearby higher education institutions or lack of transportation exacerbate these challenges, particularly for students from rural areas. This group often feels marginalized and excluded from the opportunities available to their urban counterparts.

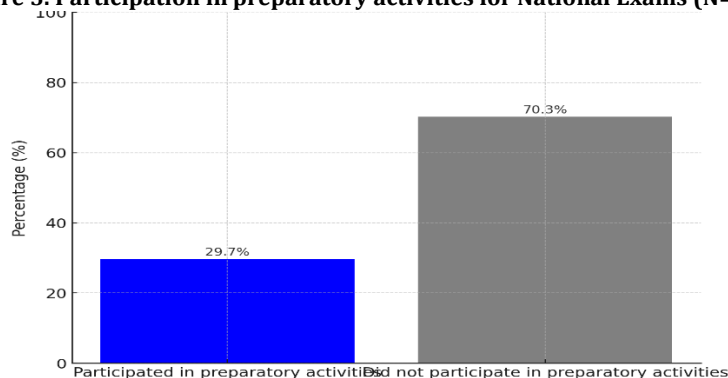
A majority (60.51%) of respondents felt they had access to sufficient information about the benefits of pursuing higher education. This indicates that existing outreach and informational campaigns, whether through schools, community initiatives, or online platforms, have been relatively effective in conveying the value of higher education. These students likely had access to career counseling, guidance sessions, or family and community networks that reinforced the importance of continuing their education.

A significant minority (32.07%) reported feeling that information on higher education opportunities was inadequate. This discrepancy points to gaps in the dissemination and accessibility of information, particularly in underprivileged or rural areas. Students in these contexts often lack exposure to higher education pathways due to limited school resources, absence of career counselors, or familial support that might otherwise fill this gap. This inadequacy leaves many students unaware of available programs, fields of study, or application processes, creating an unnecessary barrier to higher education participation.

Scholarships and financial aid emerged as a critical area of concern, with 41.55% of respondents identifying these supports as essential for their educational aspirations. This underscores the economic challenges that many students face, particularly those from low-income or single-income families. These findings reflect broader trends in educational equity research, which consistently show that financial insecurity is a primary obstacle to higher education access. For many students, scholarships and grants are not just supportive resources but essential lifelines that determine their ability to continue education.

The findings show a critical gap in students' participation in preparatory activities for national exams, with 70.3% of respondents reporting no involvement in such programs. This lack of participation reflects the limited availability of accessible, tailored academic support programs for many students, particularly those from under-resourced schools or disadvantaged backgrounds. Students may also face logistical challenges, such as a lack of transportation, financial constraints, or limited awareness of existing preparatory opportunities.

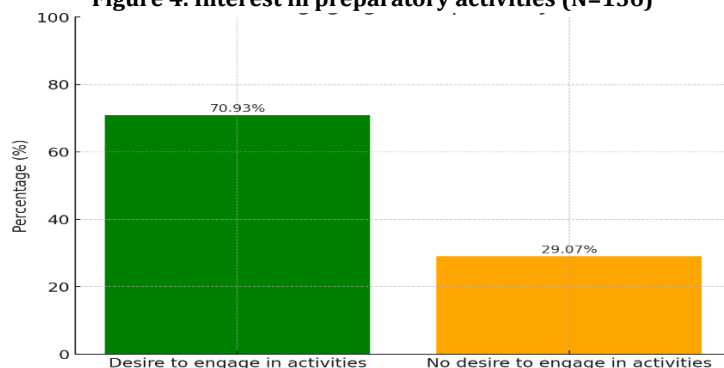
**Figure 3. Participation in preparatory activities for National Exams (N=156)**



However, a promising 70.93% of students expressed a desire to engage in these activities, demonstrating a clear and unmet demand for academic support programs. This interest underscores the recognition among students of the importance of structured preparation for achieving success in exams that are pivotal to accessing higher education. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, including the expansion of preparatory courses, both in-person and online, to ensure equitable access for all students.

Emotional support activities, such as anti-bullying and equality programs, are critically important in schools as they create a safe and inclusive environment where all students feel valued and supported, enabling them to focus on their academic and personal growth without the fear of discrimination, harassment, or social exclusion. These programs address the psychological and social challenges that many students face, particularly those from marginalized or vulnerable groups, by fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and mutual understanding, which is essential for building healthy interpersonal relationships and reducing conflict among peers.

**Figure 4. Interest in preparatory activities (N=156)**

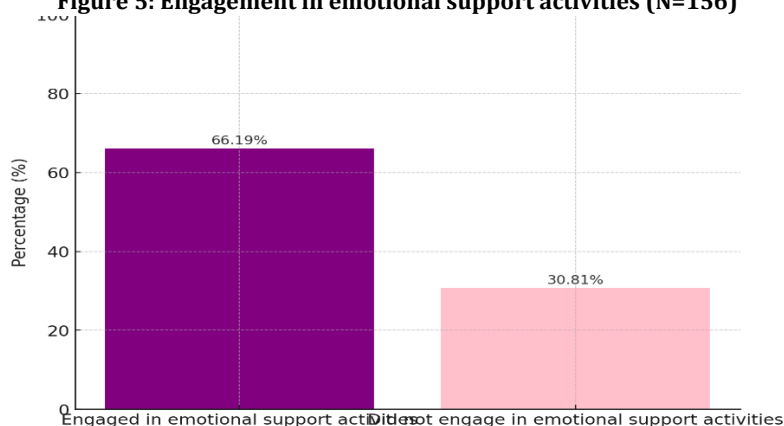


Moreover, by actively combating bullying, segregation, and inequality, schools not only protect students from immediate harm but also contribute to the development of positive self-esteem and resilience, which are crucial for long-term emotional well-being and success in adulthood. Emotional support initiatives also enhance the overall school climate, leading to improved academic outcomes, as students who feel emotionally secure and socially connected are more likely to engage in classroom activities, participate in extracurricular programs, and pursue higher educational goals.

Our study revealed also that 66.19% of respondents had participated in emotional support activities, such as anti-bullying and equality programs. This majority highlights the positive impact of existing initiatives aimed at fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment. However, 30.81% of students reported no engagement in such activities, indicating a significant gap in the implementation and accessibility of these programs.

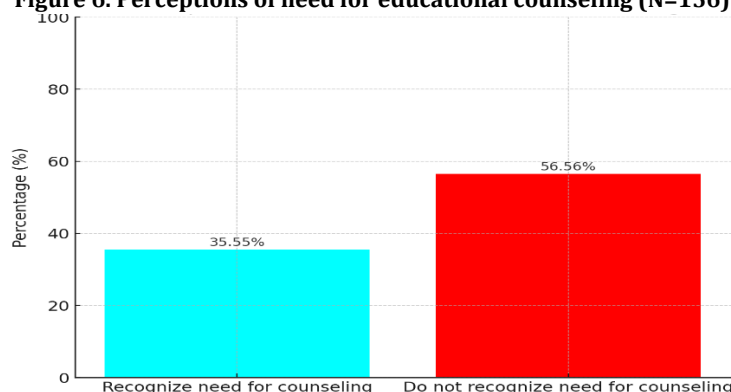
For the remaining segment, barriers may include a lack of program availability in their schools, limited awareness of the benefits, or logistical challenges preventing participation. Emotional support and equity programs are critical for addressing broader issues like mental health, discrimination, and social exclusion, which can significantly impact academic performance and overall well-being.

**Figure 5: Engagement in emotional support activities (N=156)**



When it comes to educational counseling, 35.55% of students recognized its importance and the need for such services (Figure 4). This group likely understands the value of guidance in navigating academic decisions, career planning, and university admissions processes. However, the majority (56.56%) believed they did not require counseling, potentially indicating a lack of awareness about the benefits of these services or a perception that such resources are not necessary for their academic journey.

**Figure 6. Perceptions of need for educational counseling (N=156)**



This finding suggests that many students may be unaware of how counseling can address critical gaps in knowledge, support career aspirations, or alleviate uncertainties about higher education. The perception that counseling is unnecessary could also stem from a lack of visibility or availability of professional guidance services in their schools. In our opinion, the perception that counseling is unnecessary among many students can often be attributed to a combination of factors, including the lack of visibility, promotion, or integration of professional guidance services within their schools, which may result in students not fully understanding the role of counseling in addressing critical gaps in their knowledge, offering tailored support to clarify and align their career aspirations with realistic goals, or helping them navigate the often complex and daunting pathways to higher education, thereby leaving them to rely on fragmented or informal sources of advice that may not adequately address their specific needs or concerns.

**5. Discussion. Testing the hypothesis through Pearson’s correlations:**

The table below presents the Pearson correlation coefficients for testing sociological hypotheses related to educational support, counseling, and socio-economic factors in determining students' aspirations and opportunities for continuing their education.

**Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients between key factors influencing the desire to continue education**

Variables	Correlated with	Pearson Correlation
Educational_Level	Desire_to_Continue	0.019
Adequate_Information	Desire_to_Continue	0.125
Counseling_Importance	Desire_to_Continue	0.124
Scholarship_Importance	Desire_to_Continue	-0.024
Scholarship_Importance	Counseling_Importance	0.536

The first hypothesis (H1), which posits that students from families with low educational levels require more support to continue their studies post-high school, is supported only minimally by the data. The correlation between parental educational level and students' desire to continue their education (0.019) is extremely weak, suggesting that the direct influence of parental education on educational aspirations is limited. This finding aligns with broader sociological theories that emphasize the growing

importance of institutional and peer influences in shaping young people's aspirations, particularly in societies where public education systems play a central role in providing equal opportunities. However, the weak correlation also indicates the need to consider other latent variables, such as the quality of schools, access to extracurricular activities, or social capital within communities, which may mediate the relationship between family background and educational aspirations.

The second hypothesis (H2) highlights the importance of adequate information and educational counseling in increasing university continuation rates. The weak positive correlation between access to adequate information and students' desire to continue their studies (0.125) suggests that informational campaigns and resources can have a modest yet positive impact on educational aspirations.

Similarly, the weak correlation between the perceived importance of counseling and the desire to continue education (0.124) underscores the potential role of targeted guidance programs in shaping students' decisions. These findings point to the need for improving the availability and quality of counseling services, particularly in underprivileged schools, where students may lack the social networks or familial support to navigate complex educational pathways. Although the correlations are not strong, they highlight the potential of low-cost, scalable interventions like career counseling workshops, informational sessions, and mentorship programs to influence students' aspirations and decision-making processes.

The third hypothesis (H3) explores the role of scholarships and financial aid in reducing dropout rates and facilitating access to higher education. Interestingly, the correlation between the importance of scholarships and the desire to continue education (-0.024) is negligible and slightly negative, suggesting that scholarships alone may not be sufficient to motivate students to pursue higher education. This finding may reflect structural barriers, such as the geographic availability of higher education institutions, the perceived value of a university degree in the labor market, or the psychological effects of economic insecurity, which can diminish the effectiveness of financial incentives. However, the moderate positive correlation between the importance of scholarships and counseling (0.536) reveals a strong synergy between financial and informational support systems. Students who value scholarships also recognize the importance of counseling, suggesting that a combination of financial aid and personalized guidance may be more effective in addressing the multifaceted barriers to education than standalone interventions.

## 6. Conclusion

The weak correlations overall highlight the structural nature of barriers to higher education, which cannot be addressed through isolated measures but require systemic reforms. Policies that combine financial aid with counseling, mentorship, and preparatory programs are likely to have a more significant impact on reducing inequalities and fostering educational opportunities for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, these findings suggest the need for further research to identify the underlying factors that mediate these relationships, such as school quality, community resources, or cultural attitudes toward education. By addressing these complexities, policymakers and educators can develop more effective strategies to promote equity and inclusion in education. The integration of such systemic reforms necessitates a coordinated effort among policymakers, educators, community organizations, and families to ensure that the interventions are not only designed with a clear understanding of the diverse needs of students but are also implemented in a way that addresses the intersectional challenges faced by different demographic groups, such as rural students, ethnic minorities, and students from low-income families.

This process requires substantial investment in teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills needed to deliver inclusive and supportive learning experiences, alongside the development of infrastructure that enhances access to educational resources, including technology, libraries, and extracurricular opportunities that can bridge the gap between underprivileged and privileged students. In conclusion, continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess the effectiveness of these programs, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that the initiatives remain adaptive to the changing educational landscape and the evolving needs of students.

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# CYBER-CRIME: WASTED COMPETENCIES IN THE WORLD OF TECHNOLOGY

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**Abstract:** *Through this scientific intervention, we seek to shed light on one of the practices that has distinguished and continues to distinguish our contemporary world through the emergence in the realm of crime, which has transitioned from its real world setting to a virtual one, namely cyber-crime. This involves understanding its origins, history, and concept, as well as addressing the controversies surrounding it. Additionally, we will delve into its characteristics, objectives, and its parties involved, including the perpetrator and the victim, while also discussing its forms and methods of combating it.*

**Keywords:** cyber-crime, competencies, technology.

## 1. Introduction

The society we live in today is a society of information, knowledge, and human intelligence. The advancements of the human mind have given rise to various forms and shapes of technology, contributing to the efficiency and speed of tasks. The emergence of the internet has further amplified the importance of technology, transforming the world into a small village. This convergence and the widespread adoption of this virtual world have displayed numerous behaviors and practices, both acceptable and unacceptable. While technology has facilitated life and expanded human interactions, it has also been misused, with the internet being used against others with malicious intent, shifting it from its supportive nature to a criminal one.

This forms the subject of this scientific paper, titled "Cyber-crime: wasted Competencies in the World of Technology!" Through it, I aim to answer the following question within the conceptual framework:

What is cyber-crime, and what are its objectives and characteristics? Who perpetrates this type of crime and against whom? What is the way to curb it or at least reduce its expanding scope?.

## 2. The world before the emergence of cyber-crime

Before the emergence of the internet and its crimes, there existed criminal activities such as murder, theft, fraud, forgery, and other crimes due to the persistence of evil. However, the internet facilitated the ease of committing these crimes. The realm of information knows no general ethical principles, as the boundaries of acceptable behavior or even ethical behavior in the information space are not clear. The presence of the internet has led to the evolution of traditional crimes and the emergence of new ones. (Ghada Nassar, 2017: 09)

## 3. The emergence of cyber-crime

Cyber-crime has followed a historical evolution in line with the development of technology and its usages. We can summarize the stages of these crimes into three phases:

**1.The first phase:** This phase saw the widespread use of computers in the 1960s and 1970s. With the increasing use of personal computers in the 1970s, several survey and legal studies emerged that focused on computer crimes. Actual criminal cases were addressed, and discussions began to view them as a criminal phenomenon rather than just unacceptable behaviors.

**2. The second phase:** In the 1980s, a new concept of cyber-crimes emerged, linked to remote system intrusion and activities involving the dissemination and planting of computer viruses that destructively targeted files and programs.

**3.The third phase:** this phase in the 1990s, witnessed a tremendous growth in the field of cyber-crimes, along with changes in their scope and concept. This was primarily due to the facilitation provided by the internet in accessing systems and infiltrating information networks. (Hisham Bashir, 2012: 06-07)

Cyber-crimes first appeared prominently in Western societies such as America and its neighboring countries. This was attributed to the technologies that initially found their roots in facilities like those of the U.S. Department of Defense. It was normal there to be significant breaches and violations by internet users within these government departments, including technicians, engineers, and computer personnel.

The absence of laws criminalizing attacks on information and data, and even if such laws were imposed, the difficulty of detecting these crimes and prosecuting the perpetrators, encouraged many to venture into this realm of criminal activity. (Hamoud bin Mohsen Al-Dajani: 557).

#### **4. On the concept of cyber-crime**

The concept of informational crime is challenging to define, as research and studies have provided various definitions. These definitions reflect the diversity of terms used to refer to and define this type of crime. Some terms include computer crimes, misuse of computers, crimes related to or associated with computers, crimes involving automated data processing, modern technology crimes, or information crimes. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 25)

Those who use the term "informational crime" intend to express a crime in which the subject of the violated right is information. On the other hand, those who use the term "internet crimes" are using a narrower scope because they restrict these crimes to unauthorized activities conducted through internet access, excluding crimes that could be committed using a computer without internet access. As for those who use the term "cyber-crime," they refer to crimes committed through computers and other modern communication means. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 27)

Definitions of informational crime have varied due to disagreements over defining the crime itself and, preceding that, defining information. Informational crimes represent a new category of crimes. With the information and communication revolution, a new type of crimes emerged, transitioning crime from its traditional form to an electronic one, which may be difficult to address. Informational crime is a modern phenomenon linked to modern technology, specifically information and communication technology.

Defining informational crime has been shrouded in ambiguity due to efforts to establish a comprehensive definition. Some argue against defining it, claiming it's merely traditional crime committed through electronic means. (Abdel-Al Derbi, Muhammad Sadiq Ismail, 2012: 41)

#### **5. The concept of cyber-crime**

the concept of cyber-crime; or cyber- crimes, consists of two parts: "crime" and "cyber." The term "cyber" is used to describe the idea of a part of the computer or the information age. Cyber-crime is defined as violations committed against individuals or groups of individuals with criminal intent, aiming to harm the reputation of the victim or cause material or mental harm, whether directly or indirectly, using communication networks such as the internet (such as chat rooms, email, and mobile phones). (Dhiab Musa Al-Badaina: 03).

Internet crimes can be defined as "the sum of crimes committed using information technology or information networks, and these crimes have a diverse nature and can take the form of traditional crimes using technical means of networks." (May Al-Abdullah, 2014: 139). Other definitions include: "Any harmful act against others through electronic media such as computers, mobile devices, telephone communication networks, information transmission networks, the internet, or the illegal use of computer or electronic data in general." It is also defined as: "A collection of actions and activities punishable by law, linking criminal acts with the technological revolution" (Mahmoud Madian)

It is also defined as: "An unlawful act that relies on technical knowledge and expertise in information technology, carried out using any tool of smart and programmatic communication, with the electronic space serving as its platform and stage" (Ibrahim Mohammed bin Mahmoud Al-Zandani, 2018).

#### **5/ criminal Activity in the space of internet**

Physical activity or behavior in internet crimes requires the presence of a digital environment and internet connectivity. It also requires knowledge of the initiation, execution, and consequences of this activity. For example, the perpetrator of the crime may prepare a computer to facilitate the committing of the crime by downloading hacking programs or by developing such programs themselves. Additionally, they may need to create pages containing content that violates public decency and upload them. They could also commit crimes by developing virus programs for dissemination. Not every crime requires preparatory actions, and it is difficult to distinguish between preparatory work and the commencement of criminal activity in computer and internet crimes (Abdul Haleem Musa Yaqoub, 2014: 215-216).

#### **6/ aims of cyber-crimes**

1. Illegally accessing information, such as theft, viewing, deletion, or modification of information to achieve criminal goals.

2. Accessing and disrupting or sabotaging information-providing server devices, commonly targeting websites on the internet.
3. Obtaining information, altering internet site addresses to sabotage public institutions and extort them.
4. Accessing individuals or entities using technology for the purpose of threatening or blackmailing, such as banks, government departments, official agencies, and all forms of companies.
5. Exploiting information technology for illegitimate financial, moral, or political gains through credit card fraud and hacking electronic websites on the internet, etc.
6. Utilizing technology to support terrorism and extremist ideas, or disseminating ideas that could establish extremist ideologies. (Abdul Haleem Musa Yaqoub, 2014, 214-213).

### **7/characteristics of Cyber Crime**

Cybercrime is similar to traditional crime in terms of the elements of the crime, such as a criminal with a motive to commit the crime, a victim, who may be a natural person or a legal person, and the instrument of the crime. In cybercrime, the instrument of the crime is a product of technology, as well as the location of the crime that does not burden the offender in Access to it, which facilitates the process of electronic crime, and in many of these crimes, the crime is carried out remotely, using communication lines and networks between the perpetrator and the crime site. Abdul Haleem Musa Yaqoub, 2014: 201).

Some characteristics of cyber-crime are the following:

#### **1. Overseas Crimes**

Information technology's ability to shorten distances and enhance connectivity across the globe has influenced the nature of criminal activities. Criminals utilize these technologies to violate the law, making the stage of cyber-crime no longer local but global.

#### **2. Soft and Tempting Crimes for Criminals**

Unlike traditional crimes that often require physical effort such as murder and rape, cyber-crime does not necessitate any physical exertion. Instead, it relies on mental acumen and deliberate thinking, based on knowledge of computer technologies. Cybercrime does not require any degree of physical proximity or contact between the perpetrator and the victim; hence, it is characterized by being less violent and aggressive than traditional crimes (Adham Bassem Nimr Baghdadi, 2018: 11-12)

### **8/ parties Involved in Cyber- Crime:**

Every crime has a perpetrator, a victim, and consequences resulting from the implementation of the crime. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 35)

#### **1. The Perpetrator in Cyber- Crime:**

In the digital world, criminals come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from sophisticated individuals to pranksters. Ensuring information security and avoiding liabilities necessitates treating everyone as a potential threat, not as a waste of goodwill or trust in others. It's the only guarantee for protection against highly dangerous sources that could lead to incalculable losses and responsibilities (Ayman Abdullah Fikri, 2014: 120)

Most studies and legislations consider the perpetrator in cyber-crimes to be a natural person acting on their own behalf, aiming to achieve their own interest behind the committed crime. Most individuals committing computer crimes are classified as belonging to the younger generation, professionals working in the field of computer science, or amateurs. However, practical experience has shown otherwise, as alongside natural persons, there may be accomplices who provide tools, programs, and equipment necessary for the crime, or at least sell such products and programs without which there would be no crime. Additionally, perpetrators can be groups of individuals, organizations, or legal entities, and cyber-crimes can even involve political systems and states (Ibrahim Muhammad bin Mahmoud Al-Zindani, 2018: 36)

The seriousness of these crimes lies mainly in the criminal who carries out the crime, as he is distinguished by intelligence and knowledge in dealing with the field of automated data processing and familiarity with technical skills and knowledge. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 35)

#### **A. Personal Characteristics of the Cyber Criminal:**

Studies identifying the personal traits of the cybercriminal have found that there is no specific model for them, but rather common traits among these criminals, summarized as follows:

- Highly intelligent criminals capable of modifying and developing security systems to evade detection and tracking of their criminal activities on networks or within computers.



- Specialized criminals with exceptional technical skills who exploit their knowledge and abilities to penetrate networks and crack passwords or codes.
- Recidivist criminals who consistently engage in criminal activities, employing their skills in computer operation, data storage, and unauthorized access repeatedly.
- Criminals affiliated with computer-related professions functionally. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 36)

### **B. Psychological Characteristics of the Cyber Criminal:**

Psychological studies of cyber criminals have shown that they have no sense of the illegitimacy of their actions or the deservingness of punishment for these actions. For this category, the boundaries between good and evil are blurred, and feelings of guilt are absent due to the lack of direct interaction between the perpetrator and the victim. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 37)

### **C. Types of Cyber Criminals:**

#### **First type; hackers:**

##### **They can be classified in two types:**

**Hackers:** This category includes individuals who challenge system and network security measures. However, they often lack malicious or destructive motives but are driven by the desire to prove their abilities. The term "hackers" is usually synonymous with challenge attacks. (Ayman Abdullah Fikri, 2014: 123)

Hackers are known for infiltrating your device, allowing them to view, steal, destroy files, eavesdrop, or monitor your online activities. (Abdel Halim Musa Yacoub, 2014: 201)

By gaining unauthorized access to computer systems and bypassing security barriers for this purpose, the goal of this category is usually skilled young people, driven by curiosity or self-assertion (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 38)

**2. Crackers:** The term "crackers" is synonymous with malicious and harmful attacks. (Ayman Abdullah Fikri, 2014: 123) These individuals infiltrate computer processing systems to access stored information, cause damage, tamper with it, or steal it (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 38)

This distinction does not affect the responsibility of the perpetrators of activities from both categories, and they are held accountable for the damages they cause to the targeted sites through their attacks (Ayman Abdullah Fikri, 2014: 123)

#### **Second type; malicious Actors:**

This category is motivated by the desire for revenge and retaliation due to the actions of an employer or the treatment received from the concerned institution.

When they are not employees in it, they tend to use techniques such as planting viruses, malicious software, or system sabotage. (Ayman Abdullah Fikri, 2014, p. 123)

Employees in the technology sector or users of it in other sectors are often subjected to significant psychological pressures resulting from work pressure, financial problems, and the nature of alienating work relationships. These factors may serve as a driving force for some workers to commit cybercrimes as a means of revenge against the institution or employer. For example, a disgruntled accountant might manipulate information technology programs to hide the company's accounting data six months after leaving. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019, p. 39)

#### **Third type; amateurs:**

This category commits these crimes for entertainment purposes without intending to cause any harm to the victims. They are characterized by their young age and proficiency in computer science. However, their danger lies in the fact that they may form a good nucleus for turning into professional hackers. (Khaled Hassan Ahmed Lotfy, 2019: 38)

## **2. Victims in Cyber- Crime**

It is difficult to accurately determine the victims of cyber-crimes because they often become aware of these crimes only after they have occurred. Like the perpetrators, the victims can be natural persons, legal entities, communities, or even countries (Ibrahim Muhammad bin Mahmoud Al-Zindani, 2018: 37)

## **9. Forms of cyber-crimes**

### **1. Sexual, Pornographic, and Unethical Crimes**

There are websites on the internet that promote sexual activities, whether for adults or children. These websites publish more specialized sexual images, including videos and images, and many of them specialize in chat programs. A study found that there are 71 Arabic pornographic websites on the internet.

## **2. Software Piracy via the Internet**

Although software piracy has been associated with the advent of computers in general, the emergence of information networks has significantly increased the volume of this crime. The open nature of these networks and the ease of copying software in seconds, coupled with the fertile ground these networks provide for marketing pirated software, have encouraged software pirates to operate within the network.

## **3. Information Destruction**

This involves damaging data storage units using heavy tools, explosive charges, corrosive gas bombs, or flammable materials with ignition keys. Information can also be destroyed magnetically by subjecting it to destructive magnetic forces.

## **4. Misuse of Bank Cards:**

This crime is particularly prevalent in societies with highly advanced and modern banking systems that issue bank cards with minimal security procedures. Forms of this crime include using stolen or expired cards, forging cards, withdrawing larger amounts of cash than allowed using someone else's card at ATMs, exploiting vulnerabilities in the machines. Also, some individuals falsely report their bank cards as lost, then immediately withdraw cash before the bank can freeze their funds, giving the impression that the thief who found or stole the card made the withdrawals. (Ghada Nassar, 2017: 15-19)

## **5. Theft of Personal Data:**

This involves obtaining information provided to the device (software or processing data), whether stored on disks, magnetic tapes, or paper.

## **6. Manipulation of Personal Programs:**

Software is of great importance in the field of computer use because it gives life to the computer and enables it to perform its tasks. Examples include changing the operating system program or creating a new (fake) program to commit a crime.

## **7. Defamation Crimes:**

These involve invading individuals' privacy and spying on their online profiles, then publishing personal photos and news that may affect their honor. (Ghada Nassar, 2017: 19-22) Sometimes these crimes take on extortionist logic, where photos of individuals in socially unacceptable situations are taken and then broadcasted on the internet through platforms like YouTube. (Abdel Halim Musa Yacoub, 2014: 222)

## **8. Gambling Crimes:**

This includes owning and managing an online gambling project, facilitating and encouraging it, and using the internet to promote alcohol and addictive substances to minors.

## **9. Electronic Fraud:**

This refers to any behavior or action by an individual or group that burdens or imposes additional burdens on other parties as a result of using unethical practices to gain an unfair or illegal advantage. (Ghada Nassar, 2017: 23)

## **10. Combatting cyber-crimes**

Combatting cybercrimes can be summarized in the following methods:

- Establishing International policies, and implementing strict penalties for internet crime perpetrators requires governmental and international intervention due to the severity of the matter.
- Utilizing Advanced Techniques to detect the identity of offenders and gather evidence as quickly as possible.
- Raising Awareness to educate individuals about the nature and risks of cyber-crimes.
- Maintaining Confidentiality of personal information such as bank accounts and credit cards.
- Securing Passwords to avoid disclosing passwords entirely, regularly changing them, and selecting strong ones.
- 
- Avoiding Social Media Image Storage by refraining from storing personal photos on social media platforms and computers.
- Avoiding Unknown Software Downloads by staying clear of downloading software from unknown sources.

- Regularly Updating Security Software by ensuring that computer protection programs are regularly updated.
- Establishing Special Organizations dedicated to combating cybercrimes and minimizing their occurrence.
- Prompt Reporting: by informing law enforcement agencies immediately upon experiencing a cybercrime.
- Keeping Up with Technological Advances by staying updated on developments related to cybercrimes and improving methods to combat them.
- Using Secure Software and Patch-Free Operating Systems by utilizing safe software and operating systems without vulnerabilities.
- Disconnecting Computers from the Internet When Not in Use by disconnecting devices from the internet when not actively being used.
- Exercising Caution by being cautious and skeptical of all advertisements and verifying their credibility through reputable search engines (Lamiya Talla, Kahinah Salam, Volume 06, Issue 02 2020, pages 86-88)

### Conclusion

Cybercrime, given the overlaps among its various forms, has made it challenging to establish a universally agreed definition for this concept. Each perspective sheds light on some aspects of cybercrime. Through what has been mentioned, we can define cybercrime as various unethical and illegal practices conducted through different technological means in the virtual world. These practices result in causing harm to the victims, regardless of their backgrounds. The offenders' intelligence and technological are exploited to inflict harm, leading to disruptions in accounts, destruction of information systems, leakage of personal data and documents, among other consequences. Considering the various outcomes of such practices, concerted efforts are required to control and mitigate this type of criminal activity, given its significant detrimental effects on society, whether economic, financial, or moral. Hence, it is essential to allocate educational programs and awareness sessions about this danger. Furthermore, there is a need to guide consumption in the right direction and raise awareness about the proper usage of various modern technologies. Extreme caution and vigilance are necessary to avoid becoming additional victims of technological misuse.

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## MECHANISMS AND EFFORTS TO COMBAT CYBERCRIME IN ALGERIA

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**Abstract:** *Cybercrime is a modern social phenomenon that has surged and dominated the realm of crime due to technological advancements. It is a new mechanism adopted by criminal groups on both global and local levels, amidst the rapid growth of information and communication technologies. Despite the benefits brought about by modern technology, it poses numerous risks and has quickly become a threat to the security and integrity of societies. Although there is a significant gap between developed and developing societies in terms of technology quality, this has not prevented individuals from hastily acquiring it and utilizing its services, while criminals exploit it to commit various types of crimes. Algeria, like other countries, is witnessing an increase in cybercrime rates, and concerns have grown regarding the nature of these crimes, as it is difficult to track and punish the offenders. Through this research paper, we will focus on cybercrime in Algerian society, addressing the most significant types of these crimes, how they are committed, and the various mechanisms to confront them.*

**Keywords:** cybercrime, internet, cybercriminal, confrontation Mechanisms

### 1. Introduction

The world today is experiencing a tremendous information revolution, driven by the widespread availability of the internet and mobile technologies. This revolution began in the mid-twentieth century and is considered one of the largest transformations in human history, profoundly impacting individuals, societies, and systems around the globe. Thanks to modern communication and information technologies, the world has become a small, interconnected village, as McLuhan described, enabling access to other realms that would have been unreachable.

In this context, the internet has provided individuals and society with all that previous means of knowledge offered collectively, and even more, by giving access to information that may be forbidden by authorities, represented in the form of the state, religion, or oversight from schools, teachers, or parents. It also offers information that might not have reached us due to geographical, political, or social factors (Bayoumi, 2008: 16). Indeed, this revolution has transformed many concepts, leading to the emergence of what is known as the virtual university, video conferences, e-commerce, and the electronic city. Many community fields have been integrated into this technology, altering their management methods, structures, and even the skill development of the individuals working within them. While some experts claim that communication technology has facilitated direct interaction with specific target individuals despite geographical distances, leading to its recognition as a significant transformation in the realm of communications and information technology, we simultaneously find ourselves grappling, as crime methods have evolved and many criminals now leverage this technology to support their schemes, they have employed the mechanisms of this revolution to gain profits with minimal effort, deceiving victims in the shortest time possible. The question that arises here is: how can new criminals utilize this technology to commit various crimes? What is the reality of modern crime in Algeria? And what are the international and national efforts to combat these?

### 2. Cybercrime: Concept and Characteristics

**2.1. The concept of crime:** Crime is a social phenomenon as old as human societies themselves, having undergone remarkable development in our modern era due to various social, economic, political, and other factors. Its definition varies with time and place; acts considered acceptable in some countries may be deemed crimes or deviant in others. Additionally, certain actions that were deemed immoral at one time may have been prohibited during another period. Crime can be examined from three perspectives: social, psychological, and legal.

\* **From a sociological perspective**, cybercrime is viewed as behavior that is anti-social and contrary to social norms, causing disruption in social relationships and deviating from community values. It harms the collective and threatens its safety, stability, and continuity, thus constituting a crime in terms of custom and tradition (Rashwan, 1990: 11)

\* **From a psychological standpoint**, Adler suggests that crime is the fulfillment of a human instinct in a deviant manner, which is not adopted by an ordinary person when satisfying the same instinct.

This is because anomalous psychological conditions affect the offender at the exact moment of committing the crime, making it a result of the conflict between the instinct for self-preservation, which is a drive for superiority, and social awareness (Rashwan, 1990: 6-9).

**\* From a legal perspective:** a crime is any deliberate and intentional harmful act that is prohibited by the law enacted by the state, which explicitly defines this behavior as a crime and punishes those who commit it.

## **2.2. The Concept of Cybercrime**

Through the accumulated literature on the subject, it appears that many researchers have disagreed on how to define the concept of cybercrime. There is also confusion between cybercrime, information crime, computer crime, and internet crime. Some view the concepts of cybercrime and internet crime as equivalent, while others differentiate between them. For instance, one definition of information crime describes it as "any unlawful act that requires a significant understanding of computer technology for its commission on one hand, and for its prosecution on the other" (Nidaa, 2022).

While some consider it to encompass all practices carried out against an individual or a group, with a criminal motive aimed at deliberately damaging the victim's reputation or causing psychological and physical harm, whether directly or indirectly through modern communication networks such as the internet and its associated tools like email, chat rooms, and mobile phones (Hirdou Center, 2018).

The Algerian legislator has termed electronic crimes as crimes related to information and communication technologies, defining them under Article 02 of Law 09-04 dated August 5, 2009, as crimes that affect automated data processing systems, as specified in the Penal Code, and any other crime committed or facilitated through an information system or electronic communications network (Hafoudha, 2022)

Despite the differing perspectives on the concept of cybercrime and the lack of a precise definition, it is noted that all forms of cybercrime are fundamentally the same, encompassing all types of offenses conducted via computers, either individually or connected to the internet. Security experts have classified cyber-attacks into two types: the first is the technical attack, employed by individuals knowledgeable about systems and software to carry out attacks on the internet. The second type is the non-technical attack, which uses deception and trickery to manipulate employees within companies, obtaining permissions and authorizations to use services, access information, and breach network security. This is also known as social engineering. (Al-Tayti, 2008: 253-254)

However, launching cyber-attacks requires the presence of three essential elements, which are as follows: (Ghada, 2017: 12)

\* Availability of motive: The motive may be a desire for revenge or the pursuit of financial gain.

\* Existence of a method to carry out the attack: There must be a clear concept and plan for the attack that fulfils its purpose.

\* Presence of vulnerabilities: This refers to weaknesses in the design or configuration of software or storage systems.

Among the emerging crimes are those committed via mobile phones equipped with Bluetooth technology, which allow for the transmission of audio and video messages containing indecent or lewd content. Additionally, ordinary and digital video cameras have reached extreme levels of miniaturization and precision, enabling the invasion of others' privacy by capturing images at their most intimate moments (Bayoumi, 2008: 08) Coupled with various means of eavesdropping on both wired and wireless communications, this situation poses a significant threat to individual privacy and personal freedom at risk

## **3. The cybercriminal: characteristics and motivations of criminal:**

Who is the cybercriminal? What are the most important traits and features that define them? What are the reasons that lead to prosecution as a criminal? These are questions many may pose in order to understand the identity of this new intruder in contemporary modern societies—a criminal shaped by the changing nature of modern technology, the shifting patterns of contemporary lifestyles, and the rapid pace of life, alongside the challenges and transformations it brings to our behaviours, dispositions, and ways of thinking.

**3.1. The cybercriminal,** as depicted by specialists, is an individual or a group of individuals who commit only computer-related crimes. They specialize in this type of crime, and one of the main characteristics of a cybercriminal is that they revert to criminal behaviour in the realm of computers,

driven by the desire to exploit vulnerabilities that allow them to evade detection and prosecution. Additionally, they are professional criminals in this field, adept at overcoming the obstacles set up by experts to secure computer systems. Cybercriminals are also distinguished by their intelligence and possess a high degree of expertise and skill in using information technology. (Ghada, 2017: 43-45).

Experts have classified the cybercriminal into various categories and diverse designations, which can be clarified as follows (Al- Mayel, Al-Sharbi and Qaboosah, 2019):

\*. **Amateurs:** Youth captivated by the information revolution, their aim is amusement and play to showcase skills and excellence, engaging in entertainment rather than committing crimes.

\*. **Hackers:** They are individuals who penetrate devices and are able to view or steal files on them. Hackers can access a computer using a file known as a (Patch) or (Trojan).

\*. **Professional Criminals:** This category is characterized by extensive experience and technical skills, as well as the organization and planning of the activities committed. They are considered the most dangerous among cybercriminals, aiming for financial gain or to achieve political purposes.

\*. **Resentful Individuals:** They are less dangerous than others, with the goal of seeking revenge and retribution against the actions of their

**3.2. The category of young cybercriminals:** is sometimes referred to as young prodigies of information technology. This group consists of young adults who are deeply fascinated by information technology and its systems. They may progress beyond mere hobbyist activities and enter a more advanced stage of committing cybercrimes, reaching a level of professionalism in these offenses. There are also concerns that organized crime groups may embrace this demographic to leverage and enhance their skills, as they are more receptive to any ideas presented or imposed upon them, especially those that involve adventure, excitement, and challenge.

A well-known example of computer crimes committed by this group is the infamous gang known as "Gang 414," which was implicated in sixty acts of intrusion into computer systems in the United States, resulting in significant damage to both public and private organizations.

**Pirate Class:** They are usually experienced programmers who gain unauthorized access to information systems and breach the security barriers surrounding these systems. There are two types of hackers: the amateur or mischievous hackers, who challenge network security measures but typically lack motives of defiance or self-assertion. This group mainly comprises students from high schools and unemployed youth. On the other hand, professional hackers, known as crackers, are individuals who infiltrate computer systems to access stored information or to cause damage, tamper with data, or steal it.

**3.3. The reasons behind committing cyber-crime** are similar to those for other types of crime; however, there has been a notable increase in the involvement of youth, often driven by the use of modern technologies. These motivations can be both material and personal and may also stem from purely psychological, social, or political factors, which can be categorized as follows: (Al-Mayel, Al-Shurbugi and Qabousa, 2019)

- **Intrinsic motives:** These are motives that lead individuals to commit various violations, arising from curiosity and challenge, as well as a desire to overcome the information system and assert oneself.

- **Psychological motives:** These come from individuals with psychological disorders that reflect in their behaviour.

- **Political and military motives:** Political motives represent one of the most prominent international attempts to infiltrate government networks in various countries around the world. Scientific and technological advancements have allowed for a near-total reliance on computer systems to obtain political, military, and economic information. Criminals also resort to fabricating news and information or base their claims on a small fraction of the truth, then reproduce the fabricated news surrounding it.

Experts have pointed out that the main causes of cybercrime include unemployment and difficult economic conditions. This issue leads educated youth to invest their skills in online criminal activities as a means of profit and to escape financial hardship. Additionally, the youth's passion for wealth drives them, as individuals seek pleasure and aim to avoid pain, a notion supported by the general theory of crime posed by Gutfredsson and Hirschi (Lobna, 2020). People often turn to socially unacceptable means to achieve socially acceptable goals, as the desire for wealth is met with significant challenges when pursued through socially and legally acceptable methods. Consequently, some individuals resort to cybercrimes, where larger communities are targeted, execution is easier, returns are quicker, and risks are lower. Moreover, the broader societal pressures stemming from poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and challenging economic conditions place considerable strain on society, particularly among the youth. This

generates negative feelings in large segments of the population against these circumstances and society, prompting them to resort to negative coping mechanisms, which include human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and other forms of cybercrime.

#### **4. The Role of the Internet in Committing Cybercrime**

Many consider information and communication technology to be one of the most effective tools for committing crimes due to its ability to reach a vast number of victims simultaneously. Despite the role of mobile phones and the internet in enhancing connectivity and communication among individuals within communities - speeding up relationships and bridging perspectives in the context of marriage - it is notable that this has also led to an increase in divorce rates. This rise can be attributed to the emergence of new capabilities such as cameras, recording, and the revelation of family secrets. In this context, Professor Sana Al-Bayasi pointed out that the information and communication revolution has both numerous benefits and significant drawbacks. We need to harness its advantages and avoid its harms, but how can we coexist with this technology without being adversarial? How can we adapt to the era's changes and transformations in a way that fosters healthy, positive reconciliation with it? (Al-Akhras, 2008: 188-190).

Global statistics indicate a rising global trend in cybercrime, as these crimes are committed with minimal risk. This presents challenges for law enforcement in apprehending or tracking this new category of criminals. A study by the Digital Numbers site reported that the number of victims of cyber-attacks and crimes reaches 555 million users annually, with over 1.5 million victims each day. Identity theft is the most prevalent type of crime. Additionally, the annual cost allocated for cyber security was estimated at 100 billion, up from approximately 63.1 billion in 2011, and it could exceed \$120 billion by 2017. (Hafoudha, 2022)

Among the most significant crimes committed within this network are the following:

##### **4.1.E-commerce crimes:**

E-commerce falls under the broader concept of the digital economy, which refers to the execution and management of various commercial activities, including the buying and selling of goods, services, and information through the use of the internet (Aliyan, 2015: 64-65). Despite the numerous advantages brought by this emerging trade, it also presents significant challenges, as highlighted by various reports and statistics. For instance, it was found that 80% of global companies have experienced attacks on their networks. The essence of these incidents is that amateurs and hackers intercept card numbers and use them to acquire the goods they desire, ultimately charging the legitimate cardholder (Bayoumi, 2008: 44-45).

One of the most significant issues related to e-commerce is the risks it poses, particularly to consumers. This necessitates that governments develop regulations addressing consumer protection and privacy concerns, as there is currently no specific protection for privacy in commercial transactions. Additionally, the issue of online intellectual property infringement is particularly challenging (Aliyan, 2015:129-132). Legal measures must adapt to the new characteristics of the internet.

##### **4.2. Email Crimes:**

Through email, unsolicited messages can be sent, attempting to engage in harassment and sometimes fraud against consumers. Senders bombard subscribers with massive amounts of spam. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission has released a list of the twelve worst topics of this nature that cause annoyance and frustration for internet users due to the overwhelming volume of junk mail. These topics often revolve around trivial matters such as the lure of making money, quick profits, health and dieting, and miraculous scientific achievements to cure diseases (Al-Laban, 2000:155). This list of messages is referred to as the "dirty list" because it is bothersome and slows down email systems, with most of the content entailing scams and fraud.

##### **4.3. Money Laundering Crime:**

New methods of money laundering have been identified through the global information network, emerging in recent years due to the diverse use of the internet in gambling, associated banking activities, online banking operations, and the facilitation of electronic money transfers. This has led to a rapid movement of electronic currencies, in contrast to the traditional use of paper money. (Bayoumi, 2008: 34)

**4.4. Risks Related to Computer and Communication Crimes:**

This involves deliberately causing harm and destruction, such as disabling a company's computer through viruses, which has led scientists to tackle this issue with anti-virus programs. Despite the efforts made to detect and combat viruses, experts anticipate a shift towards a form of "Electronic Terrorism," (Al-Laban, 2000: 123) where dangerous viruses attack computers and information networks, resulting in significant losses. Thus, the new terrorists do not use bombs and explosives but instead focus on the systematic destruction of computers and information networks, which could potentially lead to a nuclear war through the launch of missiles equipped with nuclear warheads, guided by computer programs.

**4.5. Risks Related to Online Pornography:**

The phenomenon known as "online pornography" has spread through the Internet, where pornographic photographs are exchanged freely. Pornographic clubs have emerged in the West, operating with the aid of the global web. While the West has often overlooked adult pornography under the pretext of the right to privacy, this does not apply to young children, especially with the rise of "child prostitution." In light of the seriousness of this issue, UNESCO organized the first international conference to combat child exploitation online in 1999. (Bayoumi, 2008: 218)

Furthermore, the Internet has facilitated the dissemination of extremist ideas, whether political, religious, or racial, thereby influencing the sentiments of youth and exploiting their ambitions, impulsiveness, inexperience, and superficial thinking to propagate their beliefs and fuel their rebellion. This exploitation often takes advantage of their suffering to achieve ends that conflict with the interests and stability of their country. It becomes evident that rates of cybercrime are increasing and diversifying at an unprecedented scale across all countries in the world. It is up to governments to implement monitoring, awareness, and filtering to enable the beneficial and effective use of modern technology. Additionally, it is necessary to instill confidence in youth, engage in discussions with them, and raise awareness of the risks and crimes associated with cyberspace, all within the framework of genuine political will.

**5. Digital statistics on cybercrime in Algeria**

Algeria was not in isolation from the information revolution and its positive and negative effects at all levels. Including the growing and high rates of crimes, in this context security interests have warned of the rise in cybercrime in Algeria, She emphasized that crime had already moved from the real world to the virtual transnational world. In view of its rapid implementation, the gendarmerie and police services recorded nearly 8,000 cybercrime offences in 2020, with the Directorate General of National Security registering a record high, That is, from 500 offences in 2015 to 5,200 cybercrime cases in 2020, while the National Gendarmerie Command recorded 1,362 cybercrime offences involving 1,028 people during 2020. The data analysis of recorded crimes showed that slander and insult through the virtual space; he took the lead by more than 55 per cent, followed by crimes against public security, then acts against private life and disclosure of secrets, and finally extortion, fraud and deception, sexual exploitation, acts against public morals and similar issues (Bachouch, 2021.) During the first eight months of 2021, the General Directorate of National Security, which specializes in combating crimes related to information and communication technologies, recorded 567 cases of internet crimes involving 543 individuals. The specialized teams for combating cybercrime within the national security apparatus managed to process 385 electronic crimes out of the 567 recorded cases by examining all technical data and physical evidence associated with the aforementioned cases (Cybercrime, 2022). This is illustrated by the data presented in the following table:

**Table showing the distribution of cyber-crimes in Algeria**

Type of Crime	Registered Cases	Addressed Issues	Number of Involved Parties	Rate of Resolved Cases
<b>Online Crimes Against Individuals</b>	430	289	365	68
<b>Crimes against the integrity of systems</b>	57	31	39	55
<b>Online Fraud Crimes</b>	25	17	32	68
<b>Internet incitement and extremism crimes</b>	14	14	31	100
<b>Crimes against public decency</b>	12	08	22	67
<b>Crimes involving the sale of prohibited goods online</b>	06	05	15	84



<b>Various crimes (unauthorized software copying, piracy)</b>	23	21	39	92
<b>Total</b>	567	385	543	534

Source: *Cybercrime*, 2022

The table above indicates that cyber-crimes in Algeria are varied and diverse, with the most notable being incitement and extremism, copyright infringement, the sale of prohibited goods, as well as fraud and scams. We can assert that crime in Algeria is on the rise, reflecting the worsening of this social phenomenon and its spread among individuals within the same society, along with the challenges in tracking the perpetrators. One cannot claim that crimes are decreasing when compared to the statistics from 2020, as these statistics pertain only to national security authorities. Additionally, many victims of digital technology within Algerian society do not file official complaints to the relevant authorities. This is due to two main reasons: the first being the fear of exposure, particularly concerning vices and extortion, and the second being a lack of awareness among community members regarding the importance of deterring and punishing cyber criminals.

Cybercrime specialists emphasized; According to DATAREPORTAL's latest report on statistics on the world's fixed and mobile Internet, the number of Internet users in Algeria has risen by 3.6 million in a year, moving to 26.35 million in January 2020, as is known by the number of social media users. "Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram" has risen in Algeria to 31 January 2021, with about 3 million new social media users registered, up 13.6% over one year, bringing the total number of users of these apps to 25 million, 56.5% of the total population (Bachouch, 2021). Where the majority of users of social media sites use smartphones and electronic boards to connect to these networks. For its part, the company "Kaspersky", which is competent to fight cybercrime, thwarted 95 thousand cyber-attacks against Algeria during 2020, ranking the first Arab and 14th 2018 year globally in terms of countries most vulnerable to cyber-attacks./

## **6. International and National Efforts to Combat Cybercrime**

The development of information and communication technology has led to an unprecedented increase in crime among community members, prompting countries to quickly seek ways to combat the rise of cybercrime. They have worked to update their legal frameworks and security apparatuses with the aim of combating internet and mobile offenses.

### **6.1.-International efforts:**

With increasing cybercrime and various damages resulting therefrom, as they transcend the boundaries of a single State to reach individuals' computers, Financial institutions and Governments are therefore necessary and imperative for international cooperation. As a result, many conferences have been held to combat cybercrime and reduce its prevalence, among them was the Seventh United Nations Conference in 1985, which resulted in some modifications at the Havana Conference (1990), which recommended the following principles:

- Updating national criminal laws.
- Improve computer security.
- Adopt adequate training for staff and agencies responsible for the prevention of economic and cybercrime.
- Receive computer ethics as part of communications and information courses.
- Adopt policies that address the problems of victims of such crimes.
- Increased international cooperation to combat crimes.

Overall, The United Nations has entrusted the issue of confronting cybercrime; of particular interest during the Tenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and the Follow-up to Offenders, held in Vienna on 10-17 April 2000, as well as during the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held in Bangkok on 18-25 April 2005, The European Commission on Crime Problems and the Committee of Experts on Computer Crime have also Draft international convention on this subject, the Council of Europe announced the draft convention on 27 April 2000 and taking into account the international character that characterized this type of crime (Zaiti, 2019).

The legislative sector has witnessed the introduction of numerous laws, as several European countries have enacted specific laws addressing internet and computer crimes, including the UK, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, Japan, and Canada. Western countries have also focused on establishing specialized divisions for combating internet crimes and have created centers to support the victims of these crimes. In this context, a report published by a cyber-security projects company titled "Cyber Security Economy Predictions" indicates that the world spent approximately \$1 trillion between

2017 and 2021 on cyber-security products and services to combat cybercrime. As a result, around one million cyber-security jobs were opened in 2016, while there was a shortfall of about 1.5 million positions in 2019 (Hafoudha, 2022).

Given the rising incidence of cybercrime in Arab countries, the General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers has prioritized combating this issue. They developed an Arab strategy derived from the Arab Convention on Combating Information Technology Crimes, which was adopted in Cairo at its 31st session on December 21, 2010. This strategy aims to tackle information technology crimes and enhance the capacity to enforce policies related to information technology and information security. This ensures the effective implementation of plans stemming from those policies across all institutions and organizations in both the public and private sectors. When preparing this strategy, the General Secretariat recognized that addressing information technology crimes necessitates strategic cooperation across national, Arab, and international levels, (Arab Banking Union, 2022)

Despite various international efforts to find effective solutions to confront the risks of modern technology, there are legal issues raised by the internet, primarily concerning the applicable law. Crimes committed online do not recognize geographical boundaries, and the perpetrator may be in one country while the crime takes place in another. Additionally, networks can be breached for the purpose of information espionage, which poses a threat to national security. Therefore, combating such crimes becomes an urgent necessity that requires international cooperation, including the sharing of data, technical assistance, and funding tools to resolve this global.

## **6.2. National Efforts:**

In the face of cybercrime, the Algerian state has implemented a series of legal and legislative measures mainly aimed at amending substantive and procedural provisions in line with the nature of the crime itself. Additionally, special units and agencies have been established to combat crime and deter offenders.

**6.2.1. The legal and legislative framework:** Prior to 2004, Algeria did not have laws governing information systems; however, with the increase in cybercrime, it became necessary for lawmakers to establish an appropriate legal framework to prevent attacks on these systems or their misuse. This was aimed at filling the legal void and following the example of most countries around the world. Thus, the Algerian legislator took the initiative to issue amended and supplementary laws to the Penal Code, as well as specific laws, the most important of which are Law 09-04 dated July 5, 2009, and Law No. 09-04 dated August 5, 2009, which set forth the specific rules for the prevention and combating of crimes related to information and communication technology (Bouznoun, 2019)

The law includes 19 articles divided into six chapters, prepared by a group of legal experts in collaboration with specialists and professionals in the field of electronic media. This law encompasses specific provisions related to its scope of application, as well as others concerning the monitoring of electronic communications. It outlines the circumstances that permit the resort to electronic surveillance, in addition to procedural rules that include the inspection of information systems and the seizure of data that could be useful for uncovering cybercrimes

Despite the enactment of such laws to combat cybercrime, the implementation of their provisions has been weak. Technical aspects necessary for classifying these crimes and determining appropriate penalties for offenders have been neglected. Consequently, penalties have often been limited to financial fines. (Hafoudha, 2022)

In general, it can be said that Algerian law has kept pace, albeit to a limited extent, with the legislative movement to combat cybercrime. This is based on the prevailing legal opinion that computer programs and data are considered tangible property belonging to others. They are thus subject to theft, which occurs when the information contained on a storage device is transferred to another ledger. In this context, misappropriation applies, with Article 350 of the Penal Code governing theft, including the theft of data. Consequently, Algerian judges apply the theft provisions to information technology assets. On the other hand, software and data fall under the scope of fraud, as they are regarded as property and movable assets, with Article 372 of the Penal Code applicable in these cases

The Algerian legislator has criminalized acts that violate the system of automated data processing, also known as information fraud, according to Section 7 bis of the Penal Code. Offenders face imprisonment for a period of three months to one year, along with financial penalties. If these actions result in the deletion or alteration of data, the punishment is doubled. However, if such actions lead to

the destruction of the operational system of information management, the penalties increase to imprisonment for six months to two years and a financial fine (Hirdou Centre, 2018).

Law number 09-04, in its fifth article, establishes the National Authority for the Prevention and Combat of Crimes Related to Information and Communication Technologies. This authority is responsible for the following:

- Coordinating efforts to prevent cybercrime.
- Assisting judicial authorities and law enforcement in investigations.
- Exchanging information with counterparts abroad to gather all relevant data to identify perpetrators of cybercrimes and to determine their locations.

Additionally, this law reiterates, in its final article, the principle of international judicial cooperation and assistance based on mutual treatment. In this context, the head of the parliamentary group of the Justice and Development Front, Lakhdar Bin Khallaf, explained to the newspaper "Al-Salam" that our issue lies in the laws enacted by the government regarding cybercrime, which have not been implemented. There are decrees related to this law, ratified in 2009, which have not been activated, resulting in the processing of cases in this regard facing a significant legal vacuum. This has, in many instances, led to the issuance of approximate judgments and penalties without any legal basis (Hafoudha, 2022).

**6.2.2. Structures for Combating Cybercrime in Algeria:** Given the escalation of cybercrime in Algeria and the unique nature of these crimes, it has become essential to develop judicial police departments to keep pace with advancements in the field of information-related crimes. To complement this vision, specialized bodies and units associated with the National Security and Gendarmerie have been mobilized.

The specialized technical bodies for investigation and inquiry into electronic crimes consist of units dedicated to combating cybercrime, comprising investigators with a unique profile that combines the attributes of judicial police with extensive knowledge of information systems. Among the most significant branches are the following: (Bouznoun, 2019)

**Section One:** The National Authority for the Prevention of Crimes Related to Information and Communication Technology. This authority was established in Algeria under Article 13 of Law 09-04, which outlines specific provisions for preventing crimes related to information and communication technology and combating them.

**Section Two:** Units affiliated with the National Security Corps. Within the national security apparatus, there are three units responsible for investigating cyber-crimes as follows:

- The Central Laboratory of Scientific Police in Algiers.
- The Regional Laboratory of Scientific Police in Constantine.
- The Regional Laboratory of Scientific Police in Oran.

In 2010, the General Directorate of National Security created approximately 23 cells to combat cybercrime across the central, eastern, western, and southern provinces, which were later extended to all security services nationwide.

**Section Three:** Units affiliated with the General Command of the National Gendarmerie. The main units of the National Gendarmerie responsible for investigating cyber-crimes include the National Institute of Forensic Evidence and Crime Sciences at the central level. The basic function of this unit is to support investigative units in the context of judicial police tasks in combating various types of crimes, including cybercrime. This institute has a section dedicated to Information Technology and Electronics that specializes in investigating cyber-crimes. Additionally, there are other entities within the National Gendarmerie, including (Bouznoun, 2019):

- The Centre for the Prevention of Information Technology Crimes and Cyber Crimes of the National Gendarmerie.
- The Directorate of Public Security and Exploitation.
- The Central Directorate of Criminal Investing

In the context of enhancing mechanisms to combat cybercrime, the National Centre for Combating Cybercrime has been established. Officials in charge of security have emphasized that individual posts will not be targeted, nor will citizens' freedoms be curtailed, but rather those posts that promote false and misleading news that threaten state and societal security (Bachouch, 2021). Furthermore, in the same vein, technology and information expert Younes Qarar underscored that the establishment of this

specialized centre is crucial, but it must be effectively implemented in practice, as cybercrimes have become more dangerous than traditional crimes.

Despite the variety of preventive and deterrent measures adopted in Algeria, along with a range of laws and regulations issued in this regard, the confrontation remains challenging, particularly due to the lack of technical foundations capable of investigation, research, and classification of crime severity before penalties are imposed. This is especially critical as the risks associated with modern technology crimes conducted online are transnational, raising issues regarding the applicable law and competent jurisdiction (Bayoumi, 2008: 8). Additionally, punishing these crimes in the absence of legislative support often conflicts with the principle of legality, which stipulates that there is no crime or punishment without a text.

It can be stated that the seriousness of cybercrime necessitates a concerted effort between legal and societal dimensions to address it, especially since this phenomenon can evolve from mere enthusiasm for technology into harmful motives detrimental to individuals and community institutions. Moreover, it is essential to highlight the role of education and guidance in protecting against and preventing cybercrime. This was emphasized at the Cybercrime Conference held in Tripoli, Lebanon, on March 24-25, 2017, where a series of techniques aimed at combating cybercrime were adopted (Kourari and Rahli, 2017)

- It is essential to adopt what is referred to as a firewall, which acts like the border customs to prevent the entry of foreign and harmful entities.
- Use encryption technology to prevent the disclosure of information.
- Utilize digital signature technology to prevent the forgery of electronic messages.
- Employ systems to detect various intrusions and find solutions for security vulnerabilities.
- It is vital to have backups of important and sensitive files and store them in secure locations.
- It is necessary to use programs designed to detect and prevent viruses and avoid using simple passwords.
- Exercise caution when opening email, ensuring the identity of the sender is verified.

The conference clarified that the guidance aspect plays a role in preventing cybercrimes by engaging all media outlets, including journalism, television, radio, theatre, and cinema, as they are widely accessible mass media. The goal is to raise awareness about the dangers of crimes, both at the individual and societal levels. It emphasized the importance of ethical conscience, which seeks objectivity and integrity when using modern technologies. Additionally, it called for strengthening the willpower and determination among Muslim youth to prevent them from succumbing to the temptations associated with cybercrimes. There is also a focus on investing in the youth through various forms of care, particularly in health, religion, mental well-being, and social aspects, aiming for the healthy upbringing of community members

## 7. Conclusion

Cybercrime takes various forms and has distinct characteristics associated with its perpetrators, it also has societal, media, and security strategies and mechanisms for combating it, as methods of committing crimes in the information age evolve, we must develop our countermeasures in line with societal advancements and changes. Algeria, like many other countries, faces numerous challenges in confronting these emerging crimes, particularly as we deal with a new class of white-collar criminals and a tech-savvy generation of youth who quickly adapt to new technologies. Consequently, it is crucial for community actors, security services, and active institutions to seek out weaknesses and strengths in the use of modern technology to enhance their ability to tackle these challenges. Furthermore, it is essential for all governments and nations to mobilize every stakeholder involved in maintaining security, while specialists are particularly urged to renew their knowledge and advance their skills to keep pace with technological innovations, aiming for effective and serious engagement with these technologies.

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## **DRUG ABUSE AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCE (PREVENTION, TREATMENT, DETERRENCE IN ALGERIAN FAMILY)**

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**Abstract:** *The spread of drug abuse and psychotropic substances within society and in institutions today constitutes an issue of public opinion, especially in the field of combating it. It has become at the forefront of social problems. It is considered a waste of human wealth due to its targeting of the human mind, especially if it targets members of society and their falling into the cycle of addiction, which affects the social system. Talking about its spread within society and its various institutions, it is considered a new challenge and confrontation facing the efforts made by the state to combat it. In addition, it constitutes a danger to society. Therefore, raising this social issue is a step toward understanding its causes and how to prevent, treat, and eliminate it within all circles. The descriptive approach was followed to describe the various family mechanisms used to confront the phenomenon of drug abuse, its types and its effects on the family. This approach aims to observe the methods adopted by the family to confront drug abuse. The importance of the subject of the study lies in the widespread spread of this scourge within society's institutions and the extent of its impact on the life of the individual. The aim of the study is to reveal the structure of the legal system of the Algerian state related to confronting drugs and psychotropic substances and to identify strategic plans and therapeutic, preventive and deterrent mechanisms against them. The results showed that despite the family mechanisms provided by the family, its increasing spread threatens the entity of the family and society, so all state institutions must work together to combat the phenomena.*

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, psychotropic substance, Algerian family, mechanisms to confront.

### **1. Introduction**

The drugs abuse and psychotropic substances is one of the most dangerous social problems that threaten the entity and stability of society, as it is considered a criminal behavior within a society that has standards and rules by which it defines acceptable and unacceptable patterns of behavior. It is one of the phenomena that has preoccupied public opinion due to the risks that have been reflected in societal security and security in particular. Despite the security efforts against it, it is still spreading and leading to the emergence of new narcotic substances that were not previously included in the category of narcotic substances. Algerian society and the family in particular face a number of serious social challenges in light of its increasing spread and the negative consequences it reflects, including violence, which has become a common pattern and behavior within society and the family. Its consumption is closely linked to violent behavior; because it has become a threat in view of its psychological and emotional effects on the individual, as a result of which acts appear that violate the standards and rules of society and thus the perpetrator becomes a criminal, as its use constitutes part of the crime because it weakens the individual's awareness in terms of controlling himself, as he cannot curb his violent criminal urges, and hence the problem of this research lies in revealing the Algerian efforts to combat the use of drugs and psychotropic substances in society. So, we ask the following question:

- What is the treatment plan to combat drug and psychotropic substance abuse in Algeria?

### **2. Importance of the study:**

- Attention to better understanding these phenomena to improve efforts in transforming understanding into more effective prevention and control programs on the drug abuse link.

- Focus on the phenomenon of the spread of drugs and psychotropic substances in society, which has become a social problem resulting from economic and social conditions, in addition to the most important psychological and social effects.

### **3. The aims of the study:**

- To highlight the role of social institutions in combating drug and psychotropic substance abuse.

- To disclose treatment plans to combat drug and psychotropic substance abuse in society.

- To highlight the problem of drug and psychotropic substance abuse and its relationship to committing crimes in various forms.

#### **4. Procedural concepts**

##### **4.1 Algerian family**

Family referred to a group of individuals linked by marriage or blood, living together in a single residential unit that undertakes the care and social and economic framing of its members. The family is considered the basic unit in organizing human societies, and plays a vital role in transmitting values, traditions and culture from one generation to another.

Badawi refers to the family as “the first social unit that aims to preserve the human species, and is based on the requirements accepted by the collective mind and the rules decided by different societies, and the family system is considered the nucleus of society” (Badawi, 1983: 152). The Algerian family's forms and compositions vary depending on cultures, traditions, and social systems. Among the basic aspects that sociology generally studies about it are: its internal structures, the roles and functions performed by its individuals, the social dynamics within it such as the balance between power and the distribution of power, and the effects of social changes on it such as economic, political and cultural changes. The roles of father, mother, and children develop over time and in diverse cultural contexts. If we take Mustafa Boutefnouchet concept of the Algerian family as “an extended family in which several conjugal families live under one roof, which is the “grand house” among urbanites and the “great tent” among the Bedouins, in addition to the fact that large conjugal families are the most widespread” (Boutefnouchet, 1984: 37)

##### **4.2 Drug abuse**

The term drug abuse refers to the excessive use of drugs, whether legally prescribed (such as “narcotics” prescribed for moderate to severe pain) or illegal drugs; however, this use does not rise to the level of drug dependence or addiction” (Gwinnell, 2008: 1). By drug abuse, we mean taking illegal drugs and other prohibited substances excessively or incorrectly. Drug abuse constitutes human suffering, the results of which are often reflected and express functional dysfunction, whether at the family level in particular or society in general, and are related to and a cause of the emergence of forms of crimes such as murder, violence, and other social problems that disrupt the system of values and standards prevailing in society, substance abuse. Narcotic drug addiction is a chronic, progressive, relapsing disorder that results in physical and psychological dependence on chemicals. Like many other health disorders, it can also be treated successfully (Ann H. Crowe, 1994). Therefore, treating the person who abuses it is necessary to reduce many social and other problems. This helps in controlling and confronting the spread of many diseases and criminal behaviors resulting from abuse, such as violence and others.

##### **4.3 Psychotropic substances**

By psychotropic substances we mean the use of chemical or natural substances that affect the mind and body in a way that changes the state of consciousness, and has negative effects on the physical and psychological health of the individual and society.

Effects vary depending on the type and dose of the substance, and may include changes in perception, increased or decreased activity, and changes in mood. Some psychoactive substances may be legal and used medically, while others are illegal and pose significant health risks.

##### **4.4 Preventive, therapeutic and deterrent mechanisms**

These are the measures and procedures taken to prevent the occurrence of certain problems or cases of deviant behavior, while the therapeutic ones relate to the treatment and interventions directed at dealing with problems or diseases after they appear. These mechanisms include the use of medications, psychotherapy, rehabilitation, and specialized treatment programs. Their goal is to restore health or improve the condition. Deterrent mechanisms aim to deter or prevent undesirable behaviors by imposing penalties or restrictions. These mechanisms include legislation, legal sanctions, and awareness programs that warn of risks.

#### **5. The reflection of drug and psychotropic substance abuse on social reality**

Drug abuse affects violent behavior and actions within the family environment, which increases aggression and tension and reduces a person's ability to control anger. It also leads to disorders such as hallucinations, psychological problems, and abnormal behaviors. Incorrect socialization methods also

push individuals to abuse drugs. Drugs to relieve stress and emotion” (Nachi & Messaoudi, 2024: 7). Preventive measures are defined as “societal measures directed at straight people to educate them about their future life in order to remain normal in order to limit deviant behavior or not differentiate between laws by addressing the conditions that help their emergence” (Ali, 2012: 61).

Therefore, society's institutions may face challenges in understanding and addressing the cultural and social factors that affect individuals' lifestyle and attitudes toward drug abuse, which requires a deep understanding of sociocultural variables. The laxity of laws and the decline in respect for the system of socially accepted values and traditions have contributed to the spread of some deviant behaviors. The sociocultural factors are These usually include social and moral systems and various customs, and violating them expresses a deviation from the standards of social control. It has recently become clear to us that there is a close relationship between the abuse of drugs and psychotropic substances and the high rates of crime in society. Such deviant behaviors, which deviate from the perpetrator's values and moral standards of the society in which he lives, affect him and thus threaten the general security of society. The increase in crime rates in society is linked to drug abuse, whether due to the need to obtain drug money or due to deviant and aggressive behaviors resulting from the effects of drugs on the individual's mind and lack of control over his or her behavior. The impact of drug abuse on society has affected its various social, cultural, educational and health systems, which has contributed to the spread of deviant behaviors, which today have constituted a crisis in values and conflicts in social standards, and non-normativity has become widespread within societies.

In the context of talking about non-normative drug abuse and psychotropic substance, it expresses the negative and unexpected effects that this behavior can have on the individual, social and economic levels, which requires effective intervention to reduce this phenomenon and provide support to affected individuals. Drug use is often considered non-normative behavior in many societies, especially Algerian society. It is associated with violating social laws and regulations, and is seen as behavior that threatens public health and negatively affects individuals and society as a whole. From a social standpoint, it can be viewed as a form of social deviation, and is attributed to a group of different reasons such as social and economic conditions, psychological pressures, and health problems. And the cultural environment. Addressing this phenomenon requires a deep understanding of the root causes that drive individuals to use drugs.

#### **6. Drug abuse and psychotropic substances affect the quality of family life and security of community**

Given that the family is the nucleus of society, any threat directed towards it through domestic violence - will ultimately lead to a threat to the entire entity of society. Therefore, societal security is linked, as previously mentioned, to the security of every person in society regarding himself, his money, his family, and his honor. In order for security to be achieved in society, several components or reasons must be present, the most important of which are justice, freedom, solidarity, satisfaction of needs, stability, and an internal and external defense and protection system. The drugs abuse and psychotropic substances is one of the most social deviations that have an impact on the quality of life of the family and society. Community security is a basic need for human society, and considering that the family is the first cell of society from which it is composed and through which the individual learns the lifestyle and the ABCs of life, caring for the individual within the family is a concern. To the entire Community. But today, what some families in our society suffer from domestic violence is due to several factors. This has affected the quality of their lives and the level of their relationships, leaving behind effects that are not only reflected on the family, but also on societal security as a whole. It has become clear that any human gathering cannot live a life of development and progress without the condition of security and security being met, because the loss and lack of security works to create chaos and social disorder, and creates a kind of confusion, which negatively affects the lives of individuals, and loses trust among the members of society. Social life is the primary factor in preserving human beings and the safety of society.

#### **7. The family mechanism to confront drug abuse and the psychotropic substances**

- Family dialogue strengthens social ties. The family is solely responsible for developing communication and dialogue skills and teaching mechanisms, basic principles and moral standards through the process of socialization, as it forms in the individual the methods and laws of social control. “Family dialogue is considered the first test for individuals in developing dialogue skills through interaction with family members and then society. Through communication and listening in order to understand others. These social skills can help the individual participate in community dialogues and



contribute to finding solutions to social issues.” (Nachi & Massoudi, 2024: 152)

- Family (parental) control, which requires parents to follow up and monitor their children continuously. Because the decline in the functional role of parents has created space for children to deviate towards consuming drugs and other psychotropic substances.

- Strengthening moral values and principles. The moral change that families are witnessing today at the level of the value system must strengthen their role and assume responsibility towards their children in establishing moral standards and principles.

- The nature of family relationships: The family relationship usually expresses the bonds and interactions between family members, and includes emotional support and continuous communications between spouses and children. They are essential in building a supportive and stable environment that contributes to the personal growth and emotional development of every member of the family. To escape. Therefore, “preparing for marital life is a matter of great importance, in order to prevent family problems that affect the psychological health of children” (Al-Hawarna, 2018: 230). The interconnectedness of relationships and the absence of conflicts and disagreements, especially in the presence of children, is a guarantee of psychological stability and building A healthy personality, far from deviant behavior.

- Parent treatment styles: “Parental treatment is a dynamic process that is constantly changing. It also depends on the existing interaction between parents and children and the environmental context in which they live. It is also one of the most important determinants of psychological well-being among children, which has either a positive or negative effect on the behavior of children” (Younis, 2022: 3); We find that parents’ treatment of their children through the process of socialization varies from one family to another, and we can classify it into two types: improper upbringing in which the parents rely on methods of intimidation, deprivation, ill-treatment, etc., which may be reflected in the psychological health of the children, creating a feeling of hatred towards the parents. Harsh treatment may sometimes be one of the reasons that causes children to deviate into socially abnormal behaviors, including drug abuse, which creates pressure on them to resort to such deviations.

- Early diagnosis: This stage appears when it is confirmed that the individual is using the drug. Here begins the process of early diagnosis and treatment of the symptoms of abuse on the individual. Parents’ continuous monitoring of their children may reveal any change in the behavior of one of their children, so they take him to a center specialized in treating addiction, and this is for rapid intervention and early diagnosis. For the condition and treatment” (Shalushi and Sehiri, 2020: 5), Identifying the problem and declaring it helps in early identification of the condition of the abuser. The faster the intervention by the family, the greater the chance of success in treating the abuser before he falls into the stage of addiction to it, as the treatment aspect here depends on the family and its approach in the case of the presence of an abuser within its family environment.

- Family support and support for the individual during treatment: Family support is an essential element in the process of treating individuals for drug abuse, and it can also have a major psychological impact on the success of treatment and the individual’s recovery of his psychological and social health, because family support and emotional support reflect positively on the life of the abuser.

- Understanding the difficulties and challenges that these individual faces during treatment can help him reduce tension and pressure. It is important for the family to encourage the addicted individual to adhere to the treatment plan and attend treatment sessions regularly. Continuous motivation and support from the family can have a significant impact on adherence to treatment. Family ostracism of an individual who uses drugs can have major negative effects on his mental and physical health.

- Providing a stable environment: The family environment is defined as the social framework in which individuals grow up, influencing the formation of their identity and social behaviors. Relationships between family members, social dynamics, include shared values and beliefs. It plays a fundamental role in shaping the lifestyle and deeply affects the individual and the social system as a whole, especially as it is associated with some social phenomena and problems. Creating a stable and safe home environment can help a person focus on recovery rather than being distracted by other family problems. Reducing stress and providing a calm atmosphere free of conflicts and problems has a positive role in contributing to the treatment of the addicted individual. We should also not forget that trying to ensure that the external social environment is free of drugs of all kinds may lead to enhancing the psychological stability of the individual by staying away from abuse.

- Contact specialists and cooperate with them: Family consultation, communication with treatment centers, and cooperation with specialists in this field play a major role in contributing to the effectiveness of treatment, after frank disclosure is made by the family about the condition of the abuser,

his history of abuse, and the factors, causes, symptoms, and various behaviors and events that are related to the subject. Communicating frankly and clearly. With specialists, it helps to easily diagnose the condition in addition, it is the responsibility of the family to follow the recommendations presented by them, in order to participate in the treatment process and program, because to a large extent the stage of recovery of the drug abuser's condition falls on the family and the environment surrounding him. For example, the attendance of the abuser's family to treatment and rehabilitation sessions. In some cases, seeking family support and guidance on how to deal with the patient in order to achieve positive results in treatment.

### Conclusions

The study concluded it is obvious that drug and psychotropic substance abuse poses a serious challenge affecting families and society in Algeria. To reduce the phenomenon, individuals' awareness and education about the dangers associated with drugs must be enhanced. The family plays an essential role in prevention, through open communication, psychological support, and the promotion of positive values. It is also necessary for educational and health institutions to cooperate with families to provide awareness and educational programs, which contributes to building a society that is aware and capable of facing these challenges. This requires joint efforts between all parties, as awareness and prevention are the basis for building a drug-free future that contributes to developing a generation that is aware and capable of facing life's difficulties. Drug and psychotropic substance abuse is a complex issue that requires concerted efforts from the family, community and government. By promoting awareness and developing effective prevention strategies.

### Study results and recommendations

- Psychological support should be provided to individuals at risk of drug abuse
- Promoting education and awareness of the dangers of drug abuse and its negative effects on individual health
- Laws related to drugs should be reviewed to achieve a balance between punishment and treatment
- Participation of the local community in creating supportive environments that prevent drug abuse.
- Developing cultural and sports activities that occupy young people's time and keep them away from drugs
- Social support programs for families and individuals at risk must be strengthened
- Research should be supported to understand more deeply the causes of drug abuse
- Cooperation with international organizations must be strengthened to share experiences and best practices

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# EDUCATION FOR CONSCIENTIZATION: CULTIVATING A LOCAL ELT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE THROUGH A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY PERSPECTIVE ON ACTION RESEARCH

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**Abstract:** *Although an ever-increasing amount of intercultural communication takes place in the cyberspace, local practice has not yet developed language teaching materials and methodologies geared towards preparing EFL learners to perform effectively in virtual intercultural encounters, where asymmetric relations of domination and subordination loom large. Empowering EFL learners and enabling them to assert more agency in intercultural communication in today's increasingly hyper connected world demands the involvement of EFL teachers in a coordinated reflexive practice centered on conscientization, a concept introduced by Freire (1970) to refer to a principled process for instilling critical awareness about social reality. To foster an English language teaching (ELT) community of practice which is more attuned to Algerian EFL learners' conscientization needs, the present conceptual article argues that action research should be assigned a pivotal role. It also contends that Critical Pedagogy—one of the four major perspectives on action research—possesses an enormous potential in the maintenance of such a community through inculcating the bottom-line critical attitude among its members. The paper closes with some suggestions for organizing and sustaining an ELT community of practice in the Algerian context.*

**Keywords:** English language teaching, conscientization, community of practice, Action research, Critical Pedagogy.

## 1. Introduction

Globalization, mass media, communication technology, and internationalization are some of the most important modern phenomena that have rendered a revamping of English teacher education in Algeria an urgent matter. While communication technologies have compensated to a large extent for the deficiency in exposure to the target language outside the classroom, these advantages have also brought about unprecedented challenges, thus imposing on EFL teachers' new social responsibilities. Given that the development of learners' intercultural competence is now largely accepted as being the more realistic aim of foreign language teaching (House, 2007; Holliday, 2005; Byram, 2008; Byram, 2009), more attention needs to be paid to the structure of intercultural communication in the cyber space. In Freire's (1970: 77) words, EFL teachers need to "understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of ... [intercultural speakers] are dialectically framed" in the space in question. The uncontrolled flow of communication in the online digital space puts users in asymmetrical relationships that make them prone to the hegemony of the center cultures. One of the most destructive outcomes of this hegemony in the long run is casting doubt on the relevance of their cultural references, thus depriving the victims of having any common core values that would enable them to engage in any constructive dialogue or cooperation among themselves—a necessary preliminary step towards taking collective action to act upon their reality to improve it.

Consequently, in an era where constant contact with the other in the digital world has become prevalent, a shift towards adopting conscientization as the primary goal of education becomes vital. Conscientization construed as the process whereby "... learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970: 35). It follows, then, that conscientization work should aim at equipping learners with critical thinking that would enable them to take a distance with what they encounter in the virtual space in such a way as to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the new communication technologies without falling prey to the risks of subordination and marginalization looming large in the virtual world. The fact that most of international communication is carried out in English puts an additional burden of responsibility on the shoulders of English language teachers who are expected to play avant-garde roles in assisting the new generations of EFL learners to assert more agency in intercultural exchanges in the cyberspace.

However, to live up to these unprecedented and considerably more demanding challenges, it is not sufficient to resort to hitherto customary response consisting of the adoption of a new methodology or teaching method. What is required at this juncture is rather a far more ambitious and thorough reform capable of mobilizing a collective, coordinated response among all ELT practitioners. This response should

be geared towards putting conscientization to practice. To accomplish this purpose, there is a need to embed English language teaching in a truly intercultural context aimed at allowing EFL learners to simulate the roles they are usually supposed to play in the online digital spaces and to gain an in-depth intercultural appreciation of the themes and topics that hold sway therein.

This is obviously a daunting task that requires allotting teachers a large margin of maneuver in designing and implementing an emergent curriculum, which is susceptible to be continuously updated and fine-tuned to the hot debates of the moment. To attain this goal, there is a need to foster ELT as a community of practice “the simplest social unit that has the characteristics of a social learning system” (Wenger, 2010: 1). For this community to teach for conscientization, it should first be responsible for its own learning through engaging in large scale action research. To ensure the sustenance of its reflexive practice, the community needs also to instill a deeply held critical attitude among its members. Hence, the need to adopt a critical pedagogy perspective on action research. Based on the above, the present paper seeks to answer the following question:

**To what extent is the adoption of critical pedagogy perspective on action research amenable to the cultivation of an EFL teachers’ community of Practice capable of catering for an education for conscientization in the Algerian context?**

## **2. Education for Conscientization**

Simply put, conscientization is the process whereby achieve a subjective position in developing a deep critical awareness about their social reality and build self-confidence in reversing the socio-cultural status quo to their advantage (Freire, 1970). Day (2012: 103) defines conscientization in pithy terms as “...a primarily epistemological move from a naïve to a critical awareness of reality. It often begins in ontological disturbance...[a] cognitive dissonance when the perception of a fact, image, or interaction conflicts with one’s beliefs about reality.”

According to this view, then, conscientization is a series of sequenced steps, the first of which consists of destabilizing the innocent perception of reality to replace it with a more realistic one that takes into consideration the positive as well as the negative sides of experiences and phenomena around us. Articulating English language teaching around relevant cultural contrasts between the core values of the mother culture and those of the dominant cultures in the global village may prove to be an effective tool for causing “the ontological disturbance” necessary for triggering conscientization. Depicting the contrast between naïve and critical thinker, Freire (1970:73) points out that while the former is inclined to prioritize “...accommodation to...[the] normalized world today”, the latter prefers “...the continuing transformation of reality „thus leading to the “continuous humanization” of human kind.

In the Algerian context, two sources of predilection for mother tongues core values are Islam and national history—especially the war of liberation—given the crucial roles that these two elements played in the forging of Algerian identity. Aspects of social phenomena related to these values can be systematically compared to and contrasted with manifestations of the values of liberalism and mass consumption society which are the dominant values of the target language cultures. It is worth noting that, since the 1970s, there have been continuous attempts at integrating elements of the national culture in Algerian textbooks in tandem with aligning teaching methodology with the most recent international trends, but these attempts lacked a clear theoretical articulation as well as a research agenda aimed evaluating their true effects on the learners, especially from the perspective of conscientization. There may have been individual efforts at experimenting with the afore-mentioned elements in the classroom, but the effects of these salutary efforts remain insignificant unless they are performed within the realm of a community of practice. As Day (2012: 103) put it, “while this work can be engaged by individuals, communal engagement is both more effective and consistent with the development of ethical... communities. „Hence, it is important to research and teach conscientization within the framework of a community of practice.

## **3. Community of Practice**

What, then, is a community of practice? The term “community of practice” was given by Lave and Wenger in 1991. For Wenger (2015), the term “communities of practice” refers to “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. Wenger (2010: 1) defines more succinctly as “a social learning system”. The corner stone in building a community of practice, Wenger (2010: 2) adds, is the construction of a „history of learning” about its practice. Which is the *raison d’être* of such a community. To accumulate such a history, the members of a

community, according to Wenger (2010: 1) should engage in two forms of “meaning making”: different forms of participation and the production of physical and conceptual artifacts. Some of forms of the latter, according to him, are “words, tools, concepts, methods, stories, documents, links to resources, and other forms of reification. „Engagement in “meaning making” is beneficial both to the community and the individual participating in its activities. The participant, Wenger (2010: 2) further adds, does not only acquire a set of competences and skills, but more importantly asserts the identity of “a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of a community.” Regarding the activities that are susceptible to improve the quality of practice, Wenger (2015) lists the following: problem solving, request for information, seeking experience, reusing assets, coordination and synergy, building an argument, growing confidence, discussing new developments, documenting projects, visits, identifying gaps in competence.

A community of practice, therefore, situates learning in a social context where participants learn; grow, and improve the quality of the service they offer to others as they go about practicing the activities related to their profession. The resulting learnedness is reified, recorded, and shared with all the members, thus guaranteeing the sustainability and flourishing of the community.

During over sixty years of independence, ELT practitioners in Algeria have cumulated a heritage of saviors and savoir-faire’s in the domain of foreign language teaching, yet a host of factors still stand in the way of synergizing their efforts in line with the defining features of a community of practice, the most important of which is the restricted space allotted for teachers’ research and the absence of institutional support for the organization and maintenance of an ELT community of practice.

As far is research on language teaching/learning is concerned, an ever-growing number of the new generations of teachers have been introduced to research methodology along with the standards for academic writing within the framework of master and doctoral dissertations. However, few of them if any do engage in research when start teaching. As for the research produced in academic settings, this type of research has generally no significant bearing on practice despite the fact that almost all dissertations comprise a pedagogical recommendations section intended for improving the quality of different aspects of teaching. A real solution to this anomalous situation consists of granting ELT teachers a larger autonomy in taking initiatives to improve the quality of their practice through the adoption and valorization of the results of an alternative type of research, namely action research.

#### **4. The Role of Action Research in Cultivating a Community of Practice**

Action research came into being as a reaction to discontent with the schism between the investigation and the corresponding action required to tackle social problems which characterize academic research, hence rendering it ineffective in addressing social problems (Burns, 2019). Hadley (2017: 3) attributes the gap between theory and practice to the flawed design of this type of research. According to him, “Researchers devise [...] studies that could be confirmed either by statistical analysis or by quasi-experimental of revered intellectuals in their discipline or academic community.” (Hadley, 2017: 3). This dysfunctional relationship between theory and practice holds also true for applied linguistic research where it has long been established that the results of academic research are not immediately applicable to language teaching classrooms: (Nunan, 1992)“. The question that raises is whether there another research alternative, which is more susceptible to improve the quality of English language teaching practice in the local context ?

Action research is a term that was proposed by Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), a social psychologist who realized that the group has a tremendous potential in changing the behavior of individual members and, hence, social change can be brought about more rapidly through active participation in social action. AR was introduced in the field of education in the first half of the last century to allow practitioners to investigate their problems by themselves as a result of dissatisfaction with the little impact that traditional scientific research does have on practice. Although AR has fallen of grace momentarily towards the end of the nineteen fifties as a result of some doubts about the validity and scientific rigor of its methodology, this type of research has been rehabilitated starting from the mid 1970’s the U.K and the U.S amid growing skepticism about the appropriateness and the applicability of the experimental method to teaching practice. Ever since, it has received worldwide a growing attention among practitioners who found in it a practical research procedure allowing them to take decisions while engaging in action.

Burns (in Cornwell, 1999: 5) defines AR as “a self-reflective, systematic and critical approach to enquiry by participants who are at the same time members of the research community. „According to Burns (2019: 168), AR consists of “cyclical phases of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting” and has two major aims: “to improve and to involve.” The former refers, according to (Burns, in Cornwell, 1999: 5), to “...bring[ing] about critically informed changes in practice.” As for the latter, it refers to involving

practitioners in all the phases of AR. In other words, AR strives both to refine the quality of practice and to solve the problem of discrepancy between theory and practice through involving teachers in the implementation and decision-making in all the cyclic phases of a piece of this type of research. Burns (1999) showcases the importance of collaboration in conducting AR to the emergence of a professional community. The same idea is echoed by Reason, P. & Bradbury (2008: 1) who do not consider AR as a methodology, but rather as “an orientation to inquiry that seeks to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues”. The idea of professional community evoked here meshes with the concept of community of practice. AR, therefore, possesses a huge potential in boosting the capacity of a community of practice to acquire and sustain a “history of learning” of its own.

To ensure a gradual move from researching individual to collective practice, Reason and Bradbury (2008: 6) proposed a practical framework for organizing the variety of the available types of action research: first-, second-, and third-person research practice. According to them, first person research practice refers to initiatives taken by individuals to assess the effects of an action related to their practice on their social context. Regarding second-person action research/practice, it denotes the stage where more than one individual become involved in discussions over and evaluation of the impact of specific actions on the quality of their practice, thereby constituting the foundational act of a community of learning. Eventually, the restricted scope of the initially small scale and scattered case studies may be broadened to obtain a more significant and larger social impact. In this regard, Reason and Bradbury (2008, 6) point out that “third-person strategies aim to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (say, in a large, geographically dispersed corporation), have an impersonal quality. At this stage, establishing conventions for writing action research and sharing its results among the members of the community become primordial.

Action research, therefore, does not only fit to the concept of community of practice, but it also provides a practical tool for the creation and maintenance of its proper history of learning that grants a given community of practice autonomy and continuity. What renders this type of research more conducive to the aspired-for change—and work on conscientization is no exception—is the coordination large scale action taken at the level of the whole community rather than in the form isolated individual cases. Yet, the danger that the community falls into a state of lethargy after a period of intense action and engagement in the construction of its own history of learning looms large amid the prevalence of centralized policies, on one hand, and the abundance of language teaching resources in the online digital space, on the other. In the long run, the sustainability of the community’s action depends on inculcating a strong critical culture among its members. The choice of an approach to action research among the ones which exist and the literature should be contingent upon the potential of the approach in question in instilling the right critical attitude especially one the goal of education becomes that of conscientization. In this regard critical pedagogy holds a special promise.

## **5. A Critical Pedagogy Perspective on AR**

Burrell and Morgan (cited in Doblec & Prud’Homme, 2003: 543) distinguished four approaches/paradigms which may guide the implementation of AR in the study of social phenomena: the functionalist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm, the radical humanist paradigm, the radical structuralist paradigm. Inspired by the ideas of the Frankfurt school (Bottomore, 2002), theorists located within the radical structuralist paradigm advocate social change through the emancipation of the subordinated members of human society. To expose the modes of domination and contradiction, the proponents of this paradigm have developed an approach—critical pedagogy—to teaching and AR geared towards empowering ELT teachers in the periphery and enabling them to end subordination to theories, curricula, and teaching materials which do not fit the needs of students in developing countries. This pedagogy of empowerment allots conscientization a centre stage in the teaching/learning process. More importantly, CP deploys a collection of pedagogic tools for accomplishing conscientization. These tools include codification, generative themes, problem-posing education, dialogical method, praxis, and humanization (Izadinia, 2009).

### **5.1. Codification**

Codification consists of assigning a symbolic representation of a specific social phenomenon. Such a representation objectifies the observation of that phenomenon by dint of drawings, images, or any other art forms to spark a critical attitude among learners. The prevalence of online communication necessitates focusing classroom conscientization work on the symbolic representation of phenomena that carry weight

in the cyber space. Special attention should be paid to the striking similarities and differences between the mother and target cultures so as to bring about the needed disturbance of wrongly or superficially held beliefs about those phenomena. This selection should be pursued by systematic experimentation with the resulting representations to assess their true effects on the learners and the sharing of the results with the community.

### **5.2. Generative Themes**

Ethnographic studies of the cyber space are the means whereby a community practice spots the contradictions and the problems in the target culture. These contradictions and problems serve as the basis for classroom debates. But, again, the validity of themes under discussion is to be determined through reflexive practice. By doing so, the community frees itself from potential hidden agendas comprised in language teaching materials produced abroad. Primordial to the success of generative themes in accomplishing the liberating agenda is associating learners in their selection (Freire, 1970). In this context, Freire (1970: 101-102) underlines the importance of embracing an “anthropological concept of culture” because it illuminates the roles of participants as “...transforming rather than adaptive beings.”

### **5.3. Problem-Posing Education**

To foster a culture of debate around sensitive intercultural problems among the new generation of EFL learners forms the essence of conscientization. Such a culture empowers learners and arms them with the measures for resisting domination in intercultural encounters. The extent to which these debates achieve the goal they purport to reach should also be subjected to rigorous research grounded in practice.

### **5.4. Dialogical Method**

Freire (1970:118) defines dialogue as “...the encounter among men to ‘name’ the world...a fundamental condition for their true humanization.” To endow learners with the ability to establish a link between what they learn in the classroom and the requirements of participation to improve their social conditions, CP proposes one and only one method: dialogue on equal basis between the teacher and learners in a way that allows learning to occur in both directions, i.e., the teacher learns from learners as much the latter learn from him. For conscientization on intercultural issues to succeed, the community of practice’s called upon to submit dialogic practice to rigorous scrutiny to ascertain that the expected outcomes are really achieved. Freire (1970:118) stresses that “dialogue... is neither a concession nor a gift, much less a tactic to be used for dissemination”.

### **5.5. Praxis**

To resolve the problem of the much-criticized gap between theory and practice in academic research, praxis was proposed as a nexus between action and reflection. Instead of reducing the role of researchers to mere testers of the grand theories in the field, proponents of CP advocate the establishment of a symbiosis between theorizing and action through engaging teachers in a series of reflections and actions about their practice until a distinctive line of theorizing takes shape. In Freire’s (1970, 106) words, “...human activity consists of action and reflection...it cannot...be reduced to either verbalism or activism”. Large scale action research tackling context-sensitive aspects of practice paves the way in the course of time to the emergence of local theories of practice. According to Reason and Bradbury (2008: 4), such theories are susceptible to “...contribute to human emancipation, to the flourishing of community... can lead us to different ways of being together, as well as providing important guidance and inspiration for practice.” It is the emergence of these theories that would enable the community to make sense of its own history of learning, thus gaining greater autonomy and control in researching and improving its practice. The Bangalore project in India, the task-based approach, the genre-based approach, the Sydney schooling Australia, the Brazilian synthesis of genre-based approaches are few examples of theories in applied linguistics that stemmed from local practice and gained international influence.

### **5.6. Humanization**

Marginalization and domination are forces that deprive the oppressed of their humanity. Conscientization is based on the belief that part and parcel of being human is to be free; liberty is not only a right but a natural inclination in every and each human being. To restore humanity to those who lost it is the perceived end goal of conscientization.

All in all, criticality in CP is the nexus of action and reflection. The thread of ideas and principles of CP provide the EFL community of practice with a systematic framework for engaging on large scale series of action and reflection on conscientization work revolving around relevant intercultural themes in the

online digital space. Ultimately, joint effort in taking actions and making sense of the obtained results increases in sophistication until they take the shape of fully-fledged theories, thus granting the community autonomy in appreciating and maintaining its history of learning.

### **6. Some implications for the Algerian EFL Context**

Amid the revolutionizing developments in our increasingly connected world, English teachers as a foreign language are called upon to take charge of conscientization around intercultural themes in the online digital space. To rise to the occasion, Algerian EFL teachers need to organize themselves in a community of practice capable of securing its own history of learning. Action research is the most suitable instrument for endorsing this undertaking. Sustaining the all-important critical attitude among its members is contingent upon the adoption of a critical pedagogy perspective in the design and interpretation of the chosen type of research.

The foundation for the establishment of an EFL community of practice is its institutionalization, i.e., to find an institutional framework ready to provide it with full-scale support in terms of training, coordination, dissemination and theoretical articulation of its history of research. In Algeria, English language teacher training is provided by two types of higher education institutions: universities and teachers' training schools. Universities, however, are devoted to academic research and are, therefore, less likely to be favorable for catering for the needs of the fledgling EFL community of practice. In this vein, Reason and Bradbury (2008, 3) warn us that, "... the structure and ethos of universities often work against the processes of action research. So those who champion action research often need to build institutions to nurture and support themselves and the practice –coalitions..." On the other hand, Teachers' training schools are more practice-oriented and, hence, they constitute the ideal sites for supporting the community in question.

The starting point for implementing the suggested design is the principled introduction of AR in teachers' training school's curriculum and more specifically around the principles of CP to inculcate in future generations of teachers a theory-informed critical attitude. Such a critical attitude will serve as a strong impetus for them to bring their contribution to the ongoing intercultural conscientization enterprise. Would-be teachers should be trained as transformative intellectuals capable of putting an end to subordination to language teaching methodologies and materials developed in center countries.

Equally important, there is a necessity to recognize the status of AR in civil service law to allow in-service teachers and teacher trainers to get promotion and tenure on the bases of the implementation and the publication of the results of AR. In this vein, the recent decision made by the ministry of higher education to include the end term dissertation required in teachers' training school curricula in the assessment grids concerning its tenure truck procedures is a salutary step in the right direction. However, as Burns (2019) emphasizes, action research represents a new research genre. Accordingly, style sheets for reporting this type of research need to be developed and standardized in line with what is done around the world. Moreover, the organization of seminars, conferences, and the starting of specialized journals are crucial activities for the promotion of cooperation among ELF practitioners through the sharing and dissemination of practice and research on conscientization at the national level. Hosting the communities scientific events and publications by the same type of institutions-teachers' training schools in our case-constitute a further insurance for the success of these events and the maintenance of the community.

Last but not least, the production of a community is also contingent upon the ability of the latter to engage in a systematic elaboration of theories grounded in its practice. Seeking to develop theories grounded in the local practice does not mean shying away from embracing existing theories and paradigms in making sense of ongoing actions, or secluding the community away from other communities. Theories and paradigms that are not promoted as standard versions or recipes to be followed can serve as a platform for "...cultivating horizontal communities of practice among local practitioners' as an alternative to 'the vertical transmission of knowledge from north to south' (Wenger, 2010: 7). As far as this issue is concerned, Content-Based Instruction (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche, 2003) and the learning-oriented Assessment model (Purpura and Oh, 2024) are emerging models grounded in classroom practice; therefore, different aspects of these models can be subjected to experimentation to improve local practice.

### **Conclusion**

A shift towards teaching for conscientization is necessary for empowering EFL learners in online intercultural communications. To effectively implement this shift, ELF teachers should organize themselves in a community of practice capable of producing a history of learning consisting of methodologies and materials along with /theories grounded in real problems of local practice. In this



regard, action research offers a plausible alternative. Moreover, the adoption of a critical pedagogy perspective on action research own the ability to instill a critical attitude among the community, thus ensuring its maintenance. As far as the Algerian context is concerned, the teachers' training schools represent the ideal host for the training, the promotion, the organization, and the coordination of the community's activities. Ultimately, the resulting history of learning will facilitate the generation of a national research agenda around conscientization work in intercultural online communication.

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# THE MISSING LINK IN THE MAP OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY APPROACHES: THE WEBERIAN APPROACH

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**Abstract:** *This research paper endeavors to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by examining the theoretical underpinnings that form the basis of most scholarly inquiry in this domain. By delineating and critiquing the foundational economic and organizational theories of CSR, we propose a novel perspective, asserting that CSR serves as a discourse on the economic role within society. We posit that employing Max Weber's analytical tools, especially his notion of ideal interests, addresses a significant gap in the existing CSR framework. This investigation leads us to propose a model of institutions driven by both material and ideal interests, underscoring the critical role of ideal interests in sustaining the legitimacy of institutions post-establishment. The paper culminates by focusing on institutions crafted for sustainability, advocating that our research offers valuable insights into prevailing theoretical challenges in economic sociology.*

**Keywords:** CSR, Normative Theories, Organizational Theories, Ideal Interests, Economics, Society.

## 1. Introduction

The discourse surrounding whether institutions should systematically account for non-economic outcomes of their operations has persisted within civil society and governmental spheres for an extended period. The empirical relevance of this debate has intensified recently, with an increasing number of entities adopting voluntary socially responsible management practices and global financial and economic crises reigniting discussions on responsible institutional behavior.

Despite these developments, advancements in corporate social responsibility research have stagnated. Recent studies, including those by Lee (2008), Rizi et al. (2023), Brin et al. (2019), and Eliss & Kelly (2019), emphasize the necessity for a distinct theoretical approach to CSR, diverging from the conventional methodologies predominantly employed thus far (Owen & Kemp, 2023:122).

This paper, after retracing the evolution of CSR by scrutinizing the paramount theoretical frameworks within economic and organizational contexts and articulating criticisms across three broad categories, aims to spotlight a fresh methodology for analyzing the role of economics in society by engaging with Max Weber's seminal work, "Economy and Society". Boeddeling has acknowledged the potential of harnessing Weber's conceptual contributions to integrate the CSR discussion within the broader scope of economic sociology (Boeddeling, 2012: 15).

Ultimately, we elucidate how this innovative framework for analyzing corporate social responsibility can deepen our understanding of CSR's essence and its potential to alter the interactions between the economy and society.

## 2. Current State of Theories on Corporate Social Responsibility

### 2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Corporate Social Responsibility

Research within the domain of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has yet to coalesce around a single unified theory or widely accepted classification system. Instead, the scholarly landscape is populated with diverse theories that mirror the complexity and dynamism inherent in CSR, categorizing these theories into either descriptive or normative camps.

Descriptive theories elucidate what the practice of corporate social responsibility by institutions is, or might be, in relation to those engaged with it. Conversely, normative theories delve into the logical underpinnings that prompt institutions to embrace social responsibilities. They address questions about the motivations driving institutions to uphold their social responsibilities and, by extension, propose what these entities ought to do or avoid doing.

Mele underscores that "a good normative theory requires a robust philosophical foundation, encompassing a coherent view of the nature of individuals, businesses, society, and the interrelations between business and society" (Garriga & Melé, 2004: 63). He argues that the absence of such a normative foundation impedes the development of clear and actionable agendas within the field of CSR.

Campbell contends that an unclear understanding of the foundations necessary for social responsibility jeopardizes the credibility of CSR programs (Campbell, 2007: 957). Indeed, the plethora of theories and the diversity of topics within CSR make it challenging to pinpoint the core issues, particularly given the variety of activities and the constant flux of the external environment.

This flux demands perpetual readiness from institutions to adapt. In the subsequent sections, we will delineate the primary theories underpinning corporate social responsibility

### *2.2. Institutional Theory*

This theory centers on how organizations are shaped by the norms of their external environments and elucidates the reasons behind the homogeneity observed among organizations within the same regulatory sphere. DiMaggio and Powell describe the organizational field as including crucial suppliers, consumers of resources and products, regulatory bodies, and other organizations that offer similar services or products (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983:149).

Organizational practices are reflective of the rules, beliefs, and assumptions sanctioned by the community at large, which are pivotal in determining appropriateness and securing acceptance and legitimacy.

Organizations, through various processes of imitation or compliance with social and cultural pressures, a strategy referred to as homogenizing adaptation—tend to adopt similar structures and procedures to better align with their proximate environments (Risi et al, 2023:19).

Institutional theory is intimately connected to the manner in which an institution implements social responsibility (Risi et al, 2023,p 21). A primary driver of CSR performance is the pressure exerted by stakeholders and competitors. An organization must satisfy diverse expectations and conform to established norms since its legitimacy and survival hinge on compliance with these accepted standards. Moreover, alignment with these standards is positively associated with resource access and the achievement of organizational legitimacy. Thus, institutional theory explores how organizational decisions are formulated, negotiated, and enacted by monitoring the competitive landscape.

Attempts to conform to institutional standards and practices often result in an organization imitating the actions of others to achieve social acceptability. This phenomenon is encapsulated by the concept of isomorphism, which is driven by three primary mechanisms: coercive, normative, and mimetic processes. Mimetic processes arise from a voluntary desire to emulate competitors believed to maintain an acceptable standard.

Normative mechanisms occur when imitation is deemed necessary to meet specific requirements essential for operation within an institutional framework, such as adherence to guidelines set by professional bodies and academic institutions. (Aguinis & Glavas,2012:961) Coercive mechanisms involve emulation through force or persuasion, occurring particularly when an organization depends on another and lacks the capability to operate independently.

This theoretical perspective also explores the institution's role as a mechanism for wealth creation, encompassing views that advocate for maximizing shareholder value. Within this context, Friedman articulated that "the sole responsibility of institutions towards society is to maximize profits for the shareholder within the legal and ethical framework of the external environment in which these institutions operate." (Friedman & Miles, 2002: 6)

Building on this premise, contemporary theorists advocate for "maximizing value," recognizing that certain social initiatives and activities pursued by an institution can enhance shareholder returns over the long term and provide a competitive edge, either in a competitive landscape or by creating new, untapped markets, particularly in developing countries.

### *2.3. Legitimacy Theory*

Legitimacy theory posits that corporate social responsibility is a response to social, political, or economic pressures that emanate from both the internal and external environments of the organization, (Sakai, 2010) with modern organizations often confronting the challenge of managing conflicting and dynamic stakeholder expectations.

The theory revolves around two central concepts: the public's perception and the effectiveness of the communication channels employed by the institution, It requires the organization to continually assess whether its existence serves the public as expected in relation to the values it upholds.

According to legitimacy theory, effective communication is crucial because it ensures that the business not only meets but also aligns with the community's rules, values, and expectations. Thus, an organization can be recognized as a legitimate entity serving the local community. (Deegan, 2019: 2319) Within the framework of legitimacy theory, communication about corporate social responsibility

initiatives becomes a vital means for initiating and maintaining organizational legitimacy.(Adomako & Tran, 2023:1799)

Patren observed a direct positive relationship between the disclosure of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and organizational legitimacy. Historically, financial performance served as the primary metric for determining an organization's legitimacy.(Aguinis & Glavas, 2012: 965) however, the manner in which an organization serves the community now significantly determines its legitimacy and survival prospects.

According to legitimacy theory, society at large is considered the essential unit of analysis, overlooking individual members. This focus highlights the dynamics between the organization and society broadly, emphasizing that organizations do not operate in isolation. Instead, they are engaged in continuous exchanges with society, sourcing human and material resources from the community, providing products and services, and typically offloading waste into the natural environment without incurring costs.

#### *2.4. Stakeholder Theory*

Stakeholder theory posits that organizations are influenced by various agents beyond just shareholders. The concept of "stakeholder activity" first appeared in Igor Ansoff's seminal work, "Corporate Strategy", which underscored the strategic importance of stakeholders in management.

Henry Mintzberg noted that the publication of "Corporate Strategy" was a pivotal event in management, as it focused attention on developing a theory of strategic planning and expanded the stakeholder concept beyond traditional planning frameworks, offering unprecedented detail.(Mintzberg, 1979: 587)

This theory arose from strategic management concerns, noting that decisions within an organization impact a broad array of parties, extending well beyond the immediate shareholders.(Friedman & Miles, 2002: 19) It has since become a cornerstone of corporate governance, strategic management, and business ethics scholarship.

The appeal of stakeholder theory lies in its challenge to the traditional shareholder-centric model, which primarily catered to the economic motives of shareholders: owners, investors, financiers, entrepreneurs, and managers. Particularly in the wake of significant capitalist crises, such as the 2008 financial downturn, stakeholder theory has sought to broaden the focus from shareholder interests to include the concerns of a wider community, where the legitimacy of business practices is crucial for operational success.

The theory is premised on the belief that an institution consists of relationships that generate value among various associated parties, thus shifting the primary unit of analysis from transactions to relationships among stakeholders.

From the stakeholder perspective, an organization must address the diverse expectations of different stakeholder groups, highlighting the importance of organizational accountability beyond mere economic or financial performance.(Hamidu et al., 2015: 12) This accountability is demonstrated through activities that benefit stakeholders and through the disclosure of important information to these groups. Consequently, the term "accountability" is frequently linked with this theory.

Clarkson has specifically addressed the classification of stakeholders within this theory, distinguishing between primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are indispensable for an organization's continuity, such as shareholders, investors, employees, customers, suppliers, and government entities. In contrast, secondary stakeholders are those who affect or are affected by the organization but do not engage in direct transactions with it and are not essential for its survival.(Clarkson, 1995: 99).

### **3.The Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Context of Organizational Theories**

The beginning of the twentieth century marked one of the most interesting periods for organizational trajectories, recognized as a second industrial revolution due to technological progress and innovations.

This era was rich in significant contributions to organizational research, including the scientific management associated with Frederick Taylor, which focused on analyzing internal behavior in organizations, the motivations of employees, work methodologies, and establishing scientific rules to achieve higher productivity and efficiency.

Similarly, the classical management theory of Henri Fayol was developed, which is one of the most symbolic theories in management history, proposing fourteen management principles and categorizing

activities within the organization while laying the foundations for the administrative process.(Herrera Acosta et al., 2020: 111)

The insights provided by these scholars lay the foundational frameworks for discussions on management and organizational behavior, delineating, through their studies, the organizational structures and systems.(Herrera Acosta et al., 2020:115) They developed a business model and a capitalist operational system that originated from the primary focus of managers of the time on producing vast quantities of consumer goods in the minimal amount of time.

It is important to recognize that the fundamental objective for placing an organization in such a scenario is to market large volumes of products to external parties. From these sales, workers are compensated with minimal wages, leading to the formation of unions aimed at safeguarding the physical and mental well-being of workers, as well as advocating for their rights and equitable remuneration.

This notion ignited extensive debate at the time since the predominant focus of organizations was on fulfilling their economic necessities, positioning the fundamental and exclusive obligation of an organization to utilize resources and structure activities in ways that enhance its profitability.

### *3.1.Under Systems Theory*

This theory explains how systems are considered a unified, organized whole, relying on the concept of a system that describes each component as interlocking and supportive parts that interact with each other. These parts are influenced by and impact the whole, and the system exists in a state of steady balance. This means that if one of its subsystems moves to a new position, the rest of the systems within the setup are affected, thus dynamically changing the original state of the system to reflect and adapt to the change, resulting in a new state of equilibrium.

Bertalanffy, the foundational theorist of this concept, delineated how management theories and practices that revolutionized organizational ideologies and operations were formulated. The systems approach typifies this, as it facilitated the comprehensive integration of all organizational functions, characterizing the organization as an open system that engages with both internal and external influences, assimilating these into various subsystems. This gave rise to a societal demand for development through a systems-oriented framework.(Von Bertalanffy, 1972: 422)

In this context, the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) emerged in line with the expansion of an organization's boundaries and its impact and influence on the general society and its relationship with all stakeholders. Systems theory clarified that external issues to the organization have a direct or indirect impact on the economic activities and returns of the organization.

A clear example of this is the factor that represents an internal force for the organization but still has the power to exert certain pressures and nurture its interests using methods and means from outside the organization.

Systems approach remains valid as companies must respond to new needs, desires, or trends of their consumers. With escalating social demands drawing institutions towards green and sustainable approaches, they must adopt socially responsible issues and elements to continue competing in the current market, unlike the past when 20th-century managers viewed the organization as an independent and closed system, unconcerned with what happened outside their organization.(Herrera Acosta et al., 2020: 120)

### *3.2. Under Decision-Making Theory*

Changes in the world of organizations are based on new needs of the external or internal system, compelling managers to make necessary decisions to keep up with or correct these changes. This has led to a new theory that attempts to explain the complex process of decision-making.

With the ongoing transformations in market dynamics, elements such as activities, obligations, duties, and working conditions at different levels are influenced, thus heightening the complexities involved in the decision-making process, which is deemed the most vital function upon which the organization depends.(March & Simon, 1993: 89)

There is a strong relationship between actions and decisions, where the decision-making process focuses on analyzing various possibilities or alternatives and conducting different comparisons and evaluations regarding the decisions and consequences that may result from a certain action, viewed from a purely functional perspective.

Transactions in today's business and economic environment are designed to influence the decision-making process by the market in which they exist and are reflected in the evolution of their industry. Thus,

institutions commit to their social responsibility by making decisions that contribute to improvements in social, economic, and organizational systems. (March & Simon, 1993: 100)

In this context, the relationship between decision-making and the social responsibility of an organization is clear. Within this framework, those in charge of institutions are required to determine positions and make decisions in a wise manner, considering the interest of all associated stakeholders while dialoguing with the available alternatives before them to make the most suitable decision considering the resources and information available.

The interests of workers are considered a priority, but responsibilities increase on institutions, especially after environmental crises of all kinds, where institutions are primarily blamed, thereby increasing demands to rationalize their decisions and expand alternatives to preserve the rights of all parties.

In current academic and political debates, the manager bears the responsibility of making decisions ethically and increasing rational interaction with the external environment. Therefore, social responsibility primarily focuses on this relationship between primary and secondary parties.

### *3.3. Under Management by Objectives Theory*

Peter Drucker was a staunch advocate for the notion that enterprises are obligated to address the broader community's needs while attaining economic prosperity linked to social equity. (Drucker, 1984) In his seminal work, "The Practice of Management," he asserted that "management must be mindful of the societal implications of its policies and deeds. It should evaluate whether its actions foster public welfare and reinforce the core values of society, contributing to its stability, strength, and cohesion." (Herrera Acosta et al., 2020: 121)

Amidst the ramifications of globalization and the growing nexus between business and society, the role of corporate social responsibility has evolved significantly in an era marked by increasing consumer skepticism towards corporations. Drucker observed that often, the invisible hand has enabled regulatory and legislative frameworks to absolve organizations of their ethical responsibilities under the law.

He articulated that a corporation acts as a social entity fulfilling a societal role and provides a setting where individuals can engage in fruitful professional endeavors, effectively utilize their skills, and achieve personal growth. In an era of perpetual change, the manner in which managers recognize and leverage business opportunities dictates the allocation of resources, ultimately impacting organizational advancement. This intricate landscape necessitates sophisticated managerial competencies.

Organizations that have made significant qualitative advancements were often initiated through innovations that contested the prevailing paradigms of their era. Challenging the long-held beliefs that constituted the foundational principles of these organizations brought forth new opportunities and risks, highlighting the importance of understanding how managerial perceptions adapt in a dynamic environment.

In 1985, Drucker emphasized the importance of "change in perceptions" as pivotal to fostering innovation. He remarked, "Perceptions that redefine the meaning of what is established must be closely examined as they harbor potential for creativity." (P. Drucker, 2007: 19) Thus, comprehending how managers interpret opportunities and threats from both internal and external sources is essential in crafting optimal strategies for resource allocation within an organization.

### *3.4. Under Critical Theory*

In the realm of critical theory, a defining aspect of Marxist ideology is its incisive critique of corporate social responsibility (CSR), a concept rooted deeply in a broad analysis of the capitalist framework. This profound doubt regarding CSR is apparent in the reflections of Fleming and Jones in their recent publication, "The End of Corporate Social Responsibility: Crisis & Critique." They assert, "Corporate social responsibility has essentially never commenced, and we recognize that the narrative surrounding corporate social responsibility is flawed, yet we behave as though it were accurate," thereby characterizing CSR as "the opium of the masses" that conceals the genuine distress caused by capitalist exploitation. (Idowu et al., 2015: 222)

Notably, Marxist thought on CSR is primarily not concerned with the victims of exploitation. Instead, it focuses theoretically on how capitalism works and how institutions and businessmen benefit from a societal tendency toward responsibility. (Idowu et al., 2015: 227)

Getting an overview of ongoing academic and political writings on Marxism and its link to corporate social responsibility is complex. Most academic work is conducted within the continental

traditions of European philosophy, thanks to its heritage from thinkers like Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. (Toft, 2015: 310)

Thus, these discourses manifest a detachment from emancipatory tactics and those influenced by analytical philosophy. Given that discussions in business ethics trace back to the emergence of American corporate culture during the 1950s and onwards, the connection between CSR and liberalism is notably strong. One might suggest that the core objective of CSR, following this line of thought, is to secure a robust position for the private sector within society to boost profits.

Early liberal critiques of this role, as expounded by Milton Friedman, and later liberal justifications for social responsibility, as depicted by Porter and Kramer, promote the idea of "creating shared value" through collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors for mutual gain. From this viewpoint, corporate social responsibility essentially acts as a tool for profit maximization.

Moreover, Newell also endeavors to demonstrate that CSR wasn't established to serve the community but instead, it provides legitimacy to the detrimental impacts of the capitalist economy on society, which is "fundamentally and intrinsically a manifestation of the neoliberal political economy from which it originated, aiming to validate, further, and perpetuate its operational methods."

As per Sklair and Miller, the detrimental effects produced by global capitalism are framed as issues needing solutions rather than as crises. (Sklair & Miller, 2010, p. 480) This framing promotes capitalism as the remedy to these issues without scrutinizing the origins of these problems and who is responsible for them. Therefore, what exacerbates the issues with CSR initiatives, according to Sklair and Miller, is the ongoing class polarization and environmental degradation, as these initiatives support the capitalist class that backs them and contradict their claims—they do not aim for "planetary sustainability" but rather for "economic growth sustainability." (Sklair & Miller, 2010:487)

#### **4. Prominent Criticisms**

Here, it is insightful to delve into the criticisms highlighted by seminal research in the field of corporate social responsibility to pinpoint foundations for a novel methodology. It appears that three areas are ripe for conceptual development to move beyond conventional methods. Firstly, it is essential to recognize that corporate social responsibility originates from conflicts of values.

From this standpoint, any efforts to convince through robust ethical arguments (normative approaches) are deemed "a squandering of everyone's time." Conversely, practical approaches tacitly endorse the normative premises of new classical economics. Hence, Gioia suggests that rather than attempting to resolve this conflict in values empirically or theoretically, embracing the existing tension as a foundational element is vital.

Second, the role of institutions and the interaction between institutional actors has been faint. It appears that the classical approaches ignore institutional effects, while neglecting interest-based action has the same impact when it comes to frameworks of "the new operating system." (Lee, 2008: 66) In this part, we point out that CSR could be more effectively analyzed through a dialectical framework capable of accommodating the interaction between actors and institutions.

Thus, the main goal of the investigation would be to make individual decisions considering the complex social phenomenon and its impact on those decisions at the same time. This approach would use "middle-range theories" to explain the ongoing changes in actors and their institutional environments.

The third point, derived from the previous one, questions if the focus on actors and institutions still maintains CSR's relevance to the function of business in society. (Fatima & Elbanna, 2023: 120) I contend that this perspective leads to an undue emphasis on organizations as the fundamental unit of analysis. Instead, I argue that it is critical to push research forward to view CSR as a dialogue regarding the role of the economy in society more broadly. (Hamidu et al., 2015: 18)

This framework for corporate social policy allows for an expansion in its analysis; firstly, the value judgments issued by current research in the field of CSR can be considered part of such a discourse. Secondly, it expands the perspective by proposing that the modern capitalist economic system is one of many possible configurations of that role historically and culturally.

#### **5. Summarizing Weber's Contribution to the Role of the Economy in Society**

Exploring Weber's Insights on the Role of the Economy in Society: According to Weber's framework, actions can be motivated by emotions (affective actions), established patterns (traditional actions), and by calculated means (instrumental rational actions) or by guiding principles (value-rational actions). For this discussion, the latter two are particularly pertinent.

Material interests are linked to concrete goals identified as success, whereas ideal interests connect to transcendent values that demand specific actions for their realization. (Weber, 1978: 43) Hence, ideal interests, perceived as psychological rewards for conduct that resonates with personal values, serve as an autonomous motive for behavior separate from material gains. Ideal interests are also the result of social constructs.

Consequently, ideal interests provide a non-normative rationale for behavior, emerging as a pivotal element in the notion of dynamic interplay between actors and institutions. Yet, how does Weber's framework modify the interaction between ideal interests and institutions? It does so mainly via two dialectic components in his theory of action, which I will outline as succinctly as feasible.

The first element is his analysis of rationality and the processes of rationalization. "Rationality" is a key analytical tool Weber employs to categorize "systems" of social action. (Weber, 1978: 78) He delineates that action is identified as social action when it is directed towards others.

When actions align in their purpose and share consistent motives, systems of action emerge. If value-rational or instrumental actions consistently guide behavior, this alignment is intentional. Within Weber's framework, there exist four distinct categories of "rationality": practical, theoretical, formal, and substantive rationality. (Weber, 1976:97)

Systems of action can be institutionalized via enhanced processes of formal and substantive rationalization, and indirectly through theoretical rationalization, thereby becoming "legitimate systems" (institutions). Nonetheless, "substantive rationality," which is inherently connected to value-driven behavior and thus to ultimate values, is most effectively realized when the values underpinning "substantive rationality" have been subjected to a process of theoretical rationalization leading to a coherent world view. (Weber & Giddens, 2001: 112)

Weber posits that only through such processes can "substantive rationality" evolve into systematic lifestyles that produce "psychological premiums" on specific behaviors that align with core values. (Weber, 1978:125) The development of psychological premiums on abstract ethical values is critically facilitated by organizations that convert these values into practical norms expected to be upheld by their members.

This manifestation of "substantive ethical rationality," which is rooted in value-driven actions and steered by ideal interests, has the capacity to modify those very ideal interests. This key dialectical component in Weber's theory is essential to his analysis of broader social transformations, and stability within the system is maintained because shifts in values and consequently in ideal interests typically unfold over extended periods.

As systems of action become more institutionalized through rationalization processes, the direction of action coalesces into a "principle," and Weber labels the outcome an "institution." When actions are indeed aimed at an institution, that institution gains legitimacy. (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005: 99)

Such legitimacy can primarily be reinforced through coercive measures, as well as through intrinsic motivations that may include the belief in the legitimacy of that system as a representation of ultimate values. (Weber, 2013: 56) Hence, the legitimacy of institutions can initially be grounded in ideal interests, though it may eventually be reinforced by coercive forces. (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005: 118) Because ideal interests are generally more stable than material interests, strengthening institutions around these interests can lend durability.

In his seminal work "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," Weber illustrates how the role of the economy in society underwent transformation in a particular historical context, framed through his concept of ideal interests. (Weber & Giddens, 2001: 167)

The potential for analysis through the lens of ideal interests is facilitated by the institutional context in CSR and its dialectical structure. CSR initiatives of institutions will be examined both as outcomes of action motivated by ideal interests and as social structures influencing those very actions. (Boeddeling, 2012: 18)

The process that leads to the creation of institutions grounded in CSR principles can be traced back to the "accumulations" of actions propelled by ideal interests, which ultimately cause institutions to internalize and reflect the values tied to these interests. (Kalberg, 2005: 56)

Institutions shaped by ideal interests necessitate the presence of a "dissenting group" capable of challenging the practical norms set by previously established institutions. While this was the norm in Protestant ethics, in the context of CSR, actors are required to shift from solely pursuing individual gains towards enhancing behavioral standards.

Reflecting on Weber's insights into the motives behind rationalization processes, the conflict among various "rationalities" of different "life-spheres", it appears feasible to approach corporate social



responsibility in this light. The concept of CSR is inherently linked to the outcomes of conflicts between the economic principles and those of the social and environmental "spheres."

## 6. Conclusion

The relationship between institutions and various societal segments remains dynamic, characterized by significant flexibility that existing theories strive to conceptualize more effectively. However, the dominance of normative approaches within academic circles broadens the scope for critique, primarily due to the inherent conflict between values and objectives, which introduces numerous obstacles.

Therefore, we suggest that to move beyond merely considering the financial benefits of stakeholder engagement, and to gain deeper insights into the nature of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its impact on actors and economic structures, research should adopt an approach characterized by three distinct qualities: it must be non-normative, focus on the interaction between active institutions, and conceptualize CSR as a discourse on the role of economics in society.

We posit that such an approach can effectively utilize Max Weber's contributions, particularly his concept of ideal interests in economic action. This concept is a crucial component of his broader theory of action and institutions and serves as a promising foundation for examining shifts in the economic role within society. Weber's analytical framework, especially as demonstrated in his analysis of Protestant ethics, has successfully elucidated changes in societal roles driven by economic factors.

Adopting this line of inquiry could also rejuvenate key elements of Weber's theoretical framework, thus introducing critical and timely questions into the research agenda of contemporary economic sociology.

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# INTEGRATIVE ECLECTICISM IS A METHOD ACTING AS A VEHICLE IN THE PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY.

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**Abstract:** *An interesting thing to focus on in psychotherapy is integration, because it seems to be the main door that allows us to look at the gap between theory and practice. Here we do not mean the unity of training and the use of all available and existing tools to treat symptoms, although training under different therapies often adds new tools that the psychotherapist uses. The integrative eclectic current invites us to rethink the basic assumptions of psychotherapeutic work. We see it as linked to how therapists confront their integrative models and the way in which they are activated in clinical situations to treat patients. One of the implicit goals that we believe is to encourage practitioners to have an open therapeutic attitude that prioritizes the patient's satisfaction at the end of each session, and aims for an effective treatment that leads to optimal adaptive cognition – whether it is a specific treatment method that the therapist pre-determines and then delivers without any compromises or is overly designed at the expense of patients' requirements.*

**Keywords:** Mental Health, Integrative eclectic approach, Modern psychotherapies, Client-Centred Therapy.

## 1. Introduction

Integration refers to the bringing together of diverse elements, whether theoretical or practical, with the aim of forming an authentic and practical whole that includes a specific goal and contributes to shaping a more efficient assessment and therapeutic practice for the patient. The goal is to go beyond the application of a single practice, when the latter does not allow or only partially allows the achievement of the previously defined goal (Bachelart et al., 2011). Integration can also be understood as an attempt to see beyond the limits of each of the theoretical approaches what can be learned from other perspectives (Stricker, 1994). This ambition is shared by many clinical practitioners, but it requires a specific implementation to avoid engaging in unstructured and illogical practices that rely on elements here and there to create a whole that lacks meaning. Therefore, we believe that a comprehensive reflection on the integration of psychological treatments partly answers the need for clarification between clinical psychology, theoretical models and clinical practices formulated by Raoult (2006: 12).

Beitman et al. (1989) noted that some factors have supported the eclectic and integrative approach to psychotherapy, such as the fact that none of the existing schools can respond to all cases, (Beitman, 1989: 140) which leads to a more flexible approach; the lack of effective differences which indicates the importance of common factors and their role in therapeutic change; and the focus on the characteristics of the patient and the therapeutic relationship, at the expense of specific techniques, which leads to greater adaptation of the treatment and the relationship with the patient.

Martin notes that psychological therapies, especially for institutions, have been in part shaped by other movements: the consolidation of a biomedical model of treating mental disorders (pharmacotherapy), specifically psychopharmacology combined with psychotherapy, and increasing coverage indicated treatments. (Weyeneth et. al., 2004: 79)

The term eclecticism is often associated with the term integration in psychotherapy according to (Norcross, 2005: 411), and there are three movements that all tend towards integration: technical eclecticism, theoretical integration and common factors. We will not discuss the different forms of eclecticism (Duruz, 1994: 14). We note that these developments have led, over the past twenty years, to an abundant literature, and to a trend towards a new intersection in psychotherapies; this leads to distinctions that rely more on empiricism (evidence-based treatments) than theory. The danger would be to confuse technical eclecticism with syncretism. The latter, says (CHAMBON) represents the negative side of eclecticism (Chambon, 1999: 144). Through this approach, it is necessary to speak in this context about the authority of syncretic techniques that would be a way of making unsystematic/uncritical combinations (NORCROSS), of mixing and combining techniques without distinction, leading to a random set of virtual methods. Technical eclecticism is, on the contrary, a movement that considers that the best treatments should be chosen for each case and each problem, without distinction of school. (Norcross, 1990: 213)

Given the diversity of psychotherapies and the multiplicity of therapeutic models, a fundamental challenge arises in how to achieve effective integration between different therapeutic theories and practices in a manner that suits the individual needs of patients, while maintaining a focus on achieving satisfactory and adaptive therapeutic outcomes. How can an eclectic integrative psychotherapist balance the requirements of multiple theoretical frameworks with the flexibility to meet the diverse needs of patients in clinical situations?

## **2. Hypotheses**

The eclectic integrative trend may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of psychotherapy by expanding the options of tools and techniques used based on the requirements of each patient's individual case.

Integration of different therapeutic theories may lead to higher patient satisfaction if treatments are provided with flexibility that suits their personal needs without strict adherence to a specific therapeutic model.

Therapists who adopt an open and integrative therapeutic stance may achieve better results in improving patients' adaptive cognition compared to those who adhere to traditional therapeutic approaches without integration.

The balance between adherence to different theoretical frameworks and clinical flexibility in the use of therapeutic techniques is a critical factor in achieving therapeutic goals and overall patient satisfaction.

### **• From Eclecticism to Integrative Eclecticism:**

Eclectic psychotherapies are inspired by an ancient philosophical school of thought, eclecticism, which is an intellectual approach that relies on drawing elements from different systems, such as Epicureanism and Stoicism, without bias towards a specific idea or opinion, and fusing them into a new coherent system. This methodological school was popularized by the Neoplatonic philosopher Potamon of Alexandria in the third century BC. Thus, while the eclectic philosopher likes to choose what he likes from the categories of things or people that he values for their diversity, rejecting any exclusive choice, the eclectic psychotherapist re-introduces the priority of listening to the patient's request and complaint, his expectations, his deep aspirations, and his choices regarding the technique used. The word "eclectic" comes from the Greek root "selective" meaning to choose or to exercise a selective choice", (Benchabane, 2018: 133) This non-exclusive choice results in eclectic psychotherapy offering a treatment proposal with a multiplicity of therapeutic tools and clinical procedures selectively. The patient is considered capable of being active in his own treatment, in his recovery or empowerment, and expressing his taste and personality (Zaannier, 2010)

Obviously, eclecticism in psychotherapy and counselling did not appear by chance. Given human nature, in addition to our knowledge of the historical reasons that allowed the emergence of this approach, the clinical experiences of practitioners and the various observations derived from therapeutic work as well as patient associations, especially the diversity of cases and problems encountered during treatment, prompted a reflection on practices to try to answer questions of feasibility and therapeutic effectiveness while highlighting the different characteristics that contribute to the success of the therapeutic relationship, especially the client and his needs.

### **• Different models for thinking about integration:**

Thinking about integration between theories began in the 1930s In the past in the United States, based on the observation that different psychotherapies are based on common factors and often from similar starting points before they differentiate into distinct schools (Rosenzweig, 1936: 413), there are four types of integrative models, and the following literature is usually mentioned, although the first model is rather an observation rather than a reflective and practical framework:

**1. Common factors model:** It is based on two double observations: first, that the effectiveness of psychotherapies is fairly constant regardless of the type of psychotherapy; and second, that common factors such as the therapeutic alliance weigh more in the balance than factors specific to each psychotherapy.

**2. Theoretical integration model:** It seeks to create a comprehensive theory that can accommodate existing theories, such as psychoanalysis and behaviorism. This is a complex goal that is difficult to achieve due to seemingly incompatible cognitive foundations.

**3. Assimilation integration model:** It aims to gradually integrate technical or strategic elements coming from other horizons into a given theory. The idea is that by incorporating external elements, they are modified to blend seamlessly with the host theory.

**4. Technical eclecticism model:** It is not concerned with theoretical aspects but rather focuses on purely technical and strategic aspects, as its name suggests. Technical eclecticism does not seek to create a comprehensive theoretical framework as theoretical integration suggests. (Norcross, 2005) says that technical eclecticism is like preparing a menu of different dishes, while theoretical integration is like preparing a new dish using different ingredients. In other words, eclecticism does not innovate, but rather selects what is available, case by case. (Bachelart, 2017b: 172)

As an example, we mention EMDR psychotherapy, which clearly follows the trend of an eclectic integrative trend. This is the opinion of the contributors and what "Francine Shapiro, Shapiro.F" agrees on, but with reservations. In addition, it is a treatment that has developed its own methods and its own model. (Medjahdi, 2021: 49)

This trend allows for multiple visions (Pluralistic) by using the various therapeutic methods (Terms and conditions) to help beneficiaries in a way that is tailored to the need and to reap results as quickly as possible, by focusing on the beneficiary's focus of interest. It also makes the therapist broaden his outlook and learn about other treatments and theories and not remain confined to one or a few of them, so as not to be biased towards them and to maintain the objective view required by the field of clinical psychology. (Abdel Wali & Al-Ouri, 2017: 204-206)

This does not mean that EMDR is a treatment transferred from various other treatments and theories, but rather that it developed its own methods in addition to its own model for explaining its mechanism in treatment.

If we want to set limits for both, we must mention that the eclectic trend is nothing but a branch of the integrative trend. This type emerged in the 1980s, seeking to reach a combination of different theoretical systems. (Roques, 2015: 30)

We can see the eclectic dimensions of the various theories that supported "Shapiro's" view in accomplishing her work, for example, psychoanalysis that uses free associations in order to let the client express his inner feelings to reach the focus causing the disorder, and this same process is the basis of the therapeutic dialogue between the therapist and the client in order to reach a more comprehensive identification of all aspects related to the client's past and history. (Medjahdi, 2020: 560)

There are many similarities with hypnosis when the therapist has to urge the beneficiary to float towards the past and use the senses as a bridge in order to reach deeper events rooted in his mind and affecting his quality of life, EMDR and hypnosis allow the beneficiary to pass to levels that were previously unknown to him and to perceive them and he can come into contact with his inner world that has become far from his perception as in reality and the present, and EMDR represents an effective assistant in stimulating self-healing or automatic healing of psychological wounds as a natural phenomenon that is considered a blessing enjoyed by every being. (Ginger, 2010: 23) With the addition of relaxation exercises, Gestalt therapy is an empirical approach that focuses on present awareness and the quality of the connection between the individual and his environment. (Troll, 2007: 607) Shapiro derived from the Gestalt theory some ideas related to the growing awareness of the impact of the feelings felt by the beneficiary during the therapeutic session and the quality of his performance (Kazdin, 2000: 162) as they govern his behavior and form his self. When the therapist investigates negative beliefs and replaces them with positive beliefs desired by the client, he has used one of the Gestalt techniques, and this happens in the here and now time "the present" which is what this treatment focuses on, as the past and future constitute an aspect of the present lived experience, where Shapiro went beyond that and included the various times that affect thinking in order to explore the past and know the present and look forward to the future in the best feeling, in addition to improving the physical feeling and feeling comfortable. (Ginger, 2010: 23)

As happens in cognitive behavioral therapies (CBT), EMDR conducts periodic assessments of the extent of discomfort and the extent of the resulting relief. After exposure to the treatment steps, the (SUD) and (VOC) scales are two scales inspired by the work of the scientist "Wolp" who introduced this type of assessment to the cognitive behavioral school. (Ginger, 2010: 24) In addition, Shapiro also includes some techniques of exposure therapy and restructuring inspired by cognitive behavioral therapies and uses them by processing emotional information associated with negative thoughts. There is also an eclecticism that includes positive psychology techniques that he uses in the future scenario stage in the eighth stage and the safe location in the second stage. It is also worth noting that the (EMDR) protocol with its

techniques for reprocessing information is completely compatible with a variety of other methods and techniques, except that (EMDR) adds the neurophysiological dimension. (Ginger, 2010: 24)

• **The project of the eclectic integrative approach:**

Adopting an integrative approach does not aim at mixing at all costs, and we realize this more by observing theoretical integration models such as the cyclical psychodynamic model (Wachtel, 2005: 180) and the transtheoretical model (Prochaska. & De Clemente, 1992: 310), or cognitive-analytic therapy (Ryle, 1990: 90), each of which has its own specificities and has made choices to integrate some theories or practices at the expense of others.

Adopting an integrative approach means selecting and selecting elements from different theoretical and practical approaches in a purposeful and thoughtful way, with the aim of improving therapeutic efficiency and adapting better to the needs of each patient. This requires a deep understanding of the different theories and knowing when and how to combine them to achieve the best possible therapeutic results. (Bachelart, 2017b: 172)

• **Reasons of Eclecticism:**

Beitman et al. (1989) point out that some factors have supported the eclectic and integrative approach in psychotherapy, such as the inability of any of the current schools to respond to all cases (Beitman, 1989: 140), which led to a more flexible approach; the absence of differences in effectiveness, which indicates the importance of common factors and their role in therapeutic change, and the focus on the characteristics of the patient and the therapeutic relationship, at the expense of specific techniques, which leads to a greater adaptation of the treatment and the relationship with the patient. It seems to us that other movements have had an impact on the integration and diversity of practices and interventions within the framework of psychotherapies, especially in institutions:

- Naturalism in psychiatry through the biomedical approach, the combination of psychotherapy and psychopharmacological therapy, the expansion of indications, and the influence of non-psychodynamic psychotherapies.

Medicalism in psychiatry prompts us to consider the relationship between psychotherapy, the supportive medical relationship and supportive therapy. (Schneider, 1976) points out that this type of treatment works to support the patient's personality in its various defensive actions so that he is able to bear the conflicts that we deal only with its conscious and personal aspects; Knowing that the supportive relationship includes psychotherapeutic aspects, among its techniques are interventions such as counseling, suggestion, reassurance, education or re-education.

Psychiatry includes some psychotherapies but differs from the general field of psychotherapy, with increasing reference to psychobiology. In the institutional field, psychiatry offers the widest range of psychotherapeutic applications, corresponding to the diversity of methods and practices and the need to adapt the therapeutic tool to very different cases.

This has consequences at the borders of medical practice and psychotherapy in psychiatry, with the effect of strengthening descriptive techniques that are only distantly related to psychodynamic psychotherapies. The extension of indications to severe cases, essential in terms of public health, such as psychosis and borderline states, has led to modifications in classical psychotherapeutic practices, especially psychotherapies with an analytical inspiration, such as supportive psychotherapy; this type of treatment is tasked with responding to a large number of clinical cases that conventional treatments cannot deal with. (Schneider, 1976)

The impact of non-analytic forms of psychotherapy, such as behavioral-cognitive psychotherapies, is not easy; For example, we see psychotherapeutic approaches with a dynamic inspiration, such as supportive psychotherapy, that are consistent with principles and procedures that focus on eliminating symptoms or even solving problems.

- Confusing technical eclecticism with random syncretism produces nothing but pseudoscience.

The latter refers to the negative side of eclecticism. In this context, there has been talk of a "salad of techniques" (Chambon et al., 1999). Random syncretism is a way of combining techniques unsystematically and uncritically (Norcross, 1990), as referred to by (Broschka & all, 1999) mixing and adding techniques indiscriminately, resulting in an arbitrary set of hypothetical methods. Technical eclecticism, by contrast, is a movement that believes that the best treatments for each case and each problem should be chosen, without distinction of school.

However, some experiments should not be dismissed out of hand. However, the worrying thing about claims that all mixtures without evidence-based study and others are true is the large gap between

the large number of people who hold these beliefs and the paucity of scientific evidence to support them. (Scott, 2011: 23-24)

Pseudoscience is not a search for a single criterion or a list of multiple criteria. Instead, (Hanson) uses the criterion of unreliability to conceptualize pseudoscience without using it directly as a criterion of distinction. The author proposes ten suggestions as guidelines for resolving the problem of distinction, and points out that a definition of pseudoscience that does not adhere to these requirements will not be entirely satisfactory. (Hanson) has made an original contribution in overcoming the limitations pointed out by (Laudan) in 1983, emphasizing the possibility of progress on the question of pseudoscience without abandoning the philosophical answer. We can say, then, that integrative eclectic psychotherapy arose because of the inability of current therapeutic schools to address all situations, and the focus on the common factors between different treatments and the importance of the relationship between the therapist and the patient. Modern psychiatry, with its integration of psychological and pharmacological treatments and the expansion of treatment indications, has contributed to the development of this approach. Eclecticism requires choosing the best treatments for each case rather than randomly combining techniques. Technical eclecticism aims to choose the optimal treatments for each patient, with an emphasis on the common factors between treatments such as empathy and acceptance. (Debray, 2023: 21-22)

While there are those who support these scientific fallacies, such as some fields that claim to be scientific and are accepted in academic circles, despite being considered a form of contemporary ignorance. (Bkouche) points out that the academic acceptance of some texts that appear to be unscientific shows leniency towards such texts. Which can be dangerous for education? Also, one should not be dazzled by technological tools that may be used magically instead of rational thinking. (2009: 2)

#### • Why do we move towards integration?

##### 1- Comparison between psychotherapies:

The integration of different practices or theories was not an accidental event. We believe that there are historical reasons that led to the emergence of this trend, especially with the increasing number of psychological treatments, which prompted clinicians to question the specificities or lack of specificities of their training.

Over the course of studies, it has been found that no single psychotherapy is statistically superior to others in terms of effectiveness (Luborsky et al., 1976: 1001), and at the same time, that there are common factors that unite them all (Lambert & Bergin, 1994; Wampold & Imel, 2015).

The development of professional organizations, networks and journals has encouraged dialogue between doctors and researchers. Including patient associations, as well as insurance companies, the former for ethical reasons and the latter for reasons of economic profitability, have also prompted reflections on therapeutic practices. (Bachelart, 2017b: 174)

##### 2-Focus on general principles

Integration has allowed a refocusing on what (Marvin Goldfried), one of the founders of SEPI, calls “general principles”. He points out that the question of integration can be viewed in two ways: either through the common points between psychotherapies, or by conceiving them as targeting different aspects of human functioning (Goldfried, 1987).

According to the first view, basic phenomena that may be common will emerge despite the theoretical positions of each school (Goldfried, 1980: 991-999). According to him, psychodynamic, experimental and behavioral approaches focus on the same general strategy or principle: increasing the general awareness of the individual. But the clinical procedures or tools differ: interpretation, the use of paraphrasing as a mirror or the suggestion of self-observation using a notebook. For Goldfried, attention at this level allows for a dialogue to be opened between practitioners of different orientations.

The second way to conceptualize integration is to conceive of the different orientations as targeting specific aspects of human functioning and the process of change. In other words, the orientations become complementary to each other, and our different theories can address complementary elements of human understanding. In this context, it seems important to think of their coexistence, not on the public stage, but in the mind of the therapist.

### **3-Improving psychotherapy**

It is clear to practitioners that one of the stated or unstated goals is to increase the effectiveness of psychotherapy with the idea of optimal adaptation, whether through a finished final product, or through the adaptation of the practitioner to his patient. It is clear that it is important to interrogate a crucial element that appears little in the literature on this topic: the distinction between meeting patients' requests and understanding their real needs.

When the therapist seeks to meet the specific demands of the patient, he runs the risk of not dealing with the deeper issues, and may see the symptoms disappear, but may then notice that the patient's discomfort or suffering still persists. This tendency to "chase symptoms" tends to become common, with the increasing number of new practitioners of new psychotherapies (who avoid being called psychotherapists out of respect for the law). In their training, which is sometimes very rapid, they often prefer the tool, the work of thinking, to theory, and especially the solid psychopathological foundations that we consider necessary. (Bachelart, 2017b: 174-175)

### **4-Power in meeting and integration**

We also believe that the integrative project ultimately addresses the question of the encounter, and asks how the therapist deals with the moments in which he or she takes control or relinquishes control. The desire to understand, to model as best he or she can, and to respond in the quickest, most profound and most effective ways to the patients' problems brings the therapist back to the concept of control over the encounter. It is possible that multiple theories, or on the other hand, the intensive technical work directed towards the elimination of symptoms, are a response to a demand (individual and social) for effectiveness as a defense mechanism by the therapist against his feeling of helplessness. Discussions about psychotherapies sometimes seem to make us believe that it is easier and more convenient to intervene in psychological disorders, a materialist discourse that tends to ignore the individual who bears these disorders and deflects the question of the meaning of symptoms. (Bachelart, 2017b: 175)

#### **• Psychological integration teaches us a lot for advanced therapy:**

The debate between theories, strategies and tools through the Anglo-Saxon perspective has been imported to France and from there to other countries. Integration seems to be a reasonable lens of thought, but it can lead to an attitude that aims to eliminate symptoms as the sole goal. We believe that there is a continuum between, on the one hand, a radical dogmatic position that is limited to recognizing the existence and usefulness of only one theoretical approach, and, on the other, an excessive pragmatism that denies the importance of theoretical thinking in favor of a purely technical application.

Some therapists take measures such as saving money instead of considering its potential function, which is not at all the work of psychotherapy. Psychotherapies must still exist even for the purpose of integrating models, and we have points of agreement about symptoms despite ideological wars.

#### **• Common factors:**

The integrative approach to psychotherapy reminds us that there are common factors, and also that there are convergent visions of treatment that unite psychotherapies. Common factors include motivations, patient expectations, as well as variables related to the therapist, such as his psychological balance and ability to build a trusting relationship, etc. These common factors represent a large part to which change in psychotherapy can be attributed. (Bachelart, 2017b: 176)

Some therapists behave in a way that psychotherapy should never succeed: prioritizing cost-saving measures over the potential effectiveness of the intervention. Even as we strive towards an integrative model, it is necessary to recognize common points - especially regarding the manifestation of symptoms - amidst ideological wars. Its primary goal is not to eliminate symptoms. In an attempt to organize and provide a strategic way of looking at symptoms, each approach reveals different aspects: cognitive-behavioral (which focuses primarily on the function of symptoms) or its context or value; existential - for the humanistic approach; or a place in psychological economy - for psychoanalysis (the latter two are aimed preferentially at the subject). Sometimes, unlike the cognitive behavioral approach, he does not, he says he is an economist because it is all about the assessment, not the symptoms. It seems that the symptoms have already been covered in every way. Some therapists take actions that lead to saving money without considering the potential benefit of work that is not psychotherapy in any way. And in order to bring the models together - despite the ideological wars and points of agreement - we still need to be there with the symptoms (this is the case to some extent). The origins lie in France. On this subject, it cannot be said that all psychological interventions, although different, have something fundamental in common: by highlighting this point, we can distinguish between psychotechnology and psychotherapy - so we shed more light on the ground where the method can be used. And put it on the integration



### Conclusion:

Integration is a relevant idea for our practice in psychotherapy because it seems to provide a key that can question the gap between theory and practice in psychotherapy. It allows for the distinction between theory and practice in psychotherapy. It allows for the distinction between the practitioner-technologist and the psychotherapist in the strict sense of the word by focusing on the symptom and what the therapist can do in the face of suffering. In fact, integration does not mean training and deploying all the tools available to confront a "resistant" symptom, although some models often fill this basic fear felt by the therapist. Therapists can be observed on a spectrum ranging from radical identification with theoretical models to highly technical without theoretical or reflective positioning. The integrative approach invites us to reconsider some of the basic assumptions of psychotherapeutic work and we believe that it is linked to the question of the encounter between the therapist and the therapeutic models he integrates and how they are activated in the clinical setting.

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## A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PORTRAIT OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY OFFENDERS

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**Abstract:** *The present study analyses the characteristics of 71 individuals convicted of child pornography, who were incarcerated in the national penitentiary network between 2019-2022. The data presented below represents an analysis of the information provided by 21 prisons, who supported me in completing a questionnaire that included the following indicators: gender, residence area, age, education level, family situation, housing situation, criminal record, relationship between the offender and the victim, number of minors abused. The characteristics of the offenders were compared with those identified in studies conducted on the same topic in other countries. The results indicate a series of similarities with the research I referenced, as well as some differences. Romanian offenders are mostly men between the ages of 25-45 who, at the time they committed the crime, had started their own family or were involved in a serious long-term relationship. From an economic perspective, the data indicates a high proportion of individuals without stable employment, of those with a low level of education, and of those who had incomes below the average level. The most significant differences from other studies in the field are the higher proportion of female offenders, the large number of individuals with a low standard of living and of those without stable employment. The study is part of my Ph.D. thesis, "Sexual Behaviours in the Online Environment: Between Normality and Deviance."*

**Keywords:** cybercrime, child pornography, offenders, characteristics.

### **1. Defining the concept – child pornography as a form of cybercrime**

The global expansion of internet among all population categories and its intensive use in all areas of private and social life, highlights this technology's essential role in contemporary society. In early 1995, 1% of the world's population used the Internet; by 2024, this percentage has grown to 66%. Today, users spend an average of 7 hours daily online to communicate, work, or relax (webage.ro, 2021). At the individual level, the internet contributes to human and social capital growth for those who have digital skills, increasing their chances to learn and access opportunities.

The rise of the internet is considered the third industrial revolution, significantly transforming people's way of life (Apostoiu, 2019). A new reality emerges—virtual reality, which is characterised by new ways of interaction and which promotes new activities and social actors. The specifics of online interactions lie in the ability to transcend the physical limits imposed by conventional reality, allowing individuals to communicate and select interactions based on personal preferences, affinities, or areas of interest. The internet enables the emergence of new currents of opinion, attitudes, and values, that are not controlled by social pressure or by the interventions of social control institutions. In this sense, the internet allows its users a degree of freedom that was previously inaccessible to them. It is also a vast space where legal norms are difficult to apply because of the anonymity that this technology allows and also because of the new issues that constantly arise in this space, which exceed the capacity of authorities to legislate and intervene effectively. National and international social control institutions are currently trying to manage the perverse effects produced by the internet.

Cybercrime is one of the hard-to-anticipate and especially difficult-to-combat consequences resulting from the widespread diffusion of the internet. The global cost of cybercrime in 2024 is estimated at 9.5 trillion dollars. Most cybercrimes are economically motivated (M. Ahlgren, 2024). Alongside economic crimes, sexual abuse-related crimes also find a conducive environment in virtual reality. It has been demonstrated that pornography consumption has increased at an accelerated rate with the spread of this technology, and alongside the explosion of adult pornography, child pornography - a highly severe form of victimisation of minors, has also expanded.

Statistics cited by the European Commission in the preamble of the *EU Strategy for a More Effective Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse* (2020) show that, worldwide, in 2019, 17 million cases of child abuse were reported online, 17 times more than in 2010. At the EU level, the increase is equally alarming: from 23,000 cases in 2010 to over 725,000 in 2019 (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, USA, 2020, apud. C.E. 2020). The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimates that there are 40,000 public chat rooms where predators seek to abuse children. However, abuse also occurs in other online spaces, which elude the control of authorities (FBI 2011 apud. Terre des Hommes, 2013).

From a sociological point of view, child pornography refers to any action intended to produce, procure, or distribute sexual materials depicting individuals under the age of 18, aimed at stimulating the sexual appetite of the viewer. The various actions described by the definition of child pornography may have different motivations. In this paper, all forms of child pornography manifestation will be analysed, regardless of the motivation behind the act (whether the act was committed for material gain, to satisfy the sexual fantasies of the offenders, or for revenge or humiliation of the victim).

Child pornography is incriminated by the Romanian legislation under article 374 of the New Criminal Code and under article 51 of the “Law 161/2003 on measures to ensure transparency in the exercise of public duties, public functions, and in the business environment, prevention, and sanctioning of corruption”.

## **2. Theories regarding the causes and effects of child pornography**

The first studies that addressed the problem of adult pornography started from the concern about the effects that it can have on its consumers behaviour. E. Goode (apud. Rădulescu, 1996, p. 177-179) identifies three possible theoretical models. The first is the catharsis theory, which posits that pornography can function as a safety valve, allowing individuals with deviant tendencies to express their sexual impulses in a form that does not have an antisocial character. From this perspective, a man’s sexual energy is expended through masturbation, eliminating the danger of it being consumed through socially dangerous actions. This theory was found to be incorrect because it treats sexual assaults as being exclusively sexual behaviours. At the same time, this theory is based on the false premise that every man possesses a finite amount of sexual energy that can be consumed through masturbation.

A second theory is the media determinism theory, which presents pornography users as passive victims of online content: individuals who watch pornographic materials imitate or model their own behaviour based on what they see in such materials. From this perspective, pornography is a form of socialisation of violence against women.

A third theory holds that pornography does not affect the consumer. The neutrality theory of pornography is supported by studies that found that exposure to erotic materials did not alter the sexual behaviour of men. The results of these studies are contested because they do not distinguish between erotic materials and aggressive materials, a distinction that can significantly influence the results obtained.

The studies conducted reveal contradictory explanations. However, there are enough indications that exposure to erotic materials has very few or no effects on adult subjects with already-established attitudes toward sexuality and sexual morality. However, in the case of minors or young people, there is evidence that, in association with other risk factors, pornographic materials with aggressive content can have a negative impact, contributing to distortions in how sexuality is perceived and manifested.

These theories have been subsequently tested in an attempt to understand the impact of child pornography on its consumers. Child pornography has become the subject of numerous studies due to the accelerated spread of pornographic materials involving children in the virtual environment and the noticeable changes in the content of these materials, which increasingly feature unimaginable forms of violence.

Several studies have analysed the influence that access to child pornography has on the sexual preferences and behaviour of its users. A new area of interest is related to understanding the effects that interactions within online groups have on group members.

Most research has been conducted on small groups of individuals convicted of child pornography offences, which limits the generalisation of the conclusions. Moreover, many studies have yielded contradictory results. While some research confirms that exposure to child pornography influenced consumers’ sexual preferences, cultivating and encouraging an interest that did not exist before, other studies show that a significant number of child pornography consumers already had pedophilic tendencies before accessing such materials. Other studies indicate that the use of child pornography served as a substitute for acting out deviant sexual fantasies, preventing potential physical sexual assaults on children (Riegel, 2004 apud. McCarthy, 2010).

M. Seto and A. Eke (2011) concluded that not all child pornography consumers possess the characteristics necessary to commit sexual abuse in the physical world, where the victim may resist, express suffering, or reveal the abuse.

J. Ray, E. Kimonis, and M. Seto (2013) showed that while some of the subjects analysed became consumers following overexposure to online pornography, including child pornography, others consumed pornography due to their pre-existing sexual attraction to children. These same authors provide evidence

that a significant portion of child pornography consumers are also interested in physical sexual contact with a minor

In a comparative analysis between individuals who committed only online offences (non-contact offences) and those who also committed offline sexual abuse (contact offences), J. A. McCarthy (2010) concluded that child pornography offenders form a heterogeneous group that must be approached with different prevention and treatment methods. Thus, there is a significant proportion of child pornography consumers who pose a low risk of transferring their fantasies into the real world by initiating physical contact. There is also a second category of consumers, that has a higher risk of acting offline. The variables associated with an increased risk of offline aggressions include a history of drug abuse, criminal records, and deviant sexual interests. Consumers of pornography who also commit contact offences are more likely than non-contact offenders to have a history of substance abuse, to have been convicted of a sexual offence, and to have been diagnosed with pedophilia. Additionally, offenders who have had physical contact with victims communicated more often, both online and offline, with other individuals interested in child pornography or used the internet to locate and communicate with potential victims. A significant difference was observed in the ratio of child pornography to adult pornography in the offenders' collections, as well as the use of non-pornographic materials featuring children (such as photographs from magazines or beauty contests) by offenders who had physical contact with children.

Regarding the influence of online interactions within child pornography consumer groups, there is a consensus among different studies showing that interactions in such settings provide its members with social support and justifications that lead to a change in perception of their sexual preferences, the validation of inclinations, minimisation of guilt, and, in some cases, facilitation of transitioning to action (Blevins, Holt and Burket 2012; Quayle and Taylor, 2002).

### **3. Socio-demographic characteristics of child pornography offenders**

Regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of child pornography offenders, the study conducted by Seto and Eke (2005), led to the following results:

- Among the analysed offenders, only one woman was registered, who acted in complicity with a man.
- 56% of the offenders had a criminal record at the time of the offence. Of these, 25% had been convicted of sexual assaults involving physical contact, 17% of non-contact sexual offences, and 15% had been investigated for child pornography.
- Offenders with a history of sexual abuse of a child present the highest risk of recidivism.

D. Howitt and K. Sheldon (2007) found that, in their sample, pornography consumers had a higher level of education compared to sexual offenders who only engaged in physical contact or mixed contact (online and offline offence). The average years of schooling in the first case was 13.8 years, while in the second case, it was 11.2 years. For offenders who acted both online and offline, the average years of schooling was 12.7 years.

Analysing the relationship between the offender and the victim, the same study shows that offenders who abused victims only physically acted more frequently within the family than other offenders. Thus, among contact offenders, 56% acted only within the family, 20% only outside the family, and 24% in both contexts. Among offenders who committed both online and offline sexual offences, 20% acted only within the family, 60% outsider the family, and 20% in both contexts.

McCarthy's (2010) study indicates that child pornography offenders represent a heterogeneous group. Summarising the results of several studies on this topic, the author describes individuals convicted of such offences as predominantly white, aged between 25 and 50 years, with above-average intelligence, and employed at the time of the offence. Regarding the personal life of the offenders, some studies analysed by McCarthy suggest that most of them were in a relationship at the time of the crime, while other studies indicate a large proportion of single individuals or of those who had never been married.

In terms of sexual inclinations, most studies analysed by Mc Carthy, show a correlation between possession of child pornography and pedophilia. A significant proportion of individuals with paraphilic tendencies have been identified among child pornography offenders. Also, the study shows that a significant proportion (between 26% and 50%) of individuals had a history of childhood sexual victimization.

McCarthy conducted her own study on a group of 107 individuals convicted of child pornography. The group included both individuals who committed only child pornography offences (non-contact offences) and individuals who used child pornography but also committed physical abuse of a minor (contact offences). Data analysis of the entire group led to the following results: the average age of

offenders was 39 years; 59% were single and had never been married; most offenders (37%) were university graduates, and a significant percentage (17%) had completed high school; 18% had suffered sexual abuse during childhood; 15% had been previously convicted for a sexual assault, and another 20% for a non-sexual offence; 24% had a history of alcohol abuse, and 40% had a history of drug abuse.

Another study that contains information about the characteristics of individuals convicted of child pornography and the motivation behind this behaviour was conducted by L. Reijnen, E. Bulten, and H. Nijman (2009). In terms of age, education level, and ethnicity, the authors found no differences between child pornography consumers and non-sexual offenders. Significant age differences were found between child pornography consumers, whose average age was 37 years, and other types of sexual offenders, who had an average age of 47 years. In terms of education level, most individuals convicted of child pornography had completed primary or secondary education, similar to other sexual or non-sexual offenders. 59.1% of the offenders convicted of pornography were not involved in a relationship, and 40% lived alone. The percentage of child pornography consumers who had children (18.1%) is much lower than that of contact sexual offenders who had children (59.6%) or that of non-sexual offenders (54%). The personality tests applied during the research concluded that individuals who download child pornography are less socially integrated, lack interpersonal skills, and face intimacy issues. At the same time, the conclusions show that internet offenders are less energetic, impulsive, thrill-seeking, friendly, and extroverted and have a better tolerance for frustration than non-sexual offenders.

D. Finkelhor considers that online child sexual abuse is just another form of child sexual abuse and that offenders who act online are not different from those who act in the physical reality. Child pornography consumers who do not commit physical abuse (online offenders) are an exception and they must be treated differently, but at this moment we cannot draw conclusions regarding them due to the lack of relevant data (Finkelhor, 2012). Summarising some of the results obtained by Finkelhor in various studies on child sexual abuse (1986, 2013, 2020), we can identify the following characteristics of offenders who commit sexual assaults on children:

- Most child sexual assault offenders are men. In most cases, women are involved by instigating or encouraging men; the percentage of women cited by the author is 5%.
- 25% of offenders are related to their victims, 60% are acquaintances, and 15% are strangers. Most offenders who operate online are individuals who have met the children in real life, with the internet merely being a tool used to develop a relationship with the victim.
- Only 10% of offenders have a prior history of sexual abuse.
- 35% of offenders were subsequently convicted for committing other offences; most were convicted of theft or violence.
- The recidivism rate increases with the length of the monitoring period for offenders: if the recidivism rate is 11% within the first five years, the recidivism rate doubles after extending the monitoring period to 22 years. The existence of prior sexual assault and a young age at the time of the first sexual offence are the main factors statistically associated with recidivism. Intelligence level, occupational status, or sentence length do not influence the risk of recidivism.
- Individuals who assault boys are at least twice as likely to recidivate compared to those who assault girls.
- Only a small proportion of offenders are convicted for their actions: only one-third of the identified offenders are convicted, and these come from those who acted negligently, committed multiple offences, come from less privileged social categories, and lack the resources to defend themselves in court.
- Most abusers are not pedophiles but opportunistic offenders. Most sexual offenders do not choose children due to a sexual preference but for a variety of other reasons. The access to an unsupervised minor in the context of the absence of an adult partner or the desire to experiment is considered the main contributing factor in most cases of abuse.

#### **4. Methodology of the study**

This paper aimed to highlight the characteristics of the individuals convicted for child pornography offences in Romania. As much as the data allowed me, I compared the traits of Romanian offenders with the characteristics of the offenders analysed in the international studies cited in the previous chapter.

Statistics from the Romanian Police regarding reported child pornography offences were consulted. These statistics contain information regarding the gender of the offenders and their relationship with the victims. To identify the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the offenders, I developed a questionnaire containing relevant indicators, which was sent to all penitentiaries in the national network. Due to personnel shortages or procedural reasons, only 21 penitentiaries

responded to the request. After the assemble of the data received, a database was created containing a total of 71 offenders who were in custody between the 2019-2022. The quantitative data collected refers to the offenders' gender, residence, age, education level, family situation, criminal record, relationship with the victims and number of victims. Thus, the quantitative data used to outline the socio-economic characteristics of the offenders are based on incomplete information. A more accurate understanding of the investigated aspects was not possible at the time of data collection, as none of the institutions I contacted did not create databases or analyses on the subject of child pornography. The limited data I received was only possible due to the support of the specialists in the education and psychosocial assistance services, who filled out the questionnaire with the required information. I would like to thank them on this occasion. Although the data obtained are based on the analysis of a limited number of subjects and take into consideration only the child pornography cases identified by the authorities, they provide a starting point for understanding the particularities of a worrying phenomenon that affects Romanian society and which has not been addressed by sociological research.

### 5. Research results

The statistical data centralised by the Romanian Police provides information on the gender of individuals suspected of committing child pornography offences, and also on the relationship between the offender and the victim. A predominant proportion of male offenders was recorded, with men making up 88.4% of the total number of individuals convicted of child pornography offences. Although the proportion of women is significantly smaller, their presence is notable in absolute terms, with 29 female offenders registered in 2022 and 32 in the previous year.

**Table 1: Distribution of suspects according to their gender (source: IGPR)**

Year	TOTAL	Male	Female	Percentage of male offenders
2022	251	222	29	88.44
2021	263	231	32	87.83

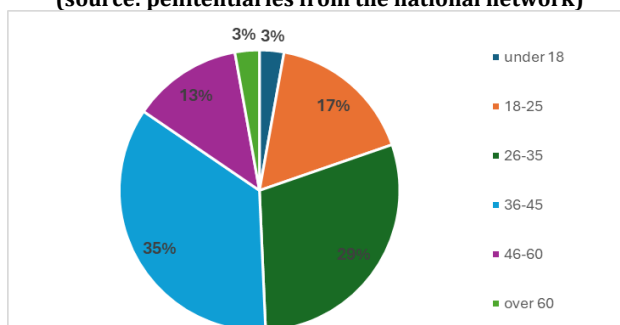
The number of cases where the offenders acted within their own family is relatively low. However, compared to the previous year, an increase in such cases is noted: 13 cases in 2022, compared to 5 cases in 2021.

**Table 2: The proportion of suspects who acted within the family (source: IGPR)**

Year	Total number of suspects	Suspects who acted within the family	Percentage
2022	251	13	2.38
2021	263	5	2.58

The information on the socio-economic characteristics of offenders is based on the data provided by the penitentiaries. Most offenders convicted of child pornography were between 26 and 45 years old. The number of offenders coming from rural areas (36) is approximately equal to that of offenders coming from urban areas (35).

**Figure 1: Distribution of offenders by age (source: penitentiaries from the national network)**



When correlating the age of the offenders with their residence area, a higher proportion of very young people and, also, of older people, is noted in rural areas. While no offenders under the age of 18

were recorded in urban areas, two such cases were identified in rural areas. Additionally, the number of individuals who are over 46 years old is higher in rural areas, while the number of individuals aged 26-45 years is bigger in urban areas.

**Table 3: Number of offenders by age and residence  
(source: penitentiaries from the national network)**

Age group	Urban	Rural
Under 18	0	2
18-25	7	5
26-35	12	9
36-45	14	11
46-60	3	6
Over 60	0	2

Out of the 58 offenders for whom marital status information was available, most were involved in a family-type relationship: 19 were married, and another 18 were in a concubinage relationship. However, the number of single offenders is still significant: 18. Three other individuals were involved in other types of relationships at the time they committed the offence (were divorced or had a non-committal relationship). The number of unmarried offenders decreases with age (the situation in which the convicts were under 18 was not taken into account). Offenders aged between 26 and 60 were, in most cases, in a family-type relationship (married or concubinage). However, a significant proportion of unmarried individuals is noted across all age categories.

**Table 4: Number of offenders by age and marital status  
(source: penitentiaries from the national network)**

Age group	Single	Married	Concubinage	Other situations
Under 18	2	0	0	0
18-25	6	6	0	0
26-35	5	5	6	0
36-45	3	6	8	3
46-60	2	3	3	0
Over 60	1	0	1	0

For 41 offenders, data related to their living situation was available: most (19) lived with their nuclear family (parents in the case of minors and spouse or partner in the other cases). A significant number of individuals analysed lived with their extended family (13), while 9 lived alone at the time they committed the crime. A high proportion of offenders had a low level of schooling. Out of the 71 individuals, 40 had completed secondary school at most. Another 24 were high school graduates, while 7 had completed university education. Most of the offenders for whom data regarding occupation was available, did not have a stable job at the time of committing the offence. However, there is also a significant proportion of convicts who were employed at the time. A small number of subjects were self-employed. The available information on the convicts' incomes is limited. Data were collected for 21 individuals. Of these, two-thirds had an income below the threshold required for a decent living. The remaining 7 individuals had an average or above average income. In rural areas, a higher number of offenders had incomes below the threshold necessary for a decent living, while in urban areas, more offenders had medium incomes.

**Table 5: Number of offenders by income category  
(source: penitentiaries from the national network)**

	Up to 2500 lei/adult <sup>1</sup>	2500-4500 /adult	No data
Urb	3	6	27
Rur	11	1	23

<sup>1</sup> The value of 2,500 lei/adult in the household was established based on the ICCV's 2021 analyses regarding the value of a consumption basket corresponding to the minimum of decent living and subsistence: 2,708 lei per month for a single adult. In assessing the average income of over 2,500 lei/adult, I took into account the INS data which shows that the average monthly income was in the second quarter of 2022, 2,481 lei per person.



Most offenders had prior criminal records. Out of the 66 individuals for whom data regarding their criminal history was available, 37 had previous convictions. Most of them had been previously convicted of theft and rape. There were also individuals convicted of human trafficking, robbery, assault, manslaughter, or driving without a license.

Offenders from rural areas had prior convictions to a greater extent than those from urban areas. While in urban areas, the number of offenders with or without prior convictions was equal, in rural areas, the number of those with prior convictions was significantly higher: 12 compared to 3.

A significant proportion of offenders had multiple victims. Of the 62 offenders for which data on the number of victims was available, 34 had a single victim, while the remaining 28 had at least two victims. Among the 28 offenders who abused more than one minor, most (11) had two victims. The highest number of minors abused by a single offender was 30.

As the age of offenders increases, the proportion of those who abused more than one victim also increases. Out of the 8 offenders aged between 45 and 60, 5 abused at least two minors. Additionally, both individuals over 60 years of age abused at least two victims.

**Table 6: Number of offenders by number of victims  
(source: penitentiaries from the national network)**

	1 victim	2 or More Victims
under 18	2	0
18-25	8	3
26-35	11	7
36-45	10	10
46-60	3	5
Over 60	0	2

When comparing the number of victims, slight differences between urban and rural areas were noted. The number of offenders who abused more than one minor was higher in urban areas (15) compared to rural areas (13).

With regard to the relationship between the victim and the offender, data provided by penitentiaries show a different situation from the one reflected in police statistics. More than one-third of the offenders (16 out of 41 for whom data is available regarding the relationship with the victim) had abused a minor from their own family.

The information regarding individuals convicted of child pornography offences could be representative of the prison population. Given the low number of inmates compared to the total number of child pornography offences reported to the police, I cannot generalise the conclusions to all perpetrators of such crimes. Observing the very high proportions of offenders who abused at least two victims, who abused family members or who had prior criminal records, I can hypothesise that custodial sentences are more likely to be imposed in cases involving a higher degree of social danger.

## 6. Conclusions

The results obtained in the present research show that individuals convicted of child pornography offences have the following characteristics:

- Most of them are men aged between 26 and 45 years.
- Most had their own families or were involved in family-type relationships at the time they committed the crime. However, the number of unmarried offenders is still significant.
- There is a high proportion of offenders with a low level of education (most of them are secondary school graduates).
- Most of them did not have stable employment. There is still a significant percentage of those who were employed at that time.
- In terms of standard of living, two-thirds of the offenders had an income below the one necessary for a decent living.
- The majority of the analysed offenders had prior criminal records.
- There is a high proportion of offenders with multiple victims. As the age of the offenders increases, so does the percentage of offenders who had more than one victim.
- More than a third abused minors within their own families.

Compared to the results of studies conducted in other countries on the same topic, the present research highlights the following particularities of Romanian offenders:

➤ **A higher proportion of female offenders:** 11.6% in the present study compared to 5% of female offenders among sexual offenders identified by Finkelhor and 0.5% of those convicted of child pornography identified by Seto and Eke (2005).

➤ **A lower level of education:** The majority (40 out of 71) had completed at most 8 grades, compared to the results obtained by Howitt and Sheldon (2007), which indicate an average education level of 13.8 years for individuals convicted of child pornography only and 12.7 years for those convicted for both pornography and contact sexual offence. The education level from this analysis is lower than that identified by McCarthy, who showed that 37% of the offenders attended university. At the same time, the data confirm the conclusions of L. Reijnen, E. Bulten, and H. Nijman (2009), who indicated that most offenders had completed primary or secondary education.

➤ **A higher proportion of individuals without a job:** Most offenders analysed in this study did not have a job at the time they committed the crime, while studies analyzed by McCarthy (2010) indicated that most were employed at that moment.

➤ The study contradicts the conclusions of Reijnen, Bulten, and Nijman (2009) and McCarthy (2010), who found that online sexual offenders are more likely to live alone and be unmarried. In this research, **more than half of the offenders for whom family data was available (37 out of 58) were married or in a concubinage relationship.** Additionally, only 9 out of the 41 subjects for whom data on housing were available lived alone at the time of the offence.

#### **Similarities with other studies relate to age and prior criminal records of the offenders.**

Thus, according to this study, most child pornography offenders are aged between 26 and 45, which is consistent with the findings of Seto and Eke (2005) and McCarthy (2010). More than half of the subjects in this study (37 out of 66 for whom data is available) had prior criminal records at the time of the offence, a situation similar to that identified by Seto and Eke (2005), who established that 56% of offenders had a criminal history. This percentage is, at the same time, significantly higher than that identified by McCarthy (2010), who established that 37% of offenders had a criminal history.

The proportion of offenders who, at the time of the child pornography offence, had a history of sexual aggression (of any type) is 19% in this study, compared to 15% found by McCarthy (2010) and 10% identified by Finkelhor (2012).

The results of this study provide a general socio-economic portrait of child pornography offenders in Romania. However, since there are different forms of child pornography, with different motivations (acts committed for material gain, acts committed to satisfy the sexual fantasies of the offenders, or acts committed to humiliate or seek revenge on the victim) and different forms of manifestation (acts that do not involve physical contact with the victim, acts that involve the physical assault of the minor), it would be useful to initiate studies that highlight the particularities of different categories of offenders.

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# THE IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA ON ALGERIAN YOUTH: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD ITS IMPACT ON THE TRANSITION OF SEXUAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to examine the impact of new media on Algerian youth's understanding of personal beliefs and sexual values. It provides detailed and comprehensive results analyzing how young people interact with new media and the way it influences the formation of their sexual beliefs. The results show significant variation in responses, highlighting that the effects of new media are not uniform across the youth population. Through in-depth analysis based on the assumptions of the UVT (Unconscious Value Transition) theoretical framework, the study arrives at a deeper understanding of the formation of youth's sexual beliefs in light of their engagement with influential figures and content through new media. The study concludes by emphasizing the significance and ability of the UVT theoretical proposal to explain the nature of value transitions among youth.*

**Keywords:** Value transition, role models, belief, alternative socialization, new media, sexual value transition.

## Introduction

In the age of modern technology, the world is witnessing massive changes in various aspects of life. However, perhaps no generation has been more affected than the youth, who are undergoing fundamental transformations in their experiences and interactions with the world around them. New media is considered one of the most significant and influential phenomena in the lives of today's youth, offering them new opportunities to explore and shape their personal beliefs and sexual values. This comes amid the increasing influence of social media and digital content that flows through platforms like TikTok, which have become integral parts of their daily lives. Algerian youth are among those experiencing socio-cultural transformations influenced by numerous factors, including rapid technological developments and the expansion of new media into public and private social life. The use of these media by young people has become a mirror reflecting the formation of their personal beliefs and values, especially those related to their sexual lives. In this context, this study explores the cultural and social transformations experienced by Algerian youth as a result of their interaction with new media. It focuses on the impact of these transformations on their understanding and formation of sexual beliefs and gender values, particularly through the use of new media such as social networking sites and digital content, which have become important parts of young people's experiences in shaping their sexual beliefs and values. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following question: How do new media influence Algerian youth's views on the values linked by their sexuality life, and how does this change the traditional beliefs associated with it? We will analyze this from the perspective of the theory of unconscious value transition in the digital environment (UVT).

## 1. Study objectives

The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To what extent does new media influence the sexual beliefs and values of Algerian youth?
2. Analyze the role and functions of social media influencers in the formation of sexual beliefs among young Algerians.
3. To assess the generational differences in the acceptance and rejection of new sexual values facilitated by digital media,
4. Scrutinizing cognitive dissonance among youth in their transitions between old sexual values and new ones.
5. Understand how virtual communities serve in the reconfiguration of sexual beliefs among Algerian youth.

**2. Study concepts:** This research touches several core concepts, most of which relate to the UVT theoretical proposal. These include:

**2.1. The concept of values:** Values are defined as a deeply held belief, principle, or moral standard that is of importance to the individual or society that holds onto it. As a standard, they influence attitude, behavior, decision-making, and perceptions of what is desirable or important. They also connote the level of something that is considered to be better rather than bad (Schwartz & Wolfgang, 1987). These values generally result from cultural, social, religious, or personal sources and are usually identified with the very core of an individual's beliefs and his worldview. Furthermore, values tend to be general and not specific, transcending certain actions and attitudes.

They represent a set of acquired standards that prepare us to act as we do, which emerge from the inseparable interconnection of emotional and cognitive belief systems. A system of standards through which behavior is judged and sanctions are applied; individual or common concepts of what is desirable and undesirable; moral judgments or value indicators; and things that are viewed positively or negatively (Hutcheon, 1972). For instance, values are considered general evaluative criteria used to assess specific behaviors in certain situations. Or they can be viewed as beliefs about what is good, acting as behavioral tendencies or generalized attitudes (Hutcheon, 1972). Therefore, values are understood as a broad term encompassing all forms of beliefs and expressive ideas that are associated with some specific positive or negative evaluative meanings.

**2.2. Value transition:** The concept revolves around the idea that the deep-seated beliefs, principles, and moral values of a person are slowly and suddenly transformed as an eventual result of influence from the outer world, experience, and interaction with humans. Such shift in moral, cultural, and societal values influencing re-appraisal and transformation of belief patterns of an individual constitutes value transition. The shift in values could be done either unconsciously or consciously and is bound by the exposure to new ideas, diversity of views, shifting social norms, and personal growth. The concept suggests that value changes can be both conscious and unconscious and can be internally and externally facilitated toward reorientation of an individual's moral and cultural compass. This is through exposure to new media, new role models, and alternative socialization.

**2.3. Sexual value transition:** The concept refers to the transformation or evolution in the societal attitude, norms, and practices dealing with sexuality. It may be used to cover a wide range of aspects, starting from changes in perceptions, ways of expression, and ways of regulation of sexuality within society. For example, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy discusses how technology has given birth to individuals with new sexual identities, such as homosexuality. To these people, sophisticated technologies become part of the needed ingredient in their favored way of gratifying sexual experience (Halwani, 2023). This transition toward incorporating technology into sexual practices reflects the shift in sexual values toward forms of expression and sexual beliefs that rely on digital media.

**2.4. The concept of belief:** In the social sciences, belief refers to an individual's acceptance or conviction that something is true or correct. It is often based on personal experience, cultural or societal norms, or other factors that shape one's convictions (Ajzen, 1975). Beliefs play a crucial role in shaping human behavior, attitudes, and decision-making processes. They form essential elements of our cognitive structures, shaping how we perceive the world, others, and ourselves.

**2.5. The concept of role models:** In the social sciences, a role model refers to an individual or figure that others respect due to their social status and seek to emulate (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Role models serve as examples or guides for behavior and values. They play a significant role in shaping the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of those who look up to them for guidance and inspiration (Vocabulary.com, n.d.). Role models can be either positive or negative. Positive role models provide examples of behaviors that are worth imitating, following, or even believing in, while negative role models demonstrate behaviors that should be avoided.

**2.6. The concept of new media:** New media refers to digital technologies that allow for the control, compression, and interactivity of media. Examples include websites, multimedia computers, video games, compact discs, and DVDs. New media does not include traditional media like television programs, feature films, magazines, books, or print publications unless they incorporate technologies that enable digital interactivity (Konieczny, 2009).

### **3. The UVT\* as a theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of the Unconscious Value Transition (UVT) suggests an explanation for how youth in modern society, particularly in the digital environment and the influence of social media, undergo value transformations. According to this framework, unconscious interactions with influential models and frequent exposure to new media can lead to radical changes in the values and behaviors of youth (Chiheb, 2024a).

This proposal is grounded in an axiological dimension that deals with values and ethics, highlighting the diversity of value systems within Arab societies. It also explores the way in which normative values are shaped by social expectations and personal experiences, given the complexity of transitions of values from one social context to another. The theoretical proposal created an urge to explain the ethical dimensions that come with this value transition, where moral implications of adopting new values will account for how individuals and groups interact with conflicting value systems. It also explores the role of core and external values in shaping individuals' motivations and behaviors, and how they prioritize and absorb values based on their personal and collective importance (Chiheb, 2024b). The UVT theoretical proposal introduces a set of fundamental and secondary assumptions to explore the issue of value conflict among youth within Algerian families, as follows:

#### **3.1. Fundamental assumptions**

**3.1.1. Alternative socialization:** This assumption refers to the transition of youth from direct socialization based on human interaction to indirect socialization through digital media. Within this perspective, new media platforms-in this case, social media-become the main source of values and beliefs while it also marginalizes the role reserved for traditional family and social role models during socialization (Chiheb, 2024a).

**3.1.2. Absence or weakness of traditional role models:** It is assumed that traditional influential figures, such as parents and teachers, have become less capable of transmitting values and beliefs across generations. With the weakening of the value-based discourse used by these role models, and its failure to meet the needs of young people, youth turn to new media for alternative guidance, leading to value transitions through digital influencers (Chiheb, 2024a).

**3.1.3. Absence of the spirit of belief:** The assumption may note that there are circumstances when exposure to new ideas through digital media may weaken the traditional belief systems of individuals. During those moments of doubt and uncertainty a radical shift in earlier belief may take place as individuals, with a blank spirit, may unconsciously adopt the new values provided for them (Chiheb, 2024a).

#### **3.2. Secondary assumptions**

**3.2.1. The influence of the content of social media on values:** It is ordinary for young people to be exposed to all forms of discussions and debates through social media, which influences their sexual values unconsciously after some time. New information about sexual values is filtered through "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers" to reinforce and add to their unconscious mind.

**3.2.2. Influential figures on social media and beliefs exploration:** New influential figures on new media play a role in affecting the unconscious transition of sexual values among young people.

**3.2.3. Group dynamics on social media and social beliefs:** Young people may unconsciously adopt the values of the virtual communities to which they belong, strengthening their sense of personal sexual beliefs.

**3.2.4. Cognitive dissonance and adaptation to new beliefs via social media:** Young people who encounter new information about their sexual beliefs on social media, which challenges the prevailing beliefs in their real-world community, may experience dissonance between their old and new beliefs, leading to an unconscious adaptation to the new values and beliefs.

**3.2.5. Value transformation through exposure to social media:** As these young people interact with diverse content and perspectives, they may challenge their current sexual values and beliefs, which are dominant in their real-world community, and transition to new values and beliefs.

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\* The Unconscious Value Transition (UVT) is a new theoretical framework that the researcher has been developing since 2015. It explores the complex interplay between the unconscious mind, values, beliefs, role models, and new media in shaping individual value systems.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Study design

This study adopts an exploratory research design, suitable for investigating a relatively under-researched topic: the intersection of new media and sexual values in Algeria. The research is framed within the Unconscious Value Transition (UVT) theoretical model, which posits that individuals undergo unconscious shifts in values as they are exposed to new cultural norms through indirect socialization processes. This model is particularly relevant in contexts where traditional values (such as those shaped by religion and family) come into conflict with modern, progressive values encountered through media.

The research design is primarily qualitative but incorporates quantitative elements to provide a comprehensive analysis. By using a mixed-method approach, the study captures both the breadth of the phenomenon (through quantitative data) and the depth of individual experiences (through qualitative narratives).

### 4.2. Sample and sampling strategy

The study sample consists of 196 participants, who were randomly selected from a pool of Algerian youth active on social media. Participants were recruited through a combination of online advertisements and social media groups, specifically targeting individuals between the ages of 18 and 35. This age group was chosen because they represent the segment of the population most likely to be engaged with new media and to be in the process of forming their sexual identities. The study focused on individuals who are regular users of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, as these are the most popular social media platforms among Algerian youth.

The sample was designed to include a diverse range of participants in terms of gender, educational background, geographical location (urban versus rural), and socio-economic status. This diversity was important to ensure that the study captured the varying experiences and perspectives of Algerian youth, as sexual values are likely to be influenced by these demographic factors.

**Table 1: The demographic characteristics of the sample**

Characteristic		
Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	118	60.2
Female	78	39.8
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25	84	42.9
26-35	112	57.1
Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	20	10.2
Secondary	62	31.7
University	112	57.1
Geographical Origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Rural	84	42.9
Urban	112	57.1
Family Size	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Large	48	24.5
Medium	92	46.9
Small	56	28.6
Housing Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Independent	108	55.1
Apartment	64	32.7
Shared House	24	12.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Going through some demographic specifics of the sample, several key insights can be taken from this about the way multiple factors influence the perception of new media's impact on the sexual values of Algerian youth. The tabulated data explores that 60.2% were males and 39.8% females. This would

probably mean that there are gender-based differences in the shaping of sexual values through new media, as both men and women might actually go through or interpret the process differently. There is also some divergence according to age groups, with a presupposition that the younger the participants are, the more they will be influenced by new media; for older participants, especially those above the age of 53, reflection upon such changes may reflect more comparative and traditional aspects. Another influential factor is the educational background of participants, in which educated participants seem to hold a more profound and analytical view regarding how new media influences sexual values and beliefs; their depth of education stipulates how they understand these changes among Algeria's youth.

In addition, the great difference between rural and urban participants is that rural participants may hold more traditional values, whereas urban respondents may be more inclined to the rapid social and cultural transformations introduced by new media. The other influential factor could be the housing type, for instance, independent housing may imply privacy and hence allow freedom of expression on sexual beliefs more than shared housing where one is frequently interacting with others in ways that may shape the exchange of sexual values.

#### **4.3. Data collection**

The data for this study were collected using a mixed-methods approach, which included both quantitative and qualitative elements. The primary tool for data collection was an online questionnaire, which was distributed via social media platforms. The questionnaire was divided into two sections:

**4.3.1. Demographic information:** The first section gathered basic demographic information about the participants, including their age, gender, education level, geographical origin (rural or urban), family size, and housing type. This information was essential for understanding how different demographic factors might influence participants' engagement with new media and their sexual values.

**4.3.2. Attitudinal and behavioral measures:** The second section of the questionnaire focused on participants' attitudes toward new media and its influence on their sexual values. Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements using a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). These statements were designed to measure various aspects of the Unconscious Value Transition (UVT) model, including:

- The extent to which participants rely on new media for information about sexuality.
- The influence of social media influencers on their sexual beliefs' formation.
- Their experiences with cognitive dissonance when confronted with conflicting sexual values.
- Their participation in virtual communities and how these communities shape their views on sexuality.

In addition to the quantitative questions, the questionnaire included several open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences with new media and how it has influenced their sexual beliefs. This qualitative data provided richer insights into the personal experiences of Algerian youth as they navigate the complex terrain of value transition in the digital age.

#### **4.4. Data analysis**

The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, to summarize participants' responses to the attitudinal measures. Cross-tabulations were also conducted to explore relationships between demographic factors (such as age, gender, and education) and participants' attitudes toward new media's influence on their sexual values.

The qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involved identifying recurring themes in participants' narratives, such as the role of social media influencers, experiences with cognitive dissonance, and the impact of virtual communities on sexual beliefs formation. These themes were then linked to the UVT theoretical framework to provide a deeper understanding of how unconscious value transitions occur.

### **5. Results**

The study's results demonstrate the significant impact of new media platforms on the formation and perception of sexual values among Algerian youth. It has also been illustrative of how exposure to the globalization of more progressive views on sexuality—mostly through social media, in any case—contributes to personal changes in beliefs and behavior. This paper also described how cognitive dissonance develops because of the conflict between traditional values instilled through using family and religious structures and modern values created by digital content.



### 5.1. The role of new media in shaping sexual values

As many as 91.8% of the respondents expressed their opinion that new media has significantly changed the previous pattern of upbringing regarding sexual values, further validating this finding. As a matter of fact, the majority of young Algerians stopped relying exclusively on the family, this country's educational systems, or religious authorities for developing their sexual belief systems. New media sources such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become the primary sources of sexual information for young Algerians. The findings indicate that the youth have easy access to digital platforms, which have exposed them to a wide range of diverse perspectives that challenge their conservative upbringing.

**Table 2: Changes in pattern of parenting and bringing up due to new media:**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	6	3.1
Neutral	10	5.1
Agree	180	91.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

This shift represents a departure from traditional transmission of sexual values as inculcated through the family and religious institutions. It suggests that new media may provide youth with a variety of alternative sexual norms and behaviors that often deviate from values accentuated in their lives offline. Suppose they feel a high sense of membership in a certain group.

### 5.2. New media as a primary source of sexual education.

Indeed, another important finding is that 67.3% of respondents said they now rely on new media as the primary source of sexual information. A shift that indicates how digital platforms are occupying center stage in shaping the sexual beliefs of young people has occurred away from more conventional forms of sexual learning, such as family conversations or school-based curricula.

**Table 3: Using new media as a primary source of sexual education**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	20	10.2
Neutral	42	21.4
Agree	134	68.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

These data have allowed us to grasp how social media emerges as a significant source of conversations about taboo or sensitive topics, such as sexual orientation, gender beliefs, and relationships outside of marriage, within the context of mainstream Algerian peer groups. Discussion of all of the above themes is barely present in formal education and religious life; therefore, for filling this gap in knowledge, new media have become especially significant.

### 5.3. The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Sexual Beliefs Construction:

It followed that 84.7% of the respondents believed the role that social media influencers play in shaping sexual beliefs became considerably stronger than that of traditional role models, including parents, teachers, or religious leaders. They often share on social networks, including Instagram and TikTok, very personal experiences about sexuality, relations, and gender, challenging usual norms and urging young people to adopt more progressive attitudes.

**Table 4: Effect of social media influencers on sexual beliefs**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	6	3.1
Neutral	24	12.2
Agree	166	84.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Indeed, results have shown that, through social media influencers, the Algerian youth find alternative role models who give guidance and views on topics rarely discussed by traditional authorities.

These young people often find encouragement to question or redefine their beliefs and values through their interactions with influencers who embrace openness to and acceptance of diverse sexual identities.

#### 5.4. Virtual communities and sexual belief formation

In this context, another finding indicates that 71.4% of the respondents reported their involvement in virtual communities, online forums, or social media groups, which have significantly influenced their sexual beliefs. These virtual communities serve as safe places where young people 'explore and discuss' sexual topics with difficulty brought up offline.

**Table 5: Virtual communities and the shaping of sexual beliefs**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	16	8.2
Neutral	40	20.4
Agree	140	71.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The participants demonstrated that virtual communities offer emotional support, validation, and a sense of belonging to individuals who face isolation or marginalization due to their sexual orientation or held beliefs. For many participants, virtual communities have become an important means of shaping understandings of sexual beliefs that are necessary to counterbalance some of the more conservative norms of their offline environments.

#### 5.5. Dissonance of cognition and value adjustment

One experiences cognitive dissonance, a state of internal turmoil between their ingrained traditional sexual values and the contemporary values they unintentionally discover through new media. Generally, many respondents adjusted to the new values they encountered on the internet, suggesting that cognitive dissonance could serve as a pivot for value adjustment.

**Table 6: The effect of cognitive dissonance on value adjustment**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	4	2.0
Neutral	26	13.3
Agree	166	84.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The participants reported that cognitive dissonance is a result of exposure to incoherent messages on sexuality from traditional and digital sources. While traditional sources focus on modesty, chastity, and rigid gender roles, the digital platforms enable sexual freedom, fluidity of gender roles, and normalization of a myriad of sexual orientations. As time progresses, youth will become more likely to shift their value judgment to match the progressive views encountered online.

#### 5.6. The transition of values across generations

These findings also attest to generational differences in the formation and adjustment of sexual values. Young Algerians, according to 88.8% of the participants, are more susceptible to the influence of new wave sexual values through new media than older citizens, who may resist such changes. This generational divide thus reflects broader socio-cultural changes influenced by the use of new media across different generations.

**Table 7: Generational differences in sexual values because of new media**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	8	4.1
Neutral	12	6.1
Agree	176	89.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

If anything, this would seem to suggest that the new media exposure initiates a generation of young people who are more likely to question traditional approaches to sexuality and espouse values

closer to global, progressive standards, while older generations largely unexposed to digital content hold stronger allegiance to traditional values inculcated through family and religious authorities.

## 6. Discussion

The discussion section elaborates the findings, connecting them to the Unconscious Value Transition theoretical framework and analyzing their wider implications for explaining the socio-cultural transformations taking place among Algerian youth. The discussion addresses several themes, such as the decline of traditional socialization actors, the emergence of digital influencers, cognitive dissonance, and generational variations in value adaptation.

### 6.1. Alternative socialization through new media

The findings of the study strongly support the UVT model's assertion that new media operates as a powerful alternative mechanism of socialization, supplanting the roles of parents, religious figures, and teachers. Indeed, 91.8% of the participants agreed that new media has drastically changed the transmission pattern of sexual values in the family (see Table 2). This shift highlights the evolving role of digital platforms in reshaping sexual beliefs, as contemporary youth encounter a diverse array of sexual values that challenge the conservative norms pushed by traditional authorities. Such narration of sexuality-related stories through digital content on social media sites starkly contrasts with the messages provided to youngsters either by the family or the religious community. This is a form of indirect contact, whereby the youths are involved with the digital content without truly being aware of its impact on their perceptions. This gradual change over time leads to a profound shift in the values related to sex, as identified by the UVT model.

**Table 8: Traditional vs. digital socialization of sexual values**

Socialization Agent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family	62	31.6
Religious Institutions	30	15.3
New Media	104	53.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to Table 8's evidence, new media has supplanted more traditional socialization agents as the dominant force in shaping sexual values for over half of the respondents.

### 6.2. The role of social media influencers

The most dramatic finding in this study is the role that social media influencers now play as key figures in shaping the sexual beliefs of the Algerian youth. 84.7% agreed that today, influencers play a more important role in guiding sexual values among young people compared to traditional figures like parents or religious leaders (see Table 4). This response aligns with the UVT model's emphasis on the role of alternative socialization agents in facilitating value transition. Compared to traditional authorities on these topics, the content of social media influencers is oftentimes far more relatable and accessible to youth. Social media influencers frequently share personal stories about their experiences with sexuality, relationships, and beliefs, which resonate deeply with questioning youth. Influencers open up discourses on sensitive topics, such as sexual orientation and gender fluidity, allowing youth to explore novelty in understanding their sexual selves.

**Table 9: Social Media Influencers as New Role Models**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	8	4.1
Neutral	26	13.2
Agree	162	82.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Social Media Influencers Indeed, the attempt by more than 80% of respondents to identify their role models among social media influencers in relation to the development of their sexual values indicates the emergence of new dimensions in youth beliefs within the context of the digital environment.

### 6.3. Cognitive Dissonance and the Adjustment of Values

The UVT model highlights that the center of value adaptation lies in the experience of cognitive dissonance. To this end, Table 6 demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of respondents, specifically 84.7%, reported experiencing cognitive dissonance when considering competing sexual values from traditional and new media sources, respectively. This happens when youth read progressive values from online sources that contrast with their conservative upbringing. We observed that most participants eventually embraced the new values they encountered on digital platforms, a consequence of consistently finding satisfaction in alternative viewpoints. Indeed, this process of reshaping their beliefs impacted their core beliefs. The UVT model, which suggests that individuals unconsciously adopt new values through indirect socialization, can also shed light on this, gradually altering their core beliefs.

**Table 10: Cognitive Dissonance and Value Transition**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disagree	6	3.1
Neutral	28	14.2
Agree	162	82.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The Table shows that more than 80% expressed having changed their sexual values based on cognitive dissonance. In other words, it indicates that cognitive dissonance is an important catalyst for value shifts during digital time.

### 6.4. Generational differences in value adaptation

The study emerged that there are significant generational differences in the acceptance of new sexual values. The younger participants were more likely to accept the freedom of sexual values propaganda in the new media, while the older participants showed more resistance. This aligns with the significant socio-cultural changes between these generations in terms of the use and influence of new media, as indicated in Table 7, where 89.8% of the respondents acknowledge this generational gap in the transmission and acceptance of new sexual values.

## 7. General results of the exploratory study

Based on the results derived from the different tables, a general overview can be provided about some of the trends and transformations that emerge in the participants' views on Algerian youth regarding sexual values and beliefs in the context of the influence of new media.

1. Results show that Algerian youth are more into the new sexual values generated by new media and perceive strongly supportive value transition. The youth continuously get exposed to some alternative content that shapes their notion of sexual beliefs and norms.

2. Various tables illustrate that a relatively good number of the youth have rebelled against the traditional beliefs and sought to redefine their appreciation of sexual values, particularly those defined by the traditional role models. It is not new but rather part of the greater movement where the youth are drifting from the sustained conventional beliefs into more current media-oriented views.

3. The findings show that the youth are undergoing fundamental changes in the way they conceptualize their sexual life. These are occurring mainly based on constant exposure or engagement with messages and characters provided by media through new platforms. Social media use is becoming a major lens through which young people look at, search for, and shape their sexual life.

4. The findings indicate that new media is a significant source of discovering and building sexual beliefs and values among young Algerians. In fact, for their discovery of new ideas and beliefs on their sexuality, a growing proportion depends on these platforms, placing new media as one of the key influential elements leading in the formation of their values in current times.

5. The frameworks of the Algerian society, very complete changes in culture and social sphere take place. Youths find it difficult to reconcile their ever-changing sexual attitudes with the traditional values instilled upon them. Most of them would rather change to more progressive ones according to what they see on social media.

6. The evidence of social media influencers in shaping sexual beliefs and values of the youth to which today's change in socio-cultural landscape is a reality. They help guide, inspire, and support youths through such new sexual practices and beliefs. Youths find influencers more relevant and accessible to converse about such topics than other traditional figures.

7. The technology and new media have become an active agent in accelerating cultural and social changes in sexual life among young people in Algeria. Technology will continue to change the way youth break into and think about their sexual values, challenging traditional social standards.

8. There is a noticeable difference in the responses of youth within the different age brackets represented in the various tables. The newer the generation, the more open they will be to adopting new sexual values created by new media; the older the generation, the more traditional the beliefs may be. That, of course, would suggest that each age bracket experiences and presses differently in terms of contact with new media content and the influence of such on sexual beliefs.

9. The new media show different influences concerning youth, with some being more influential, for instance, TikTok, in shaping sexual values; even more, it shows the diversity in the influence of new media on the values and beliefs of the young people.

10. The findings have shown that young people are increasingly engaging in the socio-cultural changes brought about by new media. This created debates and contradictions with traditional values and new sexual beliefs that urge young people to engage and adopt values in response.

### Conclusion

The study gives important insights into how new media are restructuring sexual values in Algerian youths. The findings confirm that digital platforms, especially social media influencers and virtual communities, play a central role in promoting new sexual norms that challenge traditional values. The current study supports the UVT model by demonstrating that youth adopt the new values unconsciously through repeated exposure to digital content leading to gradual shifts in their sexual beliefs. These findings also show the great driving role of cognitive dissonance for value adaptation, with youth negotiating the tension between conservative values imported through family and religion and the progressive ideas they are exposed to through new media. Indeed, over some time, many youths change their beliefs to conform to ideas that are more liberal than they had previously encountered online. Truly, it reflects a broader shift in sexual values among younger generations.

Such value transitions need further research for the explanation of long-term implications, especially in relation to other aspects of Algerian society: family dynamics, religious life, and gender relationships. Future studies should also explore how various media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube contribute to these value shifts from the perspective of the UVT.

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## EFFECTS OF IMPULSIVE SENSATION-SEEKING ON DECISION-MAKING AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the implications of impulsive sensation-seeking on decision-making ability in two distinct age groups: post-adolescents (18-25 years) and young adults (26-35 years). The impulsive search for sensations is a personality characteristic that manifests itself through a person's tendency to seek and appreciate diverse, novel, complex and intense experiences. This includes a predisposition to try activities that may involve physical, social, legal or financial risks. Decision making capacity refers to the rationality of the decision-maker, more precisely to the sensitivity he has to the most common biases and decision heuristics. Using a sample of 70 participants, the Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire (ZKPQ) to assess sensation-seeking behaviors and the Cognitive Assessment System (CAS++) to assess decision-making capabilities were applied. Data collection was done online, with participants filling in structured digital forms. Statistical analysis confirmed significant differences in decision-making capacities between the two age groups, with post-adolescents demonstrating lower decision-making scores compared to young adults. The study also found that there was no significant correlation between impulsive sensation-seeking behaviors and decision-making capabilities, suggesting that the direct influence of sensation-seeking on decision-making might be less than previously assumed. In conclusion, decision-making seems to improve with age and the accumulation of life experience, reflecting not only cognitive and psychological maturity, but also the effects of a supportive psychosocial context. The lack of a meaningful direct relationship between sensation-seeking and decision-making underscores the need for further research to understand how these dimensions interact throughout different stages of life.*

**Keywords:** Impulsive search for sensations; decision-making capacity, Cognitive Assessment System

### 1. Impulsive sensation seeking

Impulsive sensation seeking is a psychological construct originally developed by Marvin Zuckerman in the 1960s. This refers to the tendency of some individuals to seek new, intense and varied experiences, even if they involve considerable risks. According to Zuckerman, sensation seeking is composed of four main dimensions: seeking adventures and experiences, seeking new experiences, disinhibition, and susceptibility to impulsivity (Zuckerman, 1994; Zuckerman, 1979).

An essential aspect of impulsive sensation seeking is its relationship to biological and genetic factors. Studies suggest that high levels of dopamine in the brain are associated with sensation-seeking behaviors. People with increased dopaminergic activity tend to be more impulsive and seek new and intense experiences more frequently (Depue & Collins, 1999; Roberti, 2004). This link has also been supported by neurobiological research that indicated that genetic variability in dopamine receptors can influence sensation-seeking levels (Zuckerman, 2005).

Additionally, sensation seeking is strongly associated with specific personality traits and engagement in risky behaviors. People with high levels of sensation seeking are frequently involved in high-risk activities like extreme sports, substance use, and unprotected sexual behaviors (Hoyle et al., 2002; Zuckerman & Kuhlman, 2000). In social and cultural contexts, these behaviors may be either esteemed or discouraged, contingent upon the norms and values prevalent within the particular community (Ball & Zuckerman, 1992).

People with high levels of impulsivity are often more likely to engage in sensation-seeking activities. This bond is based on their desire to stimulate and avoid boredom (Zuckerman, 1994).

Studies have also shown that this factor can vary depending on age and gender. For example, teens and young adults tend to score higher on sensation seeking compared to older adults. In addition, men generally tend to score higher than women on sensation seeking, although gender differences may vary depending on cultural context (Cross, Copping & Campbell, 2011).

## 2. Decision making

Decision making is the cognitive process by which individuals select between different options and actions. This process is complex and involves various cognitive components, including attention, working memory, inhibition control, and executive functions. An influential model in the decision-making field is that of Expected Utility Theory, which suggests that individuals make rational decisions by evaluating probabilities and the value of possible outcomes (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1944; Savage, 1954).

This classical model, developed by von Neumann and Morgenstern (1944), suggests that rational decisions are made by evaluating the probabilities and value of possible outcomes. Within this theory, individuals are seen as rational agents who seek to maximize the expected utility of their decisions (Savage, 1954).

However, further research has shown that human decisions are often influenced by emotions, cognitive biases, and heuristics. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky introduced Perspective Theory, which demonstrates that people are not always rational and are influenced by the way options are presented and loss aversion (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

Decision-making capacity can vary significantly between individuals and can be affected by factors such as age, experience, emotional state, and mental health. For example, adolescents and young adults tend to make more impulsive and less calculated decisions due to incomplete development of the prefrontal cortex, responsible for executive functions and behavioral control (Steinberg, 2008; Luna & Sweeney, 2004). Research has also indicated that emotional factors and stress states can diminish decision-making, leading to suboptimal decisions (Lerner et al., 2015).

The work of Thaler and Sunstein (2008) explores how small adjustments in decision-making structure can have a significant impact on the outcomes of our decisions. The authors introduce the concept of "nudge," which refers to influencing people's behavior through subtle changes in the context of making decisions, without limiting options or significantly changing economic incentives.

A "nudge" is an element of choice architecture that influences people's behavior in a predictable way, without restricting options or significantly altering economic incentives.

Essentially, it's a subtle change that can guide people to make better choices for their health, wealth, and happiness.

For example, countries that use the implied consent system (where citizens are considered organ donors unless they explicitly choose not to be) have much higher donation rates compared to those requiring explicit consent (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008).

The analysis ahead will concentrate on exploring the correlation between impulsive sensation seeking and decision-making capacity within the framework of youth and post-adolescent demographics. The study will investigate whether there are significant differences in decision-making capacity between the analyzed age groups, as well as whether there is a significant correlation between this capacity and impulsive sensation seeking.

## 3. Research methodology

The main goal of this research is to analyze how impulsive sensation seeking influences decision-making processes among adolescent and youth groups. In order to carry out the investigative approach, the following objectives and hypotheses were considered:

**Objective 1:** Identify differences in decision-making among people aged 18-25 compared to those aged 26-35.

**Objective 2:** Evaluate and measure the relationship between impulsive sensation seeking and decision-making capacity in the selected sample.

**Objective 3:** Explore the impulsive sensation seeking on decision-making capacity in the analyzed age groups.

**Hypothesis 1:** It is assumed that there are significant differences in the level of decision-making capacity according to age.

**Hypothesis 2:** It is assumed that there is a significant correlation between impulsive sensation seeking and decision-making exercise.

The **sample** of this research consisted of 70 individuals, with 35 belonging to the age range of 18-25 years and 35 to the range of 26-35 years. The research sample was selected from the city of Constanța using convenience sampling and subsequently, snowball sampling.

Two **tools** were used to test participants: ZKPQ, which assessed impulsive sensation seeking and CAS++ / Cognitive Skills Test, to assess decision-making capacity.

The ZKPQ personality test, also known as the Zuckerman-Kuhlman Personality Questionnaire, is a psychological tool developed by Marvin Zuckerman (2008) to assess five major personality traits. It is designed as an alternative to the Big-Five, measuring the following dimensions: Activity – measures energy levels and the need to be busy; Impulsive search for sensations - measures the need to have complex, novel and intense experiences, as well as the tendency to act quickly, without first thinking; Aggression/Hostility – measures tendencies toward irritability, aggression, and resentment toward others; Sociability - reflects the desired degree of interaction with others and preference for the company of other people; Neuroticism / Anxiety - measures emotional tensions, difficulty making decisions, sensitivity to criticism, etc.

The decision-making ability assessment test is part of the CAS++ platform - Cognitive Assessment System, a platform that uses a series of standardized tests to assess various cognitive skills, such as general learning ability, verbal, numerical, spatial, etc.

The decision-making capacity assessment test measures the rationality of the decision-maker. In other words, the test measures the sensitivity of the individual to common biases and general decision heuristics (Miclea et al, 2009).

The **data collection and testing** of participants were carried out online in March 2024, at the same time, by accessing the links corresponding to the two tools uploaded on the Google Forms platform. To meet the requirements necessary to apply the decision-making capacity test, an extension related to Google Forms was installed, which allowed setting a timer to a maximum of 7 minutes, time available to complete all tasks. Subsequently, the collected data was processed using IBM SPSS version 20.

In conducting this study, fundamental **ethical principles** were rigorously observed. All participants were adequately informed about the objectives of the research and received assurances that their involvement is completely voluntary, with the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any negative consequences. To protect the confidentiality of the information collected, all personal data has been anonymized. During the research, special emphasis was placed on maintaining honest conduct, promoting precision, objectivity, honesty and good faith in all phases of the project.

#### 4. Results and discussions

**Hypothesis 1:** *It is presumed that there are significant differences in the level of decision-making capacity according to age.*

Our statistical analysis showed that the decision-making capacity variable, the arithmetic mean for the age category 18-25 years is equal to 3.34, having the standard deviation equal to 0.312, and the arithmetic mean for the age category 26-35 years is equal to 5.46, having the standard deviation equal to 0.595.

When calculating Kolmogorov-Smirnov we obtained Sig = 0.060 for the age category 18 – 25 years and Sig = 0.188 for the age category 26 – 35 years. These results lead to a normal distribution of statistical data, which is why the examination of the difference between the mentioned variables will be carried out by parametric method, using T-test.

We also checked the homogeneity of the data for said variable. In the Levene test we obtained Sig= 0.002, less than 0.05, which indicates an inhomogeneous distribution of statistical data. In this case, Sig 2 tailed = 0.003, was considered. The result obtained supports the hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the decision-making capacity variable depending on the age variable.

**Table 1:** Examination of the difference in decision-making capacity by age variable

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Decision-making capacity	Equal variances assumed	9.883	<b>.002</b>	-3.149	68	.002	-2.114
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.149	51.411	<b>.003</b>	-2.114



The findings corroborate the hypothesized assertion that there exists a notable distinction in decision-making capacity based on age. Specifically, individuals aged 18-25 demonstrate lower levels of decision-making capacity in comparison to those aged 26-35.

Individuals with a low level of decision-making capacity show a high sensitivity to the most common biases and decision heuristics (Miclea et al, 2009). More specifically, instead of investing time to properly analyze each individual decision-making situation, these individuals either avoid making decisions or rely on momentary intuition.

To begin with, we will determine the stage of development corresponding to the analyzed age categories and we will briefly explore the neurocognitive and behavioral characteristics of people in these categories. According to the stages proposed by Șchiopu and Verza (1997), those aged between 18 and 25 years enroll in the post-adolescence stage, and those aged between 26 and 35 years in the youth stage.

Adolescence is a stage of spectacular changes both biologically and psychologically and socially. It ensures the transition from childhood to adulthood, starting around the age of 14/15 and continuing until about 24/25 years. Sălceanu (2015) describes adolescence as the most difficult and disturbed stage of all stages of development, being characterized mainly by the completion of biological maturation, the development of cognitive abilities (especially abstract thinking), the creation of a clearer image of self-identity and sexual identity, the increase of emotional, personal, perhaps also financial independence from parents, development of new social relationships and, last but not least, crystallization of professional choice.

Youth (26-35 years), on the other hand, is characterized by stabilization and full biopsychic maturation. Its dominant aspects involve physical and psychological vigor, stability of ego identity, integration of sexual experience (heterosexual or homosexual), independence in interpersonal relationships, assuming a social role, consistent implantation in work, great mental adaptability – the young person passes very easily and quickly from general, abstract, theoretical aspects to applicative, concrete, etc. (Cretu, 2009).

Regarding decision-making capacity, at the neurocognitive level, the literature (Reyna, Farley, 2006; Marquez-Ramos et al, 2023) show that starting at age 16/17, adolescents use, like youth and adults, the frontal and prefrontal lobes, involved in planning, reasoning and judgment. More specifically, they are able to think logically so as to correctly understand the information presented, make connections between them and extract conclusions effectively (Sălceanu, 2015).

However, there is an imbalance between the rate of development of cortical systems involved in cognitive control and cortical systems responsible for motivation and affectivity, in the sense that the latter develop at a faster pace than the former, being hyperactive and sensitive to stimuli (Somerville, Casey, 2010; Albert et al, 2013). This neurodevelopmental imbalance between affectivity and cognition predisposes (post)adolescents to make intuitive, impulsive decisions and to show a propensity for reward-oriented and/or risky or dangerous behaviors (Luna et al, 2004; Casey et al, 2008). The specific characteristics of each age stage, but also the neurocognitive implications mentioned above, may be a possible explanation for the significant difference in the analyzed hypothesis.

To corroborate the findings, a pertinent study conducted by Steinberg et al. (2009) is referenced. This study, involving a sample of 935 individuals aged 10 to 30 years, unveiled a notable difference in decision-making capacity between adolescents and young adults. Moreover, it has been shown that this difference is not due to the capacity of cognitive abilities, impossible to differentiate especially after the age of 16/17 years, but is due to the degree of psychosocial development of people.

Given that the present study did not consider the investigation of several cognitive abilities or the degree of psychosocial and emotional maturity of the participants, this may pave the way for valuable insights for future research. In general, specialists draw attention to the context of decision-making among adolescents. With the process of emotional maturation still ongoing, post-adolescents may be less effective in managing stress compared to young people and adults, and this can lead to a reduced ability to cope with pressures (Sălceanu, 2015).

Thus, in emotionally charged situations, where social influence is strong and emotional reactions are intense, adolescents seem to make less mature decisions than young people or adults. However, under normal conditions, those in which emotional arousal and social influence are minimized, adolescents prove to be just as capable of making a mature decision as older ones (Salter, 2017). We believe that with increasing age, people gain more life experiences, which contributes to a better assessment of the risks and benefits of different decision-making situations. Young people usually have a more stable psychosocial level and take on responsibilities that promote more analytical and less impulsive thinking compared to (post)adolescents. If for adolescents, decisions are often marked by a high degree of exploration and

experimentation, based on the desire for self-discovery and personal affirmation, in contrast, young people have a wider experiential baggage, which allows them to better anticipate the consequences of their actions and evaluate more effectively possible alternatives.

When we discuss the psychosocial context, we are actually referring to the interaction between social and individual factors that influence human behavior. It includes cultural influences, social norms, family and community support, and the roles and responsibilities that come with age (Halpern-Felsher et al, 2016).

We believe that post-adolescents are in a sensitive period of transition to adulthood, seeking to define their identity and find their place in society. Social pressures, marked by increased responsibilities to achieve certain standards, such as completing university studies, gaining financial independence and, possibly, starting a family, can be overwhelming and can significantly influence decision-making. Thus, they may become more vulnerable to the influence of their peer group and social trends compared to the other age group.

In conclusion, decision-making capacity can be seen as a dynamic blend of cognitive and emotional maturity gained through experience. The differences in decision-making ability between post-adolescents and young adults are not merely a function of chronological age but are primarily shaped by the accumulation of personal experiences and their interactions with the social and cultural environments they live in.

**Hypothesis 2:** *It is assumed that there is a significant negative correlation between impulsive sensation seeking and the way decision-making capacity is exercised.*

Our statistics showed that the arithmetic mean for the impulsive sensation search variable is equal to 8.41, with the standard deviation equal to 0.505, and the arithmetic mean for the decision capacity variable is equal to 4.40, with the standard deviation equal to 0.357. In order to decide on the appropriate type of statistical coefficient, we proceeded further to the calculation of the normality of the distribution. To the calculation of Kolmogorov-Smirnov we obtained Sig = 0.073 for the impulsive sensation search variable and Sig = 0.000 for the decision capacity variable.

These results lead to an asymmetric distribution of statistical data, which is why the examination of the relationship between the mentioned variables will be carried out by the nonparametric method, using the Spearman index.

**Table 2: Impulsive correlation between sensation seeking and decision-making capacity**

			<b>Impulsive sensation seeking</b>	<b>Decision-making capacity</b>
Spearman's rho	Impulsive sensation seeking	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.028
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.815
		N	70	70
	decision-making capacity	Correlation Coefficient	.028	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.815	.
		N	70	70

Following the correlation achieved, the Spearman coefficient equal to 0.028 is identified at a Sig 2-tailed materiality threshold of 0.815, greater than 0.05. These values indicate that the obtained results do not support the investigated hypothesis and thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

Therefore, within the analyzed sample, there is no significant negative relationship between impulsive sensation seeking variables and decision-making capacity.

The obtained results refute the analyzed hypothesis, according to which there is a significant negative correlation between impulsive sensation seeking and the way decision-making capacity is exercised.

Although it might seem intuitive to expect a negative correlation between impulsive sensation seeking and decision-making, recent research suggests that this relationship is more complex than initially assumed.

One of these studies, conducted by Derryberry and Reed (2002), investigated how anxiety and attention control influence how individuals direct their attention and make decisions. Their results showed that anxiety and attention control can significantly affect decision-making, independent of

impulsive sensation seeking. This suggests that anxiety and other behavioral factors may play a bigger role in how we make decisions than previously thought.

In fact, the study of Steinberg et al. (2008) investigated how impulsive sensation seeking and impulsivity are related to adolescent development and how these traits influence adolescent behavior and decisions. Their results indicated that personality factors, such as impulsive sensation seeking, are not the only determinants of decision-making, and that other aspects, such as cognitive development, may play an important role in this process. The presented finding supports the idea that these aspects of personality are not closely related when it comes to decision-making, thus providing a new point of view on this interaction.

Conversely, Joseph and his colleagues conducted a meta-analysis of existing literature in "Sensation seeking and decision making: A meta-analysis," finding that there is a positive relationship between sensation-seeking and risk-taking decisions. However, this relationship is mediated by factors such as the decision-making context and the type of risk involved. So, it is indicated that it is not only sensation-seeking that determines risky decisions, but also the specific circumstances under which those decisions are made (Joseph et al., 2009).

Another representative study in this regard is that conducted by Romer and Hennessy, in "A biosocial-affect model of adolescent sensation seeking: The role of affect evaluation and peer-group influence in adolescent drug use," where they explored how sensation seeking in adolescence is influenced by affective evaluation and group influence. The results showed that adolescents with high levels of sensation-seeking are more susceptible to group influences and risk-taking, highlighting the importance of social and emotional factors in decision-making (Romer & Hennessy, 2007).

The human personality is a complex web of traits, each distinctly influencing how individuals navigate through their inner and outer world. In this context, the impulsive search for sensations and the decision-making process represents two essential aspects, which, although different in manifestation, can be interconnected in human psychology.

One of the findings specific to the outcome would be that individuals with a high impulsive sensation-seeking may be more open to exploring unconventional options and taking risks, suggesting that their approach to decision-making may be more flexible than initially thought. This flexibility can lead to a more open assessment of different alternatives and more effective adaptation to environmental or context changes.

We need to consider that decisional process is not always rational and deliberate, but it can be influenced by emotional factors, that sometimes act unconsciously. So, even people with strong decision-making capacity can be susceptible to emotional influences and impulses, which can alter how they make decisions and interpret available information.

Also, context and type of decisions can influence how impulsive sensation-seeking affects decision-making. Decisions made in stressful environments or emergencies can be influenced in a different way than those made in controlled and predictable environments. This underscores how the influence of impulsive sensation seeking can vary depending on the circumstances.

To sum up, the link between impulsive sensation seeking and decision-making is more intricate than previously assumed, influenced by factors like anxiety, attention control, impulsivity, and social and emotional influences, among others.

## **5. Research limits**

The current study is subject to various limitations that could impact the ensuing outcomes. Firstly, the online administration of the questionnaire raises concerns regarding whether participants fully comprehended the questions or encountered distractions during completion, especially concerning the decision-making capacity test.

Additionally, the online administration of questionnaires can be affected by factors such as internet connection, the devices used, or the participants' technical experience, which could influence the quality and validity of the collected data.

Another limitation is the lack of information about various factors that could have influenced the responses, such as educational level, social status, financial status, or religious beliefs.

These limitations can serve as directions for future research regarding the expansion of knowledge about cognitive profiles and social maturation, by further investigating a broader range of cognitive abilities.

## **6. Conclusions**

In summary, studies have demonstrated significant disparities in decision-making capacity between post-adolescents and young adults, often indicating lower levels among post-adolescents. This variation can be ascribed to a multifaceted combination of factors encompassing neurocognitive and emotional maturity, accumulated life experiences, and social influences.

Despite initial assumptions, the research did not confirm the hypothesis that there is a significant negative correlation between impulsive sensation-seeking and decision-making ability. Factors such as anxiety and social influence and experiences can play a representative role in decision-making. More specifically, the environment in which decisions are made and the specific context can influence how personality traits, such as impulsive sensation seeking, affect decision-making. For example, in emergency situations or stress, even those who are not impulsive can make quick and risky decisions.

Considering the limitations of research, using an online platform to manage questionnaires may present certain uncertainties or distractions for participants during completion. Furthermore, the reliability of the collected data might be compromised by variables like internet connectivity, the types of devices employed, or participants' technical proficiency.

Additionally, it is imperative to acknowledge the absence of data concerning key variables that could sway the decision-making process, such as educational attainment, socioeconomic status, financial standing, or religious convictions. This dearth of information poses constraints on the generalizability of the findings. These variables wield considerable influence over individuals' decision-making approaches and should thus be factored into the result analysis.

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## REPERCUSSIONS OF CHAOTIC FAMILY ON CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *Deviant behaviours are often classified as errors in the education received by the individual within the family. Children act according to the model seen at home, being a mirror of the environment where they develop their personality. The imprint that the family leaves on them will have effects throughout their life, influencing their later lifestyle. In this paper I intended to study one of the family personalities analysed by David Field and to observe the influence it has in the child's life. I chose to analyse the chaotic family personality, because it is one of the factors that most often determines the appearance of problematic behaviour in a child. The objectives I forward are 1) Analysing the way in which the child from the chaotic family understands the concept of family and 2) The link between the relationship between family members and the child's relationship with society. We shall study how the child is affected by the chaotic interaction in the family, and we will analyse the effects that the family environment has on the child's behaviour by studying the literature. Through the paper, we want to identify how the problems of the chaotic family environment affect the child's behaviour and relationships in interactions with other children, the school environment and society.*

**Keywords:** family, development, chaotic, implications, children

### 1. Defining the chaotic family system

According to David Field, the chaotic family represents a poorly organized space, with a constant status of ambivalence, where the relationship between family members is conflictual, with problems, with an insensitivity to the needs of children (Field, 1988, p72). Another definition can be found in Dex where the chaotic family system is defined as a disorganized environment, in which the presence of a hierarchy is not found.

Starting from these definitions, we can say that the chaotic family is characterized by a complete disorder: parents indifferent to the education of children, concerned only with their own interest, unsupervised children, acts of violence in the family by a member who wants to take control, the presence of trauma in the lives of family members, physical, emotional/psychological and verbal abuse by one of the parents, conflicts between parents, poor communication between family members.

Thus, children build their beliefs on 3 rules:

- 1) People are pawns that are used to fulfill personal needs
- 2) Feelings are a sign of weakness
- 3) It is not good to trust people.

There are cases where children are completely ignored, left to survive on their own, their physical, emotional, social needs are ignored, they are not given attention, parents do not show affection either to children or towards each other, the relationship between them and the children being non-existent, they are not able to bond relationships with each other, there is no love between spouses. In severe cases, parents even physically and emotionally abandon their children. Parents are very irresponsible with regard to their children's food, warmth or stimulation, medical or educational needs. Disinterest in everything related to children or life partner and an acute interest in one's own person is present. Moreover, it is possible that in the family milieu there is an authoritarian parent who wants to have control over the whole family at all costs. This includes physical abuse (slapping, beating, strangulation, whipping, hair pulling, etc.), sexual abuse (attracting, corrupting, persuading, forcing, using the child/partner to participate in acts of a sexual nature or assist by observing sexual acts between two adults or two other people), emotional or psychological abuse (by ridiculing, humiliating one of the family members, isolating them from others, prohibiting certain things, using epithets, negative predictions about the individual's behaviour, using as a scapegoat, highlighting negative points in front of others, using threats as a way of manipulation, inducing feelings of guilt) or cases of neglect (failure to satisfy or ignore essential needs), exercised on one or all members considered "weaker" in the family.

Another big issue, according to Elkin, is that the family doesn't know each member's role clearly. So, we may encounter different situations, ranging from feelings of disinterest towards children to

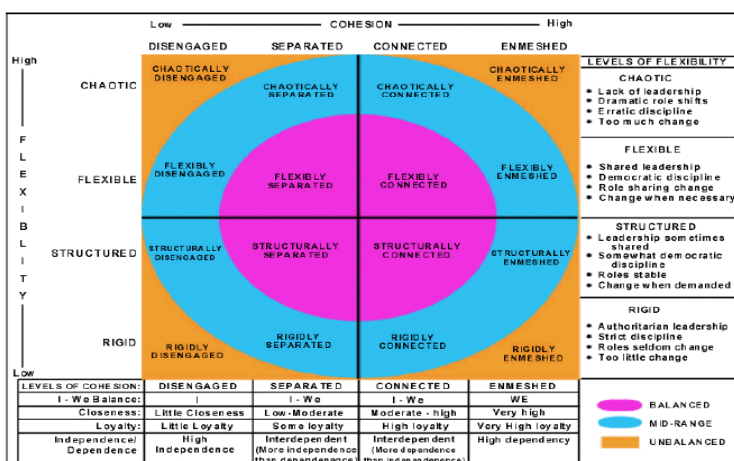
abandoning them in nurseries, kindergartens, in front of the television or in other families both for subsistence and training (Elkin 1960, p.46). In sync with the aforementioned author, I argue that this child-rearing function is being distorted with far-reaching and dramatic consequences in the future. The child growing up in such an environment generally suffers trauma. In a family with a chaotic atmosphere, basic needs (security, orderly life, love) are completely neglected. Parental functions can no longer be fulfilled. An example of neglect is the selfish attitude of the parents, so that not meeting the needs of the children is only a natural continuation of the attitude expressed by these answers: "I thought it was fun to have children, that you could play with them, have fun with them", "I thought that through a child I would save the marriage that I felt was falling apart". When everyday life brings more stress than satisfaction it is very easy to discharge one's feelings of frustration on the weakest, the children. The chaotic system can also be described as a deviation from an ideal of space, order and coherence and family stability, assuming minimum standards of living. There are some specific elements that define this system: family disruption, very low family cohesion, overwork and stress. Bronfenbrenner and Evans mentioned, moreover, that there are two determining factors: the first is the "confusing environment" characterized by "frantic activities, lack of structure, everyday uncertainty and a high average level of environmental stimulation, and the second consists in the lack of family stability (Bronfenbrenner&Evans, 2000, pp.116-125).

Confused environments are generally defined by a few characteristics: high levels of noise, overcrowding (found in large families), and sometimes lack of routine and rules. This factor may appear as a result of the increased number of individuals in the family, poverty and stress of the parents (with negative results of the parent-child interaction in the cultivation and cognitive development of the child). On the other hand, the lack of family stability is determined by family deviations and refers to psychological maladjustment and poor academic performance. It is accentuated in the case of family conflicts, limited resources and residential instability.

## 2. Interfamily relations and interaction between partners

In most cases, the relationships that children see within their family circle determine how they will later relate in society, which will influence their way of thinking and behaving. David Field affirmed that: "the family where you come from continues to influence and affect you every day of your life" (Field, 2000, p.12). He also claimed that behaviours and thoughts, attitudes and reactions, values and beliefs are related to one's origin family. Willingly or not, consciously or not, children will react according to what they have learned or seen in their parents. Realizing how important family relationships and interactions are in a child's life, we will further analyse how the interactions unfold both between partners and between parents and children. Starting from the idea that in a family it is important to know and define the roles between partners, a structural model of relations between partners is offered by Olson, Sprenkle and Russel (Mitrofan&Ciupercă, 1988, p.199). They start from two dimensions: cohesion and adaptability. Adaptability means the ability to change one's roles from chaotic structure to flexible and stable structure. And by cohesion, we mean the emotional bond between family members that can be viewed from total rupture to total involvement. I present below a diagram which renders this oscillation from chaotic to flexible.

Figure no.1 Circumplex model of marital and family systems



Source Saini et.al., 2017

The authority structure existing within a family determines the functioning of the system (Mitrofan&Ciupercă 1988, p.156). From this point of view, power can be held by:

- the man, in the case of patriarchal systems, as he sets the division of roles, deciding the professional and marital orientation of his own children and represents the interests of the family in relation to the church, school, etc. In this case we encounter the isolated family style, with an authoritarian father who controls family members through intimidation, threats and force. Disciplines applied are irregular, harsh, unfair and unbearable, and the goal is to correct behaviour.

- the woman, in the case of matriarchal systems. In these cases we encounter the absence of the father's involvement in decision-making and the education of the children.

- the child, when the older child assumes parental duties. They are prematurely forced to take on the responsibilities of the adult when they show indifference regarding their relation with the family.

- other people, outside the family. This situation occurs when the power is held by people (parents, aunts) with a great influence on the respective family or when the "personality" of the child is low and subject to persuasion. It is observed a manipulation that these people exert on the family, generating conflicting situations between the partners.

Another important aspect in the functioning of relationships between partners is the marital role. "Deviating" from this expected role produces a feeling of frustration and anxiety. And this is because spouses relate to each other according to the "relational and functional norms" of marital behaviour seen in their parents.

As such, comparisons, analogies, and not infrequently dissonances and frustrations, are expressed through expressions like: "my father would never have told my mother this", "in my family the wife has to do this", "my mother doesn't do it that way," etc. Therefore, the partners who seek to perpetually identify with the maternal or paternal model are prone to relationship failure, frustrating their partners and themselves. As tension rises in the family and the degree of anxiety is ever greater, each partner externalizes his or her anxiety into the marital relationship. Each focuses on the negative side of the other and tries to control the other, and each of them resists the other's efforts to control him.

Described as chaotic, the system is incapable of unity, and members are unable to bond with others. There is no love between spouses, but on the contrary, they show anger towards each other. The family is poorly organized, and with a constant status of ambivalence. In general, the condition is conflicted, troubled and insensitive to the needs of children.

From the point of view of the interactional process quality, we often meet families in which the constant state of conflict is generated by the competition of the needs of the marital partners and the disagreements regarding their goals and values. When the intensity and content, the form of manifestation and the frequency of conflicts increase significantly, they acquire disorganizing values in the family microgroup, progressively alternating marital relations. The internalization or defective exercise of marital roles lead to distortions of the family role structure. Bowen claimed that the level of tension in a family is given by the way partners relate to each other in stressful situations (Bowen Theory).

We highlight below some of the factors generating conflicts (Mitrofan&Ciupercă 1988, p.161):

- Tense relations between the couple and the orientation family, frequent conflicts between daughter-in-law and son-in-law.

- Deficient relations with the group of friends, colleagues, neighbours.
- Imbalance in the income and expenditure budget, which can stimulate and support some marital-family dysfunctions.

- The incidental-situational factor that produces latent dysfunctions.

We remind the cases in which the partners have a relationship based on their own interest: "I give you love, you give me social status and material well-being". Thus, the unfairness of the transaction between partners falls under moral judgments.

According to Bowen's theory, the family may be defined as an "emotional system", within which the partners will exhibit different degrees of emotional fusion. However, with the emergence of tensions and divergent points of view, the emotional fusion knows different degrees of erosion. First, one of the spouses may become dysfunctional due to "under- or over-adequate reciprocity", which causes the partner to become psychologically symptomatic. This affects the marital relationship which may become discordant. Emotional dysfunctions extend from the marital relationship to the parenting relationship.

Here are some contributing and risk factors for marital dysfunction:

- Associations between partners from significantly different socio-cultural backgrounds
- Interpersonal incompatibility caused by adherence to consensual family role models belonging to fundamentally different norms, customs, traditions, and deficits in interaccommodation



- The couple's relations with the outside may take on disorganizing values, precipitating marital conflict
- Precarious material-economic conditions, events in the physical and social environment, catastrophes, deaths, illnesses
- Poverty, material frustration, unemployment, prolonged social insecurity.

We can say that once the marital dysfunction intervenes, the process involves the entire structure of family roles and through that, it affects in different degrees and manners, the positions and the harmonious development of the members or the personalities of the members of the family system.

Iolanda Mitrofan and Cristian Ciupercă defined marital dysfunction as a critical dyadic interactional incident that disrupts and distorts homeostatic marital behavioural patterns (role-driven behaviours), disorganizing or stagnating the evolutionary processes, affecting the couple's functional goals. Often, so-called "crisis" states are encountered in the relationship of chaotic couples. They cause intra-adaptation-integration tensions and stresses in the family and are triggered in the form of manifest or sub-manifest conflict.

Thus, we may affirm that a problem child can be a symptom of a "parental failure" and represents an unfortunate consequence of a deep interpersonal dyadic marital dysfunction, which requires the appreciation of the degree and chances of compatibility of the partners, the stage and their difficulties of interaccommodation. In this way, a neurotic child becomes the imminent effect of a neurotic marital relationship. Most of the time, the physical abuse of the child covers a wide range of unjustifiable treatments that the child receives, such as: extremely violent beatings manifested by sadistic and cruel acts on the child. As defined by Kempe, physical abuse consists of "physical attacks or physical insults, ranging from minimal forms to fatal insults, caused to the child by the person who takes care of him/her (Neamțu 2003, p.698), although the legislation in the field specifies that , the child has the right to have his personality and individuality respected, "not being subject to physical punishment or other humiliating and degrading treatments" (Law 272/2004).

Psychologist Simona Nelu Potorac pointed out some consequences on teenagers coming from such environments: low attention to physical appearance and clothing as well as inadequate hygiene; loss of appetite and unexplained weight loss; absenteeism and poor school performance; loss of interest in school, extracurricular activities and hobbies; behaviour characterized by lying and stealing; contemptuous behaviour towards family and friends; hostile and violent attitude; disinterest and lack of future perspective. These are consequences that affect the normal process of psychological and psychosocial maturation of the children's personality and lead to the appearance of an acute form of aggression (which adolescents use with the aim of causing harm both outside the subjects and on themselves ).

Moreover, delinquent acts (deception, vagrancy, vandalism) are often his main concern, while they condemn them to an even more drastic life. Children who come from such family systems are not used to mutual understanding, but only to rejection situations. The presence of anxiety and "high levels of aggression" often be overwhelming (Frude, 1988, p.203). These children experience their anxiety in concrete situations of abuse. They deal with feelings differently, but most of the time, they are left to deal with these situations on their own. If anxiety is overwhelming, children may defend themselves by pushing away their own feelings and redefining the given situation.

At the same time, in marital conflicts, the aggression directed towards one of the spouses may be channelled towards the child. The child seems to function in the family as a "scapegoat". Parents, and often siblings, take out their frustrations and aggression on the child. The child lives all the time with the uncertainty and anxiety of a new abuse. Mistrust, the emotional atmosphere in the home and the attitudes of the parents lead the abused child into a confused state (Rohner, 1980, p.15). Thus, for most people, aggression is the best method of defence, and many of them learned at home how to deal with problematic situations by being aggressive. These children learn to perceive themselves as "bad" children who do not deserve love or care. They live daily in the same situation that frighten them and from one day to the next, they get used to the idea that the adult is abusing them. In this very difficult situation children develops survival strategies.

According to a study (Killen, 1989, p.90), it was observed that most children have feelings of "denial, identification, isolation/separation in which they mentally transposes themselves into another position". These children, instead of channelling their aggression towards their own parents, discharge it onto other people. They are reduced to just a mode of survival, trying to avoid actions that provoke the aggression of their caretakers, but take out their frustrations on the weaker ones. They are always on the lookout. It is also very difficult for an abused child to think about the future. For them "tomorrow" will not

come; there is always "a today" (Kempe&Helfer, 1974, p.41) . So their answer would be "Why wait? Tomorrow will be no better than today."

Following a study of 50 abused children, Martin and Beezly made a list of behavioural characteristics of abused children: inability to enjoy themselves (they look sad, apathetic); symptoms of psychosomatic stress: enuresis, fits of anger, eating problems, bizarre behaviours; inferiority complexes (they think they must have been worse to deserve such treatment); poor school performance due to lack of concentration; isolation (they have weak social relationships and exhibit depressive states); opposition (negative attitude); hypervigilance (Calam&Franchi, 1987, p.6) Reactions to abuse differ from child to child. Some are more anxious, fearful, isolated, others exert their pain on other "victims", and others are immune to anything aggressive, to any punishment or negative attitude.

Most often, a series of reactions are created in these children's behaviour, causing them to respond later with the same hostility and lack of affection with which they were treated. According to this fact, the following behavioural indicators were identified: behavioural problems (anxiety, aggression, hostility); emotional disturbances (the feeling of being unloved, unwanted, worthless); social disturbances (negative perspectives on society); irritability and in some cases failures in trying to succeed; anxious attachment to parents; fear or distrust; low self-esteem; feelings of inferiority, withdrawal, lack of communication; self-destructive behaviour (self-mutilation, depression, suicidal tendencies); delinquency (Gil, 1988, p.8). The development of the emotionally abused children is difficult and as Garbarino described in his research, they are „real evidence of a psychosocial evil”, a distorted image from what "normal" means (Neamțu, 2003, p.698).

### **3. Violence and aggressive treatment**

As per Law 217/2003, family violence is any physical or verbal action intentionally committed by a family member against another member of the same family that causes physical, mental or sexual suffering, or material damage. However, referring to the consequences of violence and aggressive treatment on children, Law 272/2004 reads: "it is forbidden to apply physical punishments in any form, as well as to deprive the children from the rights related to life endangerment, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, bodily integrity, physical or mental health, both in the family and in any institution that ensures the protection, care and education of children" (Ministry of Labour, 2005). So, we may say that family violence is one of the most common forms encountered and the most worrying, because it is not visible. In most situations, violence happens behind closed doors or is hidden from the victim, due to fear of the aggressor or a sense of shame towards society. Because this is a closely guarded secret, the positive image of the family is kept intact with solidarity. In general, the family that constitutes a field of manifestation of domestic violence becomes less transparent and less open to the social environment (that is, to the extended family, neighbours, friends or colleagues).

In these cases, social isolation inevitably occurs. They acquire a stigma in the eyes of others and at the same time a feeling of stigma and guilt that makes them isolate themselves.

From the point of view of the authors Răvaș and David, characteristic of family violence are deviant emotional relationships. They claim that a deviant manifestation would be the Stockholm syndrome, the syndrome in which the victims come to feel emotionally connected to the aggressors, to be on their side in the event that measures are taken against them, which constitutes a pathological manifestation of attachment. However, in every family falling under the family "dysfunctional syndrome" category, the children, due to their great sensitivity, receive and experience particularly intensely any "event" between family members. The main effect of conflictual interpersonal relationships on children's personality is the devaluation of the parental model and, at the same time, the loss of the possibility of identification with this model. In this sense, Ana Muntean explains that in the atmosphere of a home full of violence, neither the mother nor the father can be able to concern themselves with stimulating the child. They lose their authority in front of the child and instead of authority, terror is installed that does not educate, does not train and puts a brake on their emotional and mental development (Muntean, 2001, p.46). Therefore, children will understand that social relations are based on power relations, of the submission of the weakest by the strongest. Consequently, their own relationships with family, peers, and others will be based on strategies aimed at aggressive dominance or flight from the situation.

Analyses of the effects of aggressive parental behaviour on children have concluded that they are drastic. Many authors try to make a correlation between the fact that parents apply aggression as methods of discipline and mistreatment of children (Glăveanu, 2010, p.189) .

Among the most frequently encountered disorders we may list emotional disorders (depression, anxiety, phobia, panic), low self-esteem, memory disorders (dissociative amnesia, loading of

autobiographical memory with negative events), cognitive disorders (decreased ability to solve problems, negative cognitive schemes), stress syndromes (posttraumatic syndrome), eating disorders (bulimia, anorexia), sleep disorders (insomnia, nightmares), psychosomatizations (digestive, respiratory disorders, psoriasis, bronchial asthma, arthritis), personality disorders (dissociation, dependent, passive-aggressive personality), unhealthy lifestyle (alcohol consumption, self-medication) (Bălan, 2011, pp.67-69)

Research shows that the trauma of children growing up in such violent family climates is more intense and with deeper and more lasting consequences than for children who are direct victims of parental abuse and neglect. Often, the child takes the blame for the current family situation: "I am to blame for the problems in my family", "No one else has the problems we have", "I am unimportant, I have no value, no purpose and I have to justify my existence" (Muntean, 2001, p.46) And although, in the family, they only have the option of blind, unconditional submission, in relation to the demands and claims of the parent, children will exhibit indirect responses, through aggressive actions on others or self-aggression. The tension accumulated over time, caused by intense states of frustration, will manifest in sudden discharges. In these situations, the child constantly rejected and mistreated by the parents will learn how to react aggressively, but the object of aggression will be all authority figures.

#### 4. Conclusions and discussions

Children from chaotic families are deeply affected emotionally, psychologically and socially. Most social failures have been found to have their origin within the family milieu and children try to draw attention to these shortcomings through their behavior.

The environment from which the children come seriously affects their behavior and way of relating, later on. Of course, there are exceptions, in which family gaps are recognized and which act in such a way as to "repair" the situation that triggered the respective tensions. Most of the time, however, the presence of disorganization and chaos both in family life and in the life of each member, in the interactions between them, in the way of approaching and creating a perspective for the future. Also, through the child's manifestations in relation to society, one of the previously detailed behavioural patterns is identified: abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), neglect or violence. The indifference of the parents, the lack of affectivity and motivation, the permanent presence of tensions between partners and later, between parents and children, determine very low school performance and an acute need for the child to look for an external environment in which to receive the necessary affection. In this sense, the child will either assume the responsibility that normally falls to the adult, or seek to integrate into different social groups that satisfy his or her identified needs. Consequently, what we should clearly understand is that the role of the family in children's life influences every area of their existence: degree of socialization, emotional and mental life, degree of motivation and stimulation, level of trust in themselves and others, etc. later reflected in their behavior.

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## INCLUSIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE COLLABORATIVE ROLE OF LAGs AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

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**Abstract:** *Since the first years of operation of the Local Action Groups, the LAGs have started to have a positive impact on the social and economic development of rural areas. By involving vulnerable groups, implicitly Roma people, they can generate positive effects manifested through the creation of new jobs, the modernization of infrastructure, the improvement of the quality of life or even the preservation of cultural heritage. To answer the research question, we aim to verify how LAG organizations, NGOs for vulnerable groups and Roma communities contribute to local development through the Local Development Strategy and what impact their actions have on the communities, we conducted qualitative research. More precisely, I used the focus group interview. The conclusions obtained demonstrate the importance of the involvement of NGOs made up of vulnerable groups in Local Action Groups, while reflecting the importance of strengthening partnerships and links between organizations.*

**Keywords:** Local Action Groups (LAG); vulnerable groups, Roma

### 1. Introduction

In the last decades, the concept of social inclusion has become central in the elaboration of development strategies at the European level, being approached from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. Social inclusion is essential for creating fair and cohesive societies, and this is particularly relevant for vulnerable groups such as Roma communities. According to recent studies, the Roma continue to face social, economic and cultural marginalization, highlighting the need for mechanisms to facilitate their active involvement in local decision-making processes (UNDP, 2018; European Commission, 2020).

The participation of Roma organizations and vulnerable groups in the development of Local Development Strategies (LDS) is a key factor for promoting social inclusion and reducing disparities. As Bourdieu (1986) argues, social and cultural capital is essential for mobilizing communities in development processes. However, the lack of organization and formal structures remains a major challenge in the territories, which limits the opportunities for these groups to express their needs and interests (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993).

Previous studies have highlighted a direct relationship between the participation of disadvantaged communities in decision-making processes and increased social cohesion (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000). In Romania, the specific context of LAGs (Local Action Groups) provides a platform for such initiatives. LAGs can become important mediators between local authorities and marginalized communities, facilitating a constructive dialogue. However, the qualitative analysis carried out through focus groups showed that the level of involvement of Roma organizations varies significantly, from total lack of participation to active and direct involvement.

This article aims to explore how Roma organizations and other vulnerable groups participate in the development of SDL, analyze the success and challenges of their involvement and identify mechanisms by which this involvement can be improved. Building on the theoretical framework developed by authors such as Sen (1999) and Woolcock (2001), we will examine the contributions and obstacles from the perspective of the actors involved. Also, the analysis is based on empirical data collected through focus group interviews conducted in four regions of Romania: South Muntenia, West, East and North-East.

Thus, the article contributes to the specialized literature by offering a practical perspective on the participation of vulnerable groups in SDL, in the broader context of social inclusion. The study emphasizes the importance of partnerships between NGOs, LAGs and local authorities, demonstrating that real involvement can lead to the creation of more cohesive and equitable societies (Rawls, 1971; Giddens, 1991). At the same time, it emphasizes the need to adapt strategies to the specific needs of marginalized communities (National Roma Agency, 2019).

## **2. Local Action Groups**

Community development initiatives play a crucial role in addressing societal challenges, supporting sustainable development goals and strengthening social cohesion. In the rural environment, one of the most significant such initiatives is represented by Local Action Groups (LAGs) (Palmisano et al., 2016). These structures contribute to the creation and implementation of local development strategies through the LEADER approach, a program aimed at the economic revitalization of rural areas, which, at the same time, improves local governance by increasing social effectiveness and democratizing decision-making processes at community level (Esparcia et al., 2015).

Since their introduction into the European Union in 1991, Local Action Groups (LAGs) have established themselves as a successful model in the revitalization of rural areas, consolidating their role as an essential tool in regional development policies. These structures were created to respond to specific challenges faced by rural communities, such as depopulation, lack of economic opportunities, reduced access to services and infrastructure, and declining social cohesion. (Pártlová & Hron, 2016). Thus, LAGs had a significant impact on the development of rural areas, contributing to economic growth by financing local businesses, promoting traditional products and stimulating entrepreneurship, which led to improved incomes and living conditions. At the same time, the implemented projects created jobs in various sectors, such as construction, tourism, agriculture and gastronomy, highlighting the importance of strengthening health and education services to support them. Investments in infrastructure, upgrading roads and expanding digital connectivity have improved mobility, affordability and access to technology, with further digitization efforts recommended. LAGs have also improved the quality of life by expanding access to clean water, sanitation, health services and education, as well as by organizing cultural events that have revitalized the lives of communities. In addition, by promoting traditions and preserving cultural heritage, LAGs have strengthened local identity, attracted tourists and supported sustainable rural development (Buda & Pop, 2024).

In Romania, Local Action Groups have become key actors in community development efforts, covering all regions of the country. They play a strategic role in addressing the needs of vulnerable communities, including Roma, by implementing projects aimed at reducing social exclusion and promoting inclusive growth (Parno and Vasilută, 2021).

## **3. The importance of social involvement of vulnerable groups**

The involvement of vulnerable categories in the development processes of society is an essential factor for ensuring genuine social inclusion and for reducing socio-economic inequalities. Studies show that the participation of these groups in decision-making processes and the implementation of local development strategies contribute to increasing social cohesion and promoting their rights (Putnam, 2000; Sen, 1999; Gaventa, 2004). Studies show that the involvement of marginalized communities in decision-making processes increases the efficiency and relevance of social interventions, adapting them to the specific needs of these groups (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). Likewise, the participation of vulnerable categories in local development facilitates their access to resources and opportunities, contributing to the improvement of living conditions and the development of social capital (Narayan, 2002). Thus, promoting the active participation of vulnerable categories not only improves development results, but also strengthens the social and democratic structure of society (Hickey, 2004).

Within the Local Development Strategies (SDL), the involvement of vulnerable groups, such as Roma communities or other disadvantaged categories, allows a deeper understanding of their needs and aspirations, facilitating the implementation of measures that effectively respond to these requirements (Barca, 2009), while participating in reducing inequalities and increasing social cohesion (Moulaert et al, 2009). In the context of LAGs and NGOs, strong partnerships and inter-institutional collaborations have proven to be key elements for integrating the needs of vulnerable groups into public policies (Moulaert et al., 2005). Also, taking into account the difficulties of integration into the labor market of certain vulnerable categories, especially people of Roma ethnicity (Duminiță & Preda, 2003; Preda et al, nd), GALs can represent a solution in reducing this social problem, by creating new jobs. Therefore, the active involvement of vulnerable categories in the development of society is not only a matter of social justice, but also a catalyst for economic progress and societal cohesion.

#### 4. Methodology

This research aims to analyze the involvement of LAG organizations, NGOs, which include members from vulnerable groups and Roma communities, in local development through the Local Development Strategy (LDS) and to assess the impact of their actions on communities. Thus, we formulated the following research question: How do LAG organizations, NGOs for vulnerable groups and Roma communities contribute to local development through the Local Development Strategy and what impact do their actions have on the communities? Based on this, we formulated the following research objectives:

1. Analyzing the involvement of Roma organizations and vulnerable groups in the process of developing and implementing SDL.
2. Evaluation of projects implemented by NGOs dedicated to vulnerable groups and Roma, focusing on their objectives, activities and results.
3. Identifying specific actions of LAGs and NGOs that have generated interest among members and the local population.
4. Determining the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the involvement of organizations and communities in local development.

I also formulated the following secondary questions:

1. How do Roma organizations and vulnerable groups participate in the SDL development and implementation processes and what specific initiatives have been undertaken?
2. What types of projects have been proposed and funded by NGOs for vulnerable groups and Roma and what have been their results?
3. What specific actions of LAGs and NGOs generated interest and what factors contributed to the success of these initiatives?

In order to answer the research questions and achieve the proposed objectives, we used the sociological focus group interview method. This method is suitable as it allows the collection of qualitative information, providing a detailed insight into participants' perceptions, experiences and practices related to involvement in SDL (Local Development Strategy). Through direct interaction between participants, the focus group fosters an open discussion dynamic that can reveal relevant opinions, ideas and examples.

As the research tool we used an interview guide with semi-structured questions, which includes the following main questions:

1. How do Roma organizations and vulnerable groups participate in the development of the Local Development Strategy (LDS)? Can you provide examples of their initiatives and actions in the LAG area, particularly in terms of information, consultation, participation, involvement and initiative?
2. Have there been NGOs focusing on vulnerable groups or Roma communities that have successfully submitted and received funding for projects under SDL measures? If so, can you detail the main objectives, activities and results of these projects?
3. Can you share some specific actions carried out by your LAG or NGOs for vulnerable groups/Roma that generated interest among LAG members and the population? What were the reasons behind their success? Do you have volunteer initiatives in the territory of the GAL? If so, who are the beneficiaries and volunteers?

Questions were addressed to members of Roma organizations and representatives of NGOs that support vulnerable groups in the territories covered by the LAGs. The objective was to recruit a minimum of 20-24 participants at the national level, including the organization of focus groups made up of at least 5-6 relevant people from the respective areas. The focus groups were distributed as follows: one dedicated to the North-West region, one to the South-West region, one to the North-East region and one to the South-East region.

The aim was to gain a detailed insight into how these organizations and groups participate in the development and implementation of SDL. At the same time, the research aimed to identify the factors that contribute to the success of the projects, as well as the challenges encountered in supporting vulnerable groups.

#### 4. Results

Regarding the organization of the focus groups, they were held online on the Google Meet platform with different profile people from a macro region of the country (Southern Region of Muntenia, Western Region, Eastern Region, respectively Eastern Region). The meetings were set in advance, to ensure the availability and involvement of the respondents during the focus group. They lasted around

two hours, during which ideas were developed, and the participants had the opportunity to learn new things or different perspectives from colleagues with the same interests from the same territorial region. We obtained the consent of the participants to record (audio and video) the discussions, so that the information provided by them can be used and processed in the present study under the protection of anonymity.

When we refer to the way in which Roma organizations and other vulnerable groups participate in the elaboration of the Local Development Strategy, there were situations in which the lack of these organizations was reported:

*"We don't have Roma organizations or other vulnerable groups in the territory. People are present as often as we need, help us with everything that is needed, involvement. We are quite active with our partners."*(FG3, R1, M).

*"We do not have Roma organizations in the GAL, nor any organizations that are the object of activity for vulnerable people."*(FG3, R3, F.).

but in the cases where they exist, we can see that the answers can be divided into three main categories, reflecting the different levels and forms of involvement of these actors in the decision-making process:

- **Lack / Non-existence of organizations representing the Roma or other vulnerable groups in the territory**- fact that raises an important problem in the process of drafting the Local Development Strategy. This situation highlights a lack of organization and even the lack of structures and mechanisms to facilitate the participation and representation of these groups in decision-making processes at the local level. As for the Roma community, there was a lack of their representation, either due to the fact that the official leaders migrated, and the community remaining in the territory did not mobilize to nominate another representative, in the absence of the initially accredited one, or at the level there are only informal leaders in the community, there is no question of establishing a legal organization under the auspices of which to function. In this situation, the consequences in terms of social inclusion are negative, the rights of these communities being silenced, because the lack of an organized and representative voice can lead to the underrepresentation of their needs and concerns in the decision-making process. Moreover, the lack of organization and representation can amplify the marginalization and discrimination faced by these vulnerable groups within society, without raising the question of their involvement.

In this sense, at the level of these territories, it is essential to develop mechanisms and initiatives that encourage and support the organization of Roma communities and other vulnerable groups at the local level by facilitating the establishment of community organizations, providing support and resources for capacity building them, and promoting a culture of participation and dialogue between local authorities and communities. By creating such structures and mechanisms for representation and participation, it can be ensured that the voice and perspectives of Roma and other vulnerable groups are considered in the process of drawing up local development policies and strategies, thus contributing to greater social cohesion and building a more inclusive and equitable society.

*"As I said, we did not have the Roma minority in our partnership. We know them, let's say, we know the communities pretty well. The bigger problem is that there is a diversity, a very wide range from the very poor, to those within the Roma minority, who have a better financial situation, and we will have to analyze, see exactly how we will succeed and what let's approach it more seriously. Of course with the support and following the advice of the town halls or the UATs of which those communities are a part."*(FG1, R3, M.).

*"As a representative of the Roma minority, during the first programming period we had organizations with which, unfortunately, the ties were no longer maintained. I don't know what happened [...]"* (FG1, R4, M.).

- **Limited or passive participation** -this category includes Roma organizations and other vulnerable groups that have little or passive participation in the process of drafting the Local Development Strategy. In this sense, the respondents declared that there is involvement only when their help is requested, any other initiative on their part being lacking. This can be driven by various obstacles, but it is important that local authorities, the LAG organization and other stakeholders identify and address these obstacles to ensure that all community groups are properly represented and can express their views vision and needs in the strategy development process.



*"Unfortunately, the NGO component in this sector in our country is not extremely active, although there are needs, although on the consultation side we have such NGOs and they are key local actors at the territory level, which somehow they themselves are both a guide and a landmark. The actual logistical component of an NGO involved in such activities is non-existent. A large part of the activities is carried out through a collaboration between the local public administration, 2-3 local actors who are seen as a key factor in the development of this component."*(FG2, R1, F.).

*"We tried to attract them, but there were NGOs that, even if they exist, don't really work."*(FG2, R2, M.).

- **Intermediate or representative participation:** This category includes organizations or representatives that act as voices of the Roma community and other vulnerable groups in the decision-making process. These organizations are NGOs, associations or other entities that represent the interests and perspectives of these groups in strategic discussions. Through these representatives, the needs and concerns of the Roma community and other vulnerable groups can be integrated into the strategy-making process, contributing to a better representation and consideration of these groups in local decisions.

*"We also have many associations that have been created lately, but they are not involved in the mod direct. Maybe they lack experience or don't know."* (FG2, R2, M.).

- **Active and direct participation:** This category involves Roma organizations and other vulnerable groups that are directly involved in the strategy development process. These entities are regularly consulted, being involved in working groups and participating in public meetings and consultations. Through this active and direct participation, Roma organizations and other vulnerable groups can express their specific needs, aspirations and perspectives, thus having the opportunity to influence the content and direction of the local development strategy, so as to bring more to the community they represent. So, this category is made up of organizations involved at the level of the LAG, they have the role of members, so they get involved in all the actions and activities provided.

*"Some of the organizations are also members of the LAG."*(FG1, R1, F.).

*"The communities we still have represent the Hungarian minorities and pensioners, these are among the partners who attend the meetings very often. Wine, discuss, they are really interested and therefore we try to find solutions for them as well. I don't know if we manage to finance them, to help them somehow, but they have an involvement far beyond expectations."*(FG1, R3, M.).

*"Within the GAL we have several associations that work with young people, with individuals disadvantaged with whom we had a good collaboration and who will also be part of the future partnership agreement within the SDL 2023-2027."*(FG3, R6, F.).

Good collaboration between organizations was not a neglected aspect during the discussions, thus it was highlighted that a special bond is created between organizations, even if their goals and spheres of interest are common, they know the procedures, as well as the difficulties encountered when the core business is so tightly bound by a rigid framework.

*"The collaboration is good. A relationship was created from NGO to NGO, we also know our difficulties and problems, but also the possibilities to solve for them, to a small or large extent, the problems they face."* (FG3, R6, F.).

Regarding the participation fence, the biggest challenge that associations face in this regard is the right formula in which they can operate, so that NGOs, as well as other stakeholders, fulfill their roles. have responsibility and assumption. So that from one programming period to another, the structure, as well as the composition of the LAG undergoes changes, so that it has reliable partners, can address a target group with the most diverse needs and requirements, but also can attracts more funds in the territory in which it operates.

*"As a good part, we partnered with a municipality that has enough this side is represented, it has organizations that will deal with it and we will be able to support them further."*(FG1, R4, M.).

*"Now we have identified an association - the Union of Roma from Videle. You guys are in partnership with the city hall, and this very week we have meetings with them to bring them to the GAL and to be able to develop programs, activities for the Roma community, which is quite a large community in Videle."* (FG2, R2, M.).

*"We also intend to include as many types of measures as possible in the new strategy social, let's continue to work with these organizations and possibly with others that they will show interest in collaborating and being partners in the LAG."*(FG3, R6, F.).

*"We have a partnership with some NGOs that also deal with the Roma side. Now for the new financing tranche we have also co-opted other NGOs whose activity objective is also the part of disadvantaged groups. At the moment we are trying to organize ourselves so that in the next period we can hold these meetings with the partners and the other representatives of the town halls in order to take the pulse and make a new strategy."* (FG4, R1, M.)

Being asked to give examples of initiatives and actions of these organizations (which represent the Roma and vulnerable groups), some of the participants offered as examples their own actions initiated by the LAG organizations, through which they came or intend to come to the support of the most slightly favored. *"[...] we will support the provision of a canteen for people without opportunities where Roma people from the city will also attend. And within the new strategy we want to get funds to further support children from troubled families."* (FG1, R1, F.).

But there were also situations in which we were presented with proposals from these organizations that are part of the LAG

*"we have an association that wants to establish the day center for disabled children, we have and of these in the territory, we also have poor families, among which are also Roma families."* (FG1, R1, F.);

*"Also, almost all associations would have small requests now in the period of writing new strategies to see them a little, analyze them and see what we could do for them. It is possible to take a measure or see what their needs are, but we have not had too many problems of action on vulnerable groups [...]. For the rest, we will see in the next period."* (FG1, R2, F.);

*"At the level of Baia Sprie, [...] the city that is part of the GAL, there are many and quite a few programs running through POCU, related to the Roma minority and including entrepreneurship programs. That social center funded by the LAG was not long ago completed and has not yet managed to get off the ground very well, so we still do not feel the pulse of that project."* (FG1, R3, M.);

*"More than that, UAT Berzunți, which has around 988 Roma on the territory of the commune, has accessed a measure that refers exactly to the Roma population, they are building a sports base where they will attract and organize activities for Roma children to be present all the time."* (FG3, R2, F.).

but also initiatives from organizations that are not members of the LAG that supported the development of the financing, initiatives that should not be neglected.

*"And we have a project financed on the HARD infrastructure, which was financed by the GAL, a day center for families with children. The applicant was a parish from our territory, but this is not a GAL member. There they did activities, it allowed them to access others funds through POCU and they continue, so they want to develop and they want to continue these activities."* (FG1, R2, F.)

*"Recently, the NGOs, which are active, have somehow started to be a little more active at the national level. I had some discussions in this regard last week, with an NGO that it is called "Casa Bună", an association from Bucharest. [...] The point is that I debated with them some extremely interesting aspects in setting the wheels in motion regarding the social infrastructure component for all vulnerable groups. For them it is very important first of all education."* (FG2, R1, F.).

*"We actually have two associations that are not from us in the territory, but we have them as partners and contribute to supporting vulnerable groups, they do all kinds of medical actions, even with caravans, with ophthalmologists, because they have very good national partners good at the level of Bucharest."* (FG2, R2, M.).

In terms of attracting funding from organizations representing the Roma minority and vulnerable groups, they are not very many.

Some of the projects carried out, financed and implemented, through which funds were attracted, and which were shared by the members of the LAG associations, were aimed at community development and the provision of social services for vulnerable groups, including the Roma minority.

These funds were used for projects such as establishing social day care centers, improving the quality of social services for children in certain communities, and modernizing the infrastructure for care and education facilities. The mentioned organizations obtained funding to implement these projects, thus contributing to increasing the quality of life and social inclusion of vulnerable people in the respective communities.

Some of the projects presented by members of the LAG associations focused on addressing these specific needs. For example, in the case of the Community Development Association, funding was allocated for the establishment of a social day center aimed at supporting people from vulnerable groups, including Roma minorities. Also, the IANA Foundation submitted funding requests to the LAG for various projects, such as improving the quality of social services for children from the Nicolae Bălcescu community. This is one of the organizations with the most elaborate activity and with the most projects implemented within

the LAG. Furthermore, other organizations, such as Civitas, have benefited from funding through the LAG for various initiatives.

*"We have that community development association that we funded for financing the social day center. And within the activities it is addressed to people from vulnerable groups, including Roma minorities. The association on the territory of UAT from Negresti Oaş, where we also have the largest Roma community."* (FG1, R1, F).

Members of the Associations of Local Action Groups (LAGs) believe that the result of low involvement, as well as inconsistent funding obtained by organizations representing the interests of disadvantaged groups, is largely attributed to the fact that few representatives of these communities are willing to take responsibility. This reluctance can be determined by various reasons, such as lack of confidence in decision-making processes, administrative difficulties or lack of resources necessary for active involvement in organizational activities. Thus, this lack of active participation can affect the ability of organizations to obtain adequate funding and support for their projects, ultimately reducing the positive impact of these initiatives in disadvantaged communities.

From the answers received from the participants in the dialogue, ideas are highlighted that indicate a lack of involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the submission of projects within the social measures launched by the Local Action Groups (LAGs). And instead of the NGOs being the beneficiaries of these measures, the applicants and the main beneficiaries were the administrative-territorial units (UATs) within the LAGs. This suggests a difficulty encountered among NGOs in the process of accessing funds available for social projects aimed at disadvantaged groups.

*"I am not aware of any NGOs that have submitted for vulnerable groups [...]."* (FG3, R1, M).

*"We do not have NGOs that have submitted projects within the social measure launched by the LAG. The applicants and beneficiaries of these measures were the UATs within the GAL."* (FG3, R8, F).

Difficulties and even delays are also observed in the submission of projects intended for the Roma minority. This situation can be attributed either to a delay in assessing and understanding the specific needs of this community, or to the fact that community members do not take responsibility for coordinating these types of efforts or are reluctant. These situations lead to the loss of funding opportunities and the implementation of projects necessary for these disadvantaged groups.

*"As organizations, we did not have as a result the fact that we held the call launched for the Roma minority for almost a year and a half. As a result we should submit and do what I thought would be necessary for them now."* (FG1, R5, M).

*"Our association was not the beneficiary of a project either. The i-Leader day center was done by the LAG within measure 6, the creation of social infrastructure. So another organization for minorities did not participate and did not benefit from funds."* (FG1, R4, M).

Despite the many difficulties encountered by Local Action Groups (LAGs), they demonstrate a capacity for adaptation and innovation through activities and initiatives designed to respond to the needs of local communities. Events open to the public, such as fairs, festivals or community days, have become an essential mechanism for promoting LAG activities and community involvement. The high participation in these events shows a clear interest of the communities in the projects and initiatives of the LAGs. These activities not only promote initiatives, but also contribute to strengthening relations between LAGs and communities, generating greater public engagement.

*"As specific actions, I remember the last actions we did to promote the quality schemes in the territory, where many participants came, more than we expected"* (FG1, R5, M).

Collaborations between LAGs and Administrative-Territorial Units (UATs) play an important role in the promotion and implementation of projects. In many cases, events organized in partnership with UATs, such as community days, have been an effective vehicle for disseminating information about funding opportunities and for strengthening transparency and trust in the work of LAGs:

*"In each partner UAT, we organized, together with the respective UAT, community days. During the community days, we also did animation, in the sense that we had a tent and distributed leaflets about the financing possibilities"* (FG3, R2, F).

These initiatives provided a framework for direct interaction with the community, helping to increase the visibility of LAGs and strengthen relationships with community members.

Cooperation projects between several LAGs are an example of good practice, demonstrating the impact of collaboration at an inter-regional level. Such initiatives not only promote cultural identity, but also contribute to social cohesion and local economic development.

*"We had a cooperation project with four other Romanian LAGs on the topic of gastronomy. When we had the event in the territory, it was a very successful event"* (FG1, R1, F).

A recurring aspect of the participants' responses is the difficulty of NGOs accessing funding for projects aimed at vulnerable groups. The dominance of UATs in accessing funds reflects a limited capacity of NGOs to organize and respond to administrative requirements:

*"The applicants and beneficiaries of these measures were the UATs within the GAL"* (FG3, R8, F).

The lack of active NGO involvement is attributed to bureaucratic barriers, lack of resources and, in some cases, the reluctance of community leaders:

*"As organizations, the fact that we kept the appeal launched for the Roma minority for almost a year and a half was not a consequence"* (FG1, R5, M).

A proposed solution to increase the efficiency and accessibility of funds is the digitization and simplification of administrative procedures. This would help eliminate red tape and speed up project implementation.

*"Digitalization actions would be great to happen, to simplify the procedures more and we can move forward with shorter steps"* (FG1, R4, M).

## 5. Conclusion

Through this research we aimed to analyze the involvement of LAG organizations, NGOs, which include members from vulnerable groups and Roma communities, in local development through the Local Development Strategy (SDL) and to evaluate the impact of their actions on the communities.

The obtained results highlight the complexity and importance of the involvement of LAG organizations, NGOs for vulnerable groups and Roma communities in local development processes through Local Development Strategies (SDL). An essential aspect consists in the lack of organization and structured representation of vulnerable groups, which significantly limits their access to decision-making processes and available resources. This situation amplifies marginalization, perpetuating socio-economic inequalities and reducing the positive impact of initiatives aimed at these communities.

In order to combat this reality, it is imperative to support efforts to form solid organizational structures that ensure the legitimate and active representation of vulnerable groups. Creating and strengthening local organizations capable of representing the interests of marginalized communities is an essential step for including their needs in SDL. Also, the limited participation of existing NGOs underlines the need for interventions aimed at developing organizational capacities. Training programs for community leaders, administrative support and reducing bureaucratic barriers can help facilitate more active and effective participation.

Effective collaboration between LAGs, NGOs and UATs is an example of good practice, highlighting the role of strong partnerships in integrating the needs of vulnerable groups into development strategies. Cooperation projects, such as those dedicated to the promotion of local gastronomy or other cultural initiatives, demonstrate that unity in action can lead to significant results in terms of promoting cultural identity and local economic development. Thus, stable partnerships not only increase the impact of initiatives, but also contribute to the creation of an environment favorable to social inclusion and inter-regional collaboration.

However, the capacity of NGOs to access funds and implement projects remains limited. The dominance of UATs in the process of accessing funding shows the need to strengthen the position of NGOs as main actors in social initiatives. Lack of resources, administrative skills and trust in decision-making processes are factors that affect the involvement of NGOs and reduce their potential to contribute significantly to local development.

The digitization of administrative processes and the simplification of bureaucratic procedures are priority solutions for overcoming these challenges. Transforming workflows into electronic formats and using online platforms for project management would facilitate access to resources, improve transparency and increase the efficiency of project implementation. These measures would reduce the administrative burden on NGOs and allow for a more efficient use of available resources.

Public events organized by LAGs have proven to be an essential tool for increasing their visibility and stimulating community involvement. Through such initiatives, LAGs manage to create stronger links with local communities, promote transparency and generate support for development projects. These events provide opportunities for community members to actively engage and access relevant information about the activities and resources available through the LAGs.

Active community involvement is crucial to the success of SDLs. Promoting a culture of active participation and strengthening links between LAGs, NGOs and communities can ensure a better representation of local interests, contributing to social cohesion and sustainable development. In conclusion, the success of SDL depends on creating an enabling framework for the collaboration and

involvement of all relevant actors, from local organizations and authorities to community members, to promote equitable and inclusive development.

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## AFRICAN REFUGEES IN ALGERIAN SOCIETY - ISSUES OF IDENTITY AND THE PURSUIT OF INTEGRATION -

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**Abstract:** *Refuge and migration are among the most pressing global issues, significantly impacting the social quality of life for various groups across different regions of the world. Refuge is, in itself, a profound humanitarian crisis, resulting from successive shocks rooted in conflict, disasters, climate change, widespread drought, poverty, and starvation, particularly affecting regions in Sub-Saharan Africa and the African Sahel. Consequently, many individuals, families, and communities seek refuge in North African countries, especially Algeria, with hopes of eventually crossing to Europe. However, settling in host societies brings forth numerous challenges related to integration difficulties, marginalization, poverty, poor health conditions, and other issues. The question of identity is also deeply tied to cultural diversity, especially in the presence of many refugees or migrants who often bring distinct cultural symbols and behavioral patterns, which may provoke challenges within the host community and for the refugees themselves. Accordingly, this study examines a crucial aspect of Algerian society—the issues of identity and the potential for social, cultural, and professional integration of African refugees, particularly from Mali and Niger, in Algeria. This research explores the everyday realities of these challenges through a descriptive method, analyzing the social conditions experienced by African refugees in Algeria through simple observational insights gained from daily interactions and observations of the lives of refugees and African migrants in our society .*

**Keywords:** African refugees, human identity, social integration, feelings of inferiority, marginalization, belonging, family fragmentation.

### 1. Introduction

Refuge and migration are among the most critical global issues, drawing the attention of governments, nations, and both official and non-governmental organizations due to their potential threats to individual and community security. The experience of displacement, endured by numerous groups across continents and countries, stems primarily from broader humanitarian crises, such as wars, armed conflicts, and acts of genocide inflicted upon various peoples, tribes, and ethnicities. Additionally, poverty, hunger, drought, and widespread famine have exacerbated the severity of these crises, creating a life-threatening situation in several nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region, largely due to climate change. Refugees, often fleeing certain death, face myriad challenges in host societies, such as issues of identity and a constant search for ways to socially and culturally integrate. This struggle is particularly evident among African refugees, especially from Mali and Niger, residing in Algeria.

Talking about identity in our daily existence is deeply tied to the global cultural manifestations and the historical processes that have shaped civilization, architecture, and the emergence of cultural elements across societies within specific spaces and times. Identity is a powerful concept, constantly coexisting with the individual, collective, and societal essence, persistently surfacing in our daily discussions and often sparking scientific, literary, and political debates within contemporary societies. The core nature of social identity has become a primary concern for many thinkers and intellectuals of diverse backgrounds and cultural affiliations. It has emerged as a genuine ontological, cultural, and security challenge, affecting individuals' understanding of their life reality, personal stances, daily behaviors, and even their psychological and intellectual state. Identity is embedded in all types of human relationships, regardless of their depth.

The issue of identity in society is strongly linked to cultural diversity, intellectual plurality, and doctrinal variation, especially given the presence of numerous ethnic and tribal groups and a broad category of refugees and migrants within society. These groups bring with them cultural symbols, value frameworks, and behavioral norms that may raise various challenges for both the host community and the refugees. Additionally, many migrants face difficulties with integration, often living on the margins of the social fabric, enduring poverty, deprivation, feelings of inferiority, emotional distress, lack of secure employment, poor health, the spread of serious diseases, homelessness, and substandard living

conditions. Consequently, this study focuses on identity issues and the potential for social, professional, and cultural integration for African refugees in Algeria, highlighting daily challenges encountered in Algerian society.

This study aims to shed light on key identity and integration challenges facing African families in Algeria, particularly from Mali and Niger, using a descriptive approach to analyze the social conditions of African refugees in Algeria through simple, exploratory observations of their daily lives. The study objectives are as follows:

1. Conditions and factors influencing the migration and asylum of African individuals, families, and communities to Algeria.
2. Social identity issues of African refugees in Algeria.
3. Social integration challenges faced by African refugees and migrants in Algeria.

## **Introduction**

### **Section I: Conceptual framework**

#### **1. Definition of a refugee**

Shantawi (2001) defines a refugee as "any person forced to leave their original homeland in search of refuge, with a justified fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group, or political opinion, and who, due to that fear, is unable to return for fear of persecution." (Boutemer, 2014/2015, p. 46)

Under international law, a refugee is defined as someone who is outside their country of nationality or habitual residence, with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and who is unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or to return to it for fear of persecution. (wikipedia.org)

The United Nations also defines a refugee as a person who has left their original homeland and habitual residence and is unable to return due to poor integration, life-threatening risks, or any form of violence. (UNHCR, p. 04)

It appears that a refugee is a person compelled to leave their country of origin due to existential threats, such as the risk of death, famine, extreme poverty, severe drought, restrictions on intellectual and political freedoms, civil wars and conflicts, and ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination. Refugees are in urgent need of social support, humanitarian protection, and assistance. This is the case for the large numbers of African citizens who fled their countries due to threats of violence, murder, economic destitution, severe poverty, famine, and widespread drought, as well as the degradation caused by armed conflict, forcing communities and populations to seek refuge in various countries, including Algeria.

#### **2. Definition of identity**

The concept of identity is connected to many aspects of human existence, encompassing mental, psychological, spiritual, social, and cultural attributes. Identity emerges from specific systems of beliefs and values, often serving as a psychological framework within individual psyches. In other instances, it represents a set of symbols, perceptions, mentalities, and behavioral norms within social life. The search for identity, for individuals, is essentially a quest for the best means of cultural and social integration within the laws, values, and established norms of society, which are clearly defined and provide individuals with reference points in their daily lives.

The concept of identity holds a significant scientific appeal for many specialists, as it encompasses various dualities and tripartite characteristics related to human existence across multiple disciplines, such as (conscious, unconscious), (gender, age), (belonging, independence), (integration, differentiation), (trust, desire for existence), (language, religion, customs), and (material, spirit). Stuart Hall discusses one of these critical dualities, namely the emotions of (love, rivalry), within the conceptual framework of identity, highlighting how critical analysis has explored love and competition in numerous social processes. (Stuart Hall, 2003, p. 3)

The concept of identity has deep roots in idealistic and existential philosophy, where philosophers like Hegel and Kant linked it to consciousness and thought, and Heidegger later defined identity as an inherent principle of being and the right of every being to an identity. In the Arab world, the term "identity" evolved as a linguistic derivation from the pronoun (he), and as Fathi El-Miskini points out, "the shift by contemporary Arabs in using the term 'identity' from its ontological meaning, as explored by Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, to its current anthropological and cultural meaning is neither an error nor an arbitrary use. Rather, it reflects the same hidden motive that led early Arab translators to

adopt the pronoun to mirror the Greek concept of 'ousia.' This shift from the grammatical and anthropological (to the ontological) identity) was not accidental but responds to a pre-existing ontological understanding within the structure of the Arabic language.) Bouza (2008, " "

The issue of identity is explored within various scientific domains and cultural literatures, including psychology, anthropology, sociology, history, art, demography, religion, geography, law, geology, customs, language and communication, and politics. Different definitions of identity have been proposed. Alex Micsely describes identity as "a complex of standards that allows defining a subject or an internal feeling, embodying a range of emotions such as a sense of unity, integration, belonging, value, independence, and trust based on a desire for quality." (Micseli, 1993, p. 15)

While Micsely focuses on identity as an inner emotional sense, Richard Jenkins emphasizes the social essence of identity, particularly when individuals engage in social interactions centered on meanings and social evaluations. As noted by Haralambos and Holborn, Jenkins views social identity as "our perception of who we are, who others are, and how others view themselves and others." Identity, according to Jenkins, arises through human interactions, involving comparisons that establish similarities and differences among people. Those who perceive similarities share a distinct identity, separate from those who view themselves as different. Jenkins argues that social identity is fundamentally about meanings. (Holborn, 2010, p. 93)

The scientific debate around the nature of identity and the perception of it raises questions about the sacred, temporal, and traditional significance that societies attribute to their identities, often embedding them with a fixed cultural essence that resists change. This perspective reflects a closed form of identity. Others argue, however, that identity is not confined to heritage and history but rather represents an inherent human inclination toward movement, growth, and renewal.

Jalal Shawqi states, "Identity is an active, dynamic, and creative social existence; this is its authenticity. The social self, or identity, flourishes with social development and changing realities, giving rise to a new culture... a new image of oneself and the world." (Bouza, 2008, p. 83)

In examining the issue of African refugees in Algeria and the challenges they face in terms of identity and integration, it becomes clear that reality brings forth numerous issues requiring study and investigation. African refugees may feel socially marginalized, experiencing an erosion of their original identity amidst Algeria's social norms. Conversely, there are instances where emotions and cultures harmonize to create a unique cultural identity blend, allowing African refugees to integrate seamlessly into Algeria's social, intellectual, and doctrinal fabric, without either side feeling threatened or alienated.

### **3. Definition of integration**

Integration, or inclusion, is a frequently used term in the literature of the humanities and social sciences. It may be highlighted in discussions on workers, institutions, and professional adaptation, or considered essential when discussing social adaptation of individuals within different social groups and communities. This concept becomes particularly important when examining the situation of African refugees in Algeria.

Linguistically, the Arabic root for "integration" suggests a self-driven action, indicating that the integration process is not externally imposed but rather occurs through the individual's interaction with laws and norms or a mutual agreement on integration. In this sense, "to integrate" implies a self-motivated act of conformity, similar to how one might describe the self-driven nature of "a pot breaking" or "a prisoner committing suicide." (Belkacem, p. 9)

Noureddine Ben Belkacem defines social integration as assimilation—meaning alignment and coherence in actions, thoughts, and behaviors among citizens, fostering collective unity across national, tribal, or ethnic groups to serve the public interest. (Belkacem, p. 7)

Thus, integration involves social cohesion and unity among individuals and groups, strengthening the bonds of humanity within society so that all individuals feel they exist for one another, sharing equal rights, duties, religious and cultural freedoms, and opportunities for democratic participation.

In 2007, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs outlined several characteristics of "social inclusion" as a concept closely aligned with social integration. These characteristics include :

- Visibility to raise awareness ;
- Consideration of individual interests and needs ;
- Rights: the right to expression and to claim one's differences and identity, access to quality social services (housing, education, transport, healthcare), the right to work, and cultural participation ;



-Resources for full societal participation: essential social and financial resources.(Shuqair, 2013, p. 08)

In this research, we aim to explore these aspects as central issues facing African refugees in Algerian society to achieve the highest levels of constructive identity and social integration within the community.

## **Section II: Conditions and Factors Driving African Refuge and Migration to Algeria :**

Wars and military conflicts frequently pose direct threats to the lives of individuals and communities. The history of civilizations and states recounts numerous instances of the downfall of nations and empires due to armed conflict. War inevitably leads to social fragmentation and the destruction of cultural, intellectual, and religious structures within society. According to the latest report from the United Nations' International Organization for Migration (2024) assessing global migration trends, the following data highlights the scale of displacement:

In 2022, 117 million people worldwide were displaced, including refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The breakdown of these figures is as follows :

35.3 -million refugees ,

5.4 -million asylum seekers ,

5.2 -million non-refugee asylum seekers ,

71.2 -million internally displaced persons due to conflict, violence, and war, with 8.7 million displaced by disasters. (Kawi, 2023)

Migration to Algeria predominantly comes from the African Sahel, especially from Mali and Niger. The journey of refuge and migration in this context is often compounded by threats to African stability, such as the recruitment of African mercenaries by terrorist networks for armed activities and arms trafficking. For instance, northern Mali hosts extremist groups that actively recruit Africans in the region extending northward to the Algerian border. Although there is no definitive link between groups such as the Wagner Group, Rapid Support Forces, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam walMuslimin, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, former fighters from northern Mali have engaged in criminal activities, becoming bandits or organized gangs crossing borders. Over time, these individuals have been exploited for recruitment by warring factions across African nations, leading to the formation of organized criminal groups involved in the trafficking of migration and asylum.

Some reports indicate that these groups are located in the African Sahel, specifically in the following areas:

1. Kidal Region: Located in the northeastern part of the Malian Sahara, neighboring Niger and Algeria, this region serves as a transit point with routes extending to southwestern Libya, northern Niger, and Chad.

2. Gao City: This medium-sized city, situated along the Niger River in northeastern Mali, is a base for extremist Islamic groups that actively recruit youth.

3. Oussango Region: Located in northern Mali.

4. Areas Surrounding Timbuktu: Near the historic capital.

5. Northwestern Mali Regions.(Marie McAuliffe and Linda Adhiambo Oucho, 2024, p. 05)

These areas in northern Mali are largely outside of state control and host extremist movements classified as terrorist organizations. Additionally, traditional gold mining operations are present in the northern regions (Taoudenni, Gao, Mesna Basin, Medin Basin in the far northeast), as well as in central Mali. With the spread of artisanal mining (local community involvement in mineral exploration), these regions have also become hotspots for mercenary recruitment. The instability in the Sahel provides pathways for engagement and communication with radical groups, perpetuating threats to residents' safety and prompting migration to North African countries, particularly Algeria. The unemployment rate across African nations reached 40% in 2022, further exacerbated by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the growing waves of conflict in the African Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions, coupled with climate change, drought, and political instability, particularly in countries like Mali and Niger, there has been an increasing movement of people seeking refuge in the north, hoping for better conditions and a life free from fear. Algeria has witnessed a significant influx of African refugees, initially as a transit point to Europe. However, global changes and strict European controls over refugees and migrants have rendered the African dream of reaching Europe a challenging and perilous endeavor. Consequently, Algeria has become the primary North African country hosting African refugees, particularly from Mali and Niger,

fleeing wars, conflict, drought, famine, resource shortages, and inadequate services in their home countries.

According to the United Nations Migration Agency's March 2024 statistics, new conflicts are driving increased displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa, with nine million people displaced in 2022 and 7.4 million displaced due to climate shocks. (IOM, 2024) Additionally, statistics indicate that approximately 90,000 African refugees enter Algeria annually without interception. (Agency)

Regardless of numbers and statistics, the reality shows that the Algerian social fabric accommodates a considerable number of African refugees who now contribute to the daily life of Algerians. They interact within society, populating cities and villages across Algeria from north to south and east to west. This presence raises genuine challenges around identity, integration, and the possibility of cultural coexistence and mutual acceptance between both sides.

### **Section III. Identity and integration challenges for African refugees in Algerian society**

While it is true that issues of identity and integration for African refugees may not dominate the core cultural components of Algerian society, the daily realities are filled with complex human interactions. These dynamics range from positive extremes (respect, understanding, cooperation, support) in the way Algerians engage with African refugees, to negative extremes (humiliation, violence, exploitation, sexual assault, verbal abuse). Additionally, the large-scale presence of African refugees prompts questions around ethnicity, religion, and behavioral norms, particularly as some of these refugees belong to specific religious groups (Muslims, Christians) which may not align with the views of the average Algerian. This complexity makes the identity of refugees a subject of pressing academic study.

Some of the main challenges to be addressed in this study include:

#### **1. Poverty and marginalization**

Social perceptions and self-image are often shaped by the details of one's daily life. Feelings of belonging and social significance are rooted in the cultural imagination and reinforced by the social opportunities individuals find within a society. Discussing identity in the context of Syrian refugees, for example, or the desire to exist meaningfully within the social framework, reflects the capacity to meet human needs and integrate socially by securing employment and opportunities that provide individuals with a sense of importance, status, and value. Access to social benefits like healthcare, education, and housing allows individuals to feel grounded in their existence, rather than merely focusing on whether their identity stands out. This dynamic also applies to African refugees in Algeria.

Daily observations in Algeria reveal numerous instances of homelessness, begging (or "solicited selling"), poverty, and marginalization among African refugees, visible to both government agencies and public institutions. The majority of these refugees represent highly vulnerable groups within Algerian society, suffering from all forms of marginalization, poverty, and, in some cases, subjugation and humiliation .

To support a theoretical understanding of the issue, we reference several definitions of "poverty and marginalization".

Both KorjiDolkan and Chris Baker define impoverished groups as those "...who lack and need money, food, clothing, and shelter and cannot acquire various types and sources of wealth and power within society." (Corey Dolgan, 2011, p. 49) The global charity organization CARE provided a standard classification for the most vulnerable groups in society during its study of Zambian cities and neighborhoods, identifying indicators of well-being to distinguish between the impoverished and the affluent. These indicators include (education level, employment status, housing, ownership of agricultural land, social security, access to clean drinking water, and sanitation systems). (Al-Juhar, 2011, p. 407)

Ismail Qira further explains marginal groups as "those who suffer from a sense of isolation from the surrounding culture and from other nearby groups, as well as difficulty in accessing the services provided by urban society." (al, 2004 , p. 14)

Thus, impoverished groups are those unable to meet their basic human needs for food, clothing, housing, education, and healthcare. Many African refugees face extremely poor health conditions, often living in unsanitary environments without shelter, sewage systems, or clean drinking water, making the spread of serious infectious diseases inevitable. This situation calls for continuous and necessary intervention from Algerian authorities to provide social protection and ensure the safety of these groups. Furthermore, such groups often lack the power and legitimacy to access social resources, relegating them to a culturally marginalized status as a sub-identity within society .

This is especially evident among African refugees, who add to the existing impoverished demographics in Algeria. Observing the current situation, these refugees are often perceived as a distinct cultural or social identity unworthy of significant efforts toward social integration or humanitarian support. Many also face accusations of avoiding social improvement, as they are perceived to favor begging and involve their children in these activities rather than seeking employment or educational opportunities. This creates another point of contention regarding the plight of their children, caught between begging and the necessity of education—a key component of social and cultural identity that fosters individuals' symbolic and cultural integration within society. Education provides the highest levels of social inclusion and shapes individuals into adaptive human beings aligned with collective ethics and values.

It is evident that most African refugees in Algeria belong to the impoverished segments of society. A minority have managed to work in sectors typically avoided by Algerian youth, such as large-scale construction projects and seasonal agricultural harvesting. However, these activities are insufficient, failing to provide the refugees with adequate financial resources to meet daily necessities, and they are not covered by social security. Refugees may also experience wage exploitation by employers in these jobs. The majority, however, live under severe poverty, deprivation, and homelessness, often resorting to marginal activities like begging, either by asking passersby or drivers for money or engaging in “solicited selling” on main roads and city entrances. This form of “selling,” usually of paper tissues, has become a recognized method of begging where drivers often give money as a form of support, without purchasing the items.

Moreover, many African refugees do not enroll their children in schools. Some use their children in begging to cover daily needs, while others cite constant movement between Algerian provinces as an obstacle to regular school attendance. Other families express difficulty in adjusting their children to the Algerian educational curriculum, which differs significantly from the systems in their home countries, particularly Mali and Niger. Furthermore, there appears to be limited official attention in Algeria to the educational needs and challenges faced by African refugees.

In summary, African refugees in Algeria endure conditions of marginalization, poverty, and deprivation. They lack adequate housing, often sleeping in open spaces, isolated areas, or under bridges, with no means to educate their children. Frequently, they are forced to involve family members in begging to cover basic needs, facing extreme poverty and social isolation. This situation makes the issues of identity and social integration a significant challenge for African refugees in Algerian society, especially in the context of poverty, alienation, lack of belonging, and the absence of essential social bonds that any person needs when navigating a foreign society.

## **2. Feelings of inferiority and emotional distress**

Daily life challenges and accumulating hardships often impact human emotions and social interactions. For many African migrants and refugees, the realities of poverty, marginalization, homelessness, and emotional harm in their host countries, coupled with the inability of official and non-governmental organizations in Algeria to address their needs due to their large numbers, foster a deep sense of inferiority and lack of value within Algerian society. The issue of identity becomes particularly complex when addressing feelings of self-worth, respect, and the sense of significance. Identity, both personal and social, is closely linked to the perception of one's worth and social acceptance.

Alfred Adler notes, "Feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, and lack of self-confidence shape an individual's purpose in life. We all possess a tendency to seek recognition for our existence, which develops alongside feelings of inferiority, motivating individuals to strive for superiority within their environment." (Adler, 2005, p. 82) Hence, identity is inherently tied to a sense of worth, purpose, and confidence within one's social surroundings, shaping a positive perception of one's existence and essence.

In this context, social integration becomes highly challenging for African refugees grappling with feelings of inferiority due to hardships like deprivation, begging, and homelessness, which obstruct self-fulfillment and foster persistent feelings of inadequacy. Adler further explains, "Feelings of inferiority will intensify as long as the underlying issue persists, adding constant pressure to the individual's struggles." (Adler, *The Meaning of Life* translated by Adel Naguib Bishara, 2005, p. 80)

The situation is further complicated when emotional harm and psychological abuse become commonplace behaviors directed by various individuals and groups towards African refugees in Algeria, not to mention the conflicts that refugees may have among themselves. However, such negative behavior is generally rare in Algerian society, where incidents of insult, bullying, racism, and hate are infrequent, given the Islamic values embedded within the community that emphasize mercy, mutual aid, and social

support. Algerian law also provides legal protections for refugees, penalizing any expressions of insult or hate against foreigners.

Interviews with African refugees reveal that many feel isolated and insignificant, often described as people who have lost their homeland, identity, tribe, and family, unable to integrate fully into Algerian society. They express that Algerians frequently reject the idea of intermarriage with them and their daughters, while they also suffer from verbal abuse and occasional sexual harassment. These experiences deepen their sense of inferiority and inadequacy, particularly as they lack social and self-protective resources, being, as they describe, in a foreign society and a land that is not their own.

### **3. Family disintegration and homelessness**

The family is one of the most significant sources of individual, social, and cultural identity in any society. It provides individuals with values, morals, behaviors, and beliefs, serving as the primary institution defining an individual's identity through name and lineage. The family grants each person a unique social and self-identity within the community. Any threat to the family structure, therefore, poses a threat to identity itself, leaving individuals struggling to express their place in society and amplifying feelings of tension and disorientation as they seek to define their existence.

As Edgar Morin states, "The family name establishes personal identity, and children's growth within the family during the critical years of development plays a crucial role in their destiny. The impressions left by parents remain with children throughout their lives; the father represents authority, and the mother embodies love—two forces that influence individuals' futures. Even the memory of an absent, deceased, or weakened parent is profoundly impactful, as is that of a missing or deceased mother." (Morin, 2009, p. 202)

Fulfilling identity's role in society requires more than simply living within a family; it necessitates families that effectively perform their social functions toward their children. The family provides social warmth, emotional support, and psychological and physical protection, ensuring that each individual develops within a healthy framework that allows them to interact with society's values and norms. This fosters a well-defined social identity and integration into the community's ethical values. Miriam Van Waters emphasizes this, stating, "The home must provide shelter for the child, nurturing their sense of security, keeping anxiety and early turmoil at bay, while providing necessary health and protection and training them to face the standards of protective behavior." (Boukadah, 2007/2008, p. 96.)

In examining the role of the family in the lives of African refugees in Algeria, we observe the widespread family disintegration and homelessness among many African families, especially those from Mali and Niger. These families often rely on begging or "solicited selling" as their primary means of survival, making it challenging to provide children with the security and psychological stability they need. It is difficult to speak of creating a cultural or value-based identity for African families' future under such dire living conditions that lack stable homes, education, and—most concerning—stable family structures. Many African families can be seen homeless on Algerian streets, lacking a basic foundation for their identity formation and integration.

Refugee families in Algeria often seek only the simplest conditions of existence—food, shelter, and clothing—rather than pursuing a deeper sense of identity. Many carry the traumatic memories of war, loss, poverty, and hunger, with some families having lost members to conflict or famine or living divided between Algeria and other countries. As a result, the primary identity concern for these families is survival and reunion rather than a more complex identity formation. Their hope often lies in returning home if conditions improve in their original countries, such as Mali and Niger. While striving for a basic level of integration to ensure their survival, most African refugee families in Algeria hold onto the aspiration of one day returning to their homeland.

### **4. Cultural alienation**

As Mokhtar Benabdellawī states, "Alienation is a human problem, a crisis of suffering in an era that demands a clear definition of belonging, which now varies between universal human affiliation and the blending of intersecting identity circles, constantly generating new identities unlike any prior essence." (Blairdouh, 2016)

Today's world is dominated by cultural and ideological hegemony, creating fragmented communities and ideological uncertainty, where people may lack connection to an original or defined cultural identity. This situation is challenging for settled societies but even more severe for refugees fleeing war, hunger, and alienation from their cultural roots.

Although African refugees in Algeria find themselves in a welcoming Muslim society that treats them with humanity and social support, they still experience cultural alienation. This experience may not be as severe as in other host societies, but it raises key concepts like cultural identity, values, and cultural systems. Every society has unique cultural elements, historical legacies, and a distinct linguistic and religious identity. Societies become increasingly aware of their cultural identity, expressed through symbols, customs, traditions, and diverse human activities, forming a shared framework for individuals and groups.

For African refugees in Algeria, many have left behind homes, communities, countries, and even their cultural identity to live in a society with distinct cultural markers. Despite religious similarities, Algeria's cultural landscape differs greatly. Algerian society is culturally diverse, blending Arabic, Islamic, Amazigh, Mediterranean, African, and global elements. It encompasses various groups, including Arabized and Francophone communities, Chaoui, Kabyle, Mozabite, and Tuareg cultures. Despite this cultural diversity, Algerians live in a united, cohesive society under the umbrella of Arab, Islamic, and Amazigh identity. (Rahiema, June 2013, p. 194)

Cultural alienation for African refugees may arise from specific aspects of Algerian society's cultural system. The religious and ethnic backgrounds of some refugees, such as Christians and Jewish Africans, make their social integration challenging, especially as some religious practices may conflict with Algerian social norms or are restricted by laws despite the society's cultural diversity. This alienation often stems from the forced migration and separation from home, creating a sense of meaninglessness and resistance to adopt a new cultural identity. For refugees, alienation becomes a personal crisis of lost purpose and disconnectedness, compounded by homelessness, rejection, and lack of agency. This form of alienation requires psychological and social intervention to address its profound negative effects.

### Conclusion

Scientific discussions surrounding the concept of human existence and its purposes have raised numerous valid questions. Human life is a continuous endeavor to build civilization and structure, providing meaning and definition to existence. Identity, as a distinct ontological concept in human life, encompasses various elements; it is the cultural and cognitive system that defines one's being, the self-awareness of identity, beliefs, history, heritage, and the sense of value, purpose, integration, and belonging. Ultimately, it represents the ongoing quest for social integration. Within this framework, the issues of identity and integration for African refugees in Algeria remain among the most pertinent and pressing topics in Algerian society, visible in daily life.

The African refugee who has left behind their homeland, community, and home has lost a significant part of their identity and seeks integration in Algerian society—a society known for its openness to refugees and migrants. Despite this, the reality shows that refugees live marginalized, deprived, feeling inferior, lacking adequate housing, healthcare, and often suffering from severe illnesses due to living outdoors without suitable shelter. Refugees often reside in medium-sized groups in isolated areas away from Algerian communities. Socially constrained and culturally alienated, the African refugee is frequently rejected from employment, particularly in advanced or clearly defined roles within society.

In a country where even Algerian citizens face limited access to resources, the possibility of a “distinctive,” “creative,” or “multi-cultural” identity remains distant for African refugees. Their primary concern remains survival and meeting basic needs (food, water, clothing). Therefore, for African refugees in Algeria, identity is currently best described as “the identity of someone who simply lives”.

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## SOCIAL CULTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH TOURISM IN ALGERIA

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**Abstract:** *Infrastructure and a tourism mindset contribute to the support and development of the tourism sector. Infrastructure forms the foundation upon which the sector relies, encompassing transportation, accommodation, recreational facilities, and public services that make the tourist experience comfortable and appealing. Additionally, having a robust digital infrastructure has become essential in the technological age to facilitate access to information and tourism services. On the other hand, a tourism mindset, characterized by welcoming tourists and understanding their needs, plays a pivotal role in enhancing the tourism experience and creating a hospitable environment. This study also aims to address the importance of urban planning, waste management, and investment in infrastructure to ensure the sustainability of natural and cultural resources. Moreover, investments in healthcare services, security, and digital payment methods are vital factors for the success of tourist destinations. In summary, tourism requires a comprehensive blend of advanced infrastructure and an open mindset to create a successful and sustainable tourism experience.*

**Keywords:** tourism, tourism mindset, infrastructure.

### 1. Introduction

Tourism is considered one of the most important economic and cultural sectors in the world today, as it combines meeting the needs of travelers and entertainment with enhancing cultural understanding among peoples. Tourism is not merely an economic activity aimed at generating profits; it serves as a bridge connecting different cultures and provides an opportunity to learn about the traditions, customs, and histories of other communities. Through this cultural exchange, tourism contributes to fostering mutual understanding and broadening the horizons of both visitors and host communities.

Moreover, tourism plays a significant role in stimulating infrastructure development in tourist countries and regions. The development of infrastructure—such as airports, hotels, roads, and recreational facilities—is directly linked to the prosperity of the tourism sector. As the number of tourists increases, countries need to improve these facilities and services to accommodate the growing numbers and ensure high-quality service. This infrastructure benefits not only tourists but also local communities, improving living standards and enhancing regional development. On the other hand, tourism significantly impacts the social culture of host communities. It can lead to changes in lifestyle, consumption patterns, and even social values. Tourism can enhance cultural diversity and tolerance, but it can also pose challenges in preserving local cultural identity, especially in areas heavily reliant on foreign tourism.

In conclusion, the relationship between tourism, social culture, and infrastructure is integrative. While tourism relies on the development of infrastructure and the stability of local culture, it simultaneously serves as an effective means to enhance that infrastructure and broaden cultural interaction among peoples. Tourism acts as an open window through which communities observe each other, making it an effective tool for transferring cultures and promoting mutual understanding. This direct cultural interaction can lead to positive changes within communities, as local populations gain new experiences from visitors, whether related to lifestyle, technology, or art. At the same time, tourists learn about new cultures and different ways of life, fostering respect for cultural diversity and appreciation for differences.

In addition, tourism serves as a strong incentive to preserve cultural and historical heritage. Many communities find themselves driven to maintain their historical landmarks and local cultures to attract tourists. This creates a balance between economic progress and the preservation of cultural identity. Traditional markets, handicrafts, and popular festivals often attract tourists and help support the local economy, leading to the revival of cultural heritage that might face extinction without tourism interest.

Regarding infrastructure, tourism exerts a positive pressure on governments and institutions to develop and enhance public facilities. In countries that rely on tourism as a primary source of income, we find significant investments in improving roads, developing airports, building luxury hotels, and providing advanced communication networks. These improvements benefit not only tourism but also elevate the

quality of services provided to citizens, enhancing quality of life and increasing opportunities for local development.

However, it is essential to note that rapid growth in tourism can lead to some environmental and social challenges. Pressures on natural resources and infrastructure may occur if proper planning is not implemented. Therefore, it is crucial to adopt sustainable tourism strategies that consider the long-term preservation of environmental and cultural resources. Sustainable development in tourism aims to ensure that the economic and cultural benefits continue for future generations without harming the environment or cultural heritage.

## **2. Problem statement**

The relationship between tourism, social culture, and infrastructure lies in how to achieve a balance between economic development through tourism and the preservation of cultural identity and environmental sustainability. On one hand, tourism serves as a primary source of income and promotes the development of local infrastructure, contributing to improved quality of life and increased economic opportunities. On the other hand, the pressures resulting from large tourist inflows can threaten local culture, whether through social change or the overwhelming influence of foreign values and customs on the original identity of the host community. Furthermore, there is a question regarding the ability of infrastructure to accommodate large numbers of tourists without negatively impacting the environment and natural resources. Mass tourism can lead to the depletion of environmental resources and the deterioration of historical sites, necessitating the establishment of sustainable strategies to preserve these resources. The issue lies in how to utilize tourism as a tool for development and cultural exchange while minimizing negative impacts on the local community and infrastructure, ensuring that this development is sustainable in the long term without compromising cultural identity or the environment.

## **3. Social culture and tourism**

Social culture plays a pivotal role in promoting or hindering tourism, significantly affecting the experiences and expectations of visitors. The relationship between social culture and tourism can be summarized in the following points (Weaver, D. B. 2019, p. 55):

### **1. Cultural Attraction:**

Social culture, including customs, traditions, arts, music, and food, is a major draw for tourists. For example, tourists are attracted to countries with rich cultures, such as popular festivals, traditional markets, and historical landmarks that reflect the lives of local communities.

### **2. Respect and Cultural Interaction:**

Openness to other cultures and hospitable treatment of tourists enhance a country's reputation as a tourist destination. Conversely, communities that may be closed off or unwelcoming to tourists can weaken their appeal, deterring visitors from choosing that destination (Hall, C. M., & Page, S. J. 2014, p. 42).

### **3. Cultural Exchange:**

Tourism contributes to promoting cultural exchange among different communities. When tourists interact with locals, ideas and values are exchanged, leading to increased understanding of each other's cultures. This interaction can enrich and evolve the social culture itself over time.

### **4. Social Impacts of Tourism:**

Tourism can lead to changes in local lifestyles. Sometimes, it may commercialize certain traditions or rituals to meet tourists' needs. In some cases, this can result in the erosion of traditional values or the emergence of conflicts between cultures (Weaver, D. B. 2019, p. 295).

### **5. Social Structure and Tourism Promotion:**

Communities that rely on tourism as a primary source of income often promote cultural and social activities as part of the tourism experience. This trend can drive the revival of cultural heritage and the development of tourism infrastructure, such as museums and cultural centers (Hall, C. M., & Page, S. J. 2014, p. 121).

### **6. Cultural Marketing:**

Social culture is an essential component of tourism promotion for destinations. Countries utilize aspects of their culture in tourism marketing campaigns, such as traditional food, folklore, handicrafts, and heritage clothing, to attract foreign tourists.

## **4. Individual culture and tourism**



Individual culture in communities plays a crucial role in how tourists are received and interacted with, and it can be a key factor in the success or failure of tourism in some countries. When social or individual culture is conservative or unwelcoming towards tourists, challenges may arise that affect the tourism sector.

1. Cultural and Religious Influences:

In some communities, traditions and customs associated with religion or conservative values can strongly shape individuals' attitudes toward tourists. Some individuals may refuse to welcome tourists if they perceive that the tourists' cultures or behaviors conflict with local values. For example, non-conservative Western clothing or behaviors that may be deemed disrespectful in the local community can provoke residents' displeasure (Hall, C. M., & Page, S. J. 2014, p. 412).

2. Fear of Negative Cultural Impact:

Some communities fear that the presence of large numbers of tourists may lead to changes in local lifestyles or loss of cultural identity. These fears may result in resistance to welcoming tourists, as individuals feel that their original culture may be marginalized or that their traditional values could weaken under the influence of foreign culture.

3. Stereotypes and Preconceptions:

At times, individuals within a community may hold negative perceptions or stereotypes about tourists or certain nationalities, affecting their ability to interact warmly. These perceptions may stem from previous negative experiences or media portrayals, leading to discomfort or even hostility towards tourists (Weaver, D. B. 2019, p. 257).

4. Lack of Openness and Cultural Communication:

In some communities, a lack of communication or interaction with other cultures can result in individuals being closed off and not understanding cultural differences. These communities may lack experience in dealing with strangers or tourists, making them ill-equipped to welcome them or comprehend their cultures and needs (Baker, D., & O'Reilly, K. 2020, p. 254).

5. Traditional Values vs. Modernity:

There can sometimes be a conflict between traditional values and modernity, as some individuals view the welcoming of tourists and reliance on tourism as leading to the adoption of behaviors foreign to the community. This cultural gap may widen, especially if there is no balance between preserving traditions and adapting to modern tourism demands.

6. Economic Incentives vs. Cultural Resistance:

In some countries, despite tourism providing job opportunities and improving the economic situation, there may be strong cultural resistance. Individuals may feel that economic benefits do not compensate for the cultural and social changes that may be imposed by the influx of tourists. This creates tension between those who wish to benefit from tourism and others who seek to protect their culture.

7. Importance of Awareness and Education:

To address these challenges, cultural awareness and education can play a significant role. Individuals should be taught how to interact with tourists in a manner that respects cultural diversity, and at the same time, tourists should be made aware of the necessity to respect local culture. Through this mutual understanding, tensions can be reduced, and harmony between the local community and tourists can be enhanced (Baker, D., & O'Reilly, K. 2020, p. 51).

8. Gradual Integration:

In some countries that were previously closed to tourism, openness can be achieved gradually through programs aimed at building bridges between tourists and local communities. Responsible tourism initiatives can focus on minimizing negative impacts on local culture and work with communities to preserve their heritage and culture.

## **5. Barriers to tourism in communities**

1. Cultural Isolation and Wariness of the Foreign:

In some communities, particularly those that live in relative isolation or do not interact continuously with foreign cultures, there may be feelings of suspicion or caution toward tourists. These feelings may stem from concerns about losing cultural identity or from previous negative experiences with foreigners (Jansen-Verbeke, M. 2018, p. 45).

Examples:

2. Rural Communities: In many countries, rural communities are often more conservative compared to urban ones. Individuals in these areas may view tourism as external interference that could alter their lifestyle or threaten their traditions.

3. Tribal or Traditional Communities: Sometimes, tourism is seen as a threat to the intrinsic nature of tribal communities, as it can lead to the "commodification" or loss of their authentic character.

4. Tension Between Globalization and Local Identity:

There is an ongoing conflict in communities that have started to open up to tourism between their desire to join the modern world and their need to maintain local cultural identity. This conflict is often evident in the policies of developing countries that try to attract tourism but fear its negative impact on social values (Prideaux, B., & Cooper, C. 2017, p. 154).

Examples:

5. Interaction with Western Culture: Tourism from Western countries often brings a lifestyle that differs significantly from local values, such as wearing non-conservative clothing or engaging in behaviors like drinking alcohol or publicly expressing romantic relationships. These behaviors may not align with conservative communities and can create tension.

6. Economic and Social Pressure:

Tourism is an important economic source for many countries, but it can also put pressure on the social fabric. Communities heavily reliant on tourism may experience social tensions stemming from economic disparities between local residents and wealthy tourists. This disparity can lead to resentment towards tourists (Jansen-Verbeke, M. 2018, p. 51).

Examples:

7. Developing Countries: In some developing countries, local residents may feel compelled to provide services to tourists at the expense of their own needs. This can lead to feelings of exploitation or resentment, especially if the economic benefits of tourism do not reach all community members.

8. Adherence to Customs and Traditions:

Many communities are very protective of their customs and traditions and see the reception of tourists as a potential threat to those customs. In this case, there is an internal conflict between the need for tourism as a source of income and the desire to maintain established traditions (Baker, D., & O'Reilly, K. 2020, p. 22).

Examples:

9. Bedouin Communities: In some areas, such as Bedouin communities, individuals may feel that tourism leads to changes in their traditional ways of living. They may feel that their original customs are being exploited or superficially marketed to tourists rather than preserving their true essence.

10. Cultural Resistance to Globalization:

Some communities view tourism as a tool for cultural globalization that may erase local identities. These communities are often more resistant to tourism, seeing that a large influx of tourists may lead to the "globalization" of their culture and make it similar to other cultures following global consumer patterns.

Examples:

11. Conservative Communities in the Middle East: In some Arab countries, there are concerns that Western tourism may lead to changes in religious and social values, prompting some individuals or governments to restrict tourism or control the type of tourists allowed to visit the country (Jansen-Verbeke, M. 2018, p. 23).

12. Sustainable Tourism as a Solution for Cultural Balance:

One of the solutions that can mitigate the impact of these challenges is adopting the concept of "sustainable tourism," which focuses on positive cultural interaction between tourists and local communities. This can be achieved by encouraging tourists to respect local traditions and directing support towards projects that enhance rather than weaken local culture (Gossling, S., & Hall, C. M. 2019, p. 554).

Examples:

13. Rural Tourism Programs: Some countries, such as India or Morocco, have started to develop rural tourism programs where tourists can experience traditional rural life authentically while adhering to local values and customs.

14. Need for Mutual Education:

To reduce tensions between tourists and local residents, there is a need to educate both parties. On one hand, tourists should be educated about local customs and the importance of respecting them. On the other hand, local residents can learn how to interact with foreign cultures in an open manner without compromising their core values (Jansen-Verbeke, M. 2018, p. 147).

Examples:

15. Local Tour Guides: In some places, local tour guides are trained to act as bridges between tourists and the local community, educating tourists about local culture and inviting them to respect it.

### **5. The need for infrastructure and a tourist mindset in tourism**

Tourism requires developed infrastructure and an open tourist mindset to achieve success and sustainability. Infrastructure forms the foundation of the tourism industry, contributing to the provision of means and services that make tourists' experiences comfortable and attractive. This includes the presence of airports, paved roads, effective public transportation systems, and hotels of various classifications, in addition to recreational facilities, restaurants, and shopping centers. This infrastructure is essential to ensure that cities and tourist destinations can accommodate the increasing numbers of tourists, while also providing an appropriate level of services, thereby increasing the chances of repeat visits and enhancing the destination's reputation (Prideaux & Cooper, 2017, p. 35).

However, in addition to infrastructure, there is a pressing need for a tourist mindset, which is the general culture that embraces tourism and understands tourists' needs and requirements. This mindset includes the willingness of the local community to positively interact with tourists, offering assistance and services with a spirit of hospitality (UNWTO, 2021, p. 362). Training workers in the tourism sector and raising their awareness about the importance of providing high-quality services is part of developing this mindset. Additionally, attention to tourism education, whether for those working in the sector or the general population, contributes to enhancing local communities' understanding of the importance of tourism and its positive impact on the economy.

The tourist mindset is not limited to hotel and restaurant workers; it also includes government and administrative institutions responsible for managing tourist sites. This requires cooperation among various sectors to ensure a comprehensive experience for tourists, from their entry into the country until their departure.

Therefore, it can be said that tourism fundamentally depends on a combination of robust infrastructure and an open tourist mindset. While the importance of roads, hotels, and facilities is undeniable, the warm welcome and positive interaction with tourists are what enhance the tourism experience and encourage them to return, thus achieving sustainability and ongoing development in this sector (Prideaux & Cooper, 2017, p. 51).

Tourism relies on infrastructure and a tourist mindset as two essential pillars to ensure the sustainability of this vital sector. Tourist destinations require strong infrastructure to effectively and sustainably support tourist movement. This includes advanced transportation networks linking cities with tourist areas, as well as providing comfortable and diverse transportation options such as high-speed trains, buses, and modern airports. It also involves developing hotels and resorts across various categories to meet the needs of different types of tourists regarding comfort and quality, as well as providing healthcare facilities and public amenities such as tourist information centers, shops, and recreational facilities.

Infrastructure is not limited to just physical aspects; it also includes digital infrastructure. With the advancement of technology, providing strong and fast internet connectivity for tourists has become essential, whether to facilitate hotel and transport service bookings or to guide tourists through map and information applications. This also includes digital payment systems and electronic services that make navigating and accessing services easy and quick (Prideaux & Cooper, 2017, p. 21).

As for the tourist mindset, it is the human factor that is just as important as infrastructure. Local communities must adopt a welcoming approach towards tourists, and residents should be fully aware of the significance of tourism as a major source of income and job opportunities. This includes creating a social environment that respects and understands the different cultures that tourists bring with them. Positive interactions with tourists and providing services with kindness and professionalism are key to providing a distinctive tourism experience. Tourists seek more than just visiting landmarks or staying in luxury hotels; they want to connect with the local culture and feel welcomed (UNWTO, 2021, p. 25).

Investing in training the tourism workforce is an important part of enhancing the tourist mindset. Those working in this sector need a deep understanding of tourists' expectations and to provide exceptional experiences. This includes improving service levels in hotels and restaurants, developing the capabilities of tour guides, and even enhancing daily interactions with tourists in shops and streets (Gossling & Hall, 2019, p. 254).

On the other hand, governments and tourism institutions need to encourage sustainable tourism that balances infrastructure development with the protection of natural and cultural resources. This

includes establishing policies and procedures to ensure that the environment is not depleted or cultural heritage is destroyed. An infrastructure that supports sustainable tourism enhances the experience of tourists who seek eco-friendly destinations and preservation of local heritage.

In summary, the success of any tourist destination depends on the harmonious cooperation between developing modern and advanced infrastructure and fostering an open and accepting tourist mindset that combines professionalism in service delivery with friendly hospitality that reflects the authenticity and culture of the local community (Dredge & Jenkins, 2018, p. 251).

Therefore, tourism needs the following:

1. **Transportation:** Transportation is a fundamental pillar of tourism infrastructure. Highways, airports, and seaports facilitate tourists' access to tourist destinations, whether local or international (UNWTO, 2021, p. 215). The presence of world-class international airports eases the flow of tourists from various parts of the world. Internal transportation networks such as trains and buses contribute to improving the travel experience within the country, allowing tourists to explore areas easily and comfortably (Williams & Hall, 2022, p. 365).

2. **Accommodation (Hotels and Resorts):** Tourism requires strong infrastructure that includes diverse accommodation facilities, from luxury hotels to budget hostels. Hotels are not just a place to sleep; they represent a part of the tourist experience, relying on the quality of service and comfort provided. The hotel infrastructure plays a significant role in attracting tourists; the more modern and high-quality the hotels, the higher the tourist influx.

3. **Recreational and Cultural Facilities:** Tourism is not only about natural scenery; it also includes recreational and cultural facilities such as museums, parks, beaches, and amusement parks. These facilities require significant investments in infrastructure to ensure they can accommodate large numbers of tourists. For example, museums need modern display systems, while beaches need facilities such as restrooms and restaurants (Dredge & Jenkins, 2018, p. 59)

4. **Digital Infrastructure:** With technological advancements, internet connectivity and digital systems have become integral to modern tourism. Having strong digital infrastructure allows tourists to use mobile apps for booking hotels, purchasing travel tickets, or obtaining information about tourist destinations. Public Wi-Fi in public places and hotels enhances the tourist experience and makes them more engaged with the host country (Gosling & Hall, 2019, p. 59).

5. **Waste Management and Environmental Sustainability:** Tourism requires advanced infrastructure in waste management to maintain cleanliness in tourist destinations. Mass tourism can exert pressure on environmental resources, necessitating destinations to adopt advanced strategies for waste management and environmental protection. Infrastructure that supports sustainability, such as renewable energy use and water conservation technologies, enhances the image of the destination as an eco-friendly choice.

6. **Healthcare Services:** Healthcare services are a fundamental element of tourism infrastructure. Tourists need access to high-quality medical services in case of health emergencies during their visit. Therefore, the presence of well-equipped hospitals and clinics close to tourist areas is essential to ensure a safe and reassuring experience for tourists (Dredge & Jenkins, 2018, p. 75).

7. **Security and Safety:** Security infrastructure is an essential component of attracting tourists. Tourist destinations need effective security systems such as checkpoints, surveillance cameras, and rapid emergency services to ensure the safety of visitors. This boosts tourists' confidence and makes them feel secure during their stay (Weaver, 2019, p. 52).

8. **Public Amenities (Electricity and Water):** It is crucial for public amenities such as electricity and water to be continuously and reliably available in tourist destinations. Any interruption or shortage of these services can negatively impact the tourist experience and create a poor impression of the destination. Therefore, investing in stable electricity and water networks and ensuring reliable supply is essential for successful tourism (Williams & Hall, 2022, p. 51).

9. **Signage and Information Boards:** Signage and information boards play a significant role in guiding tourists within cities and tourist areas. These boards provide information about landmarks, directions, and amenities, making it easier for tourists to navigate and explore places without direct assistance. Tourist destinations need advanced informational infrastructure, including multilingual boards to ensure the comfort of visitors from various nationalities (Dredge & Jenkins, 2018, p. 96).

10. **Funding and Investment in Infrastructure:** Developing infrastructure requires substantial funding and ongoing investments. Governments and private companies need to invest in building and maintaining roads, hotels, tourist facilities, and public services. The success of tourism depends on the destination's ability to attract investments that enhance its competitiveness in the global tourism market.

11. Urban Planning: Good urban planning ensures optimal distribution of infrastructure in tourist cities, making access to attractions and facilities easy and organized. This involves allocating dedicated areas for tourism, providing green spaces and parks, and establishing pedestrian and bicycle paths, making the tourism experience more enjoyable and facilitating tourists' movement and exploration of places (Weaver, 2019, p. 412).

12. Payment Systems and E-commerce: Having advanced payment systems such as credit cards and electronic banking applications increases the convenience for tourists and enhances their shopping and spending experience. Tourist destinations need developed banking and commercial infrastructure to facilitate payment and commerce processes, especially as tourism moves towards digital solutions.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, infrastructure and a tourist mindset are critical factors for the success and sustainability of the tourism sector. Strong infrastructure, which includes transportation, accommodation, recreational facilities, and public services, forms the foundation that allows tourists to enjoy a comfortable and attractive experience, while digital infrastructure enhances accessibility to services and destinations. Conversely, the tourist mindset plays an essential role in creating a welcoming environment that enriches the tourist experience and contributes to positive cultural interactions between visitors and host communities. Additionally, infrastructure associated with environmental sustainability and resource management is vital for preserving tourist destinations and protecting them from degradation, thereby ensuring that these areas remain attractive for tourism in the long term. Investing in the development of this infrastructure and improving the tourist mindset enhances the competitiveness of tourist destinations, making them more appealing to visitors from around the world. Ultimately, the success of tourism requires the concerted efforts of governments, the private sector, and local communities to deliver a comprehensive tourism experience that balances the needs of tourists with the preservation of cultural and natural resources.

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# DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF THE HABITATIONAL AXIS ALONG THE VIA TRANSILVANICA TOURIST ROUTE IN BISTRIȚA-NĂSĂUD COUNTY

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the demographic and social structure of the communities along the Via Transilvanica route in Bistrița-Năsăud County. The research is based on recent statistical data and field observations, providing a detailed picture of the population distribution and demographic growth rate. The study identifies the main residential axis crossed by the route. It also addresses aspects related to family structure, educational level, community participation and social relations. A key aspect of the research is the link between the axis and the route's tourism potential, emphasising how tourism can stimulate social and cultural interactions in the county. The study contributes to understanding the social and demographic complexity of the communities along the axis and emphasises the importance of the route for tourists.*

**Keywords:** Habitational Axis, Socio-demographic aspect, Via Transilvanica tourist route, Bistrița-Năsăud County

## 1. Introduction

The geographical axis is defined as a "line of spatiotemporal shape, a line that allows in a temporal-spatial way, the diagnosis and geographical forecasting of a territory, a territory that can take different geometric conformations, and dimensions according to the capacity of component polarization" (Pop, 2003) grafting the territorial planning activity in practice, for example, within the axis, must respond to the elaboration of the main indicators in the development and geographical harmonization of the territory (Pop, 2004): the study of natural, social and economic conditions.

The geographical and social axis are concentrated and spread to and from the poles of development, the flows of population, goods, capital and information thus playing an important role in their growth and dynamics (Pop, 2016).

The development axis concentrates and spreads towards and from the development poles, population flows, goods, capital and information thus playing an important role in their development and dynamic. Also, the development axis facilitates the spatial diffusion process of the development from the urban centres towards the near rural settlements. (Iurea & Braghină, 2012)

This diffusion process manifests mainly along the major communication routes. Development axis thus plays an essential role in the urban-rural relationship. (Iurea & Braghină, 2012)

The development of the polycentric networks determines the emergence of the structuring axis which, by their favorabilities, may attract investments and enable superior development on the accessibility routes between development poles (Peptenatu et al., 2009).

Regional development is a spatio-temporal process characterized by the expansion of urban areas through which rural/semi-rural areas are integrated into urban infrastructures. (O'Driscoll, et. al, 2023) The development of the habitational axis is linked to the topography of regional development and economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Individual socio-demographic characteristics influence the composition of residential environments, employment considerations, and resources devoted to transportation, all of which influence individual travel behaviour. (O'Driscoll, et. al, 2023)

The habitational axis formed along the Via Transilvanica tourist route is located in the rural areas of Bistrița-Năsăud County, except for one component of the axis, which is Bistrița.

Rural areas are sensitive to change and can be easily affected by it, and tourism is one of the most powerful agents of change that can affect a territory. (Luiza Souza, 2019)

In many countries, rural areas protect regional natural and cultural heritage, attracting tourists in search of unspoiled nature, tranquillity, personal contact with cultural heritage and an authentic experience. (Luiza Souza, 2019)

Tourism, especially rural tourism, depends on the ability of the local community to make tourists feel welcome and on the social and demographic characteristics of the local community. (Luiza Souca, 2019)

The cultural route is a feasible strategy for the rural revitalization of villages with historical value. (Zhou, Zijie et. al,2022)

When people are place attached, they may adopt pro-social and pro-environmental behaviours to protect their place to assist in its functional purpose (tourism benefits) and hence further support tourism development. This in turn can further contribute to meeting other key sustainability and wellbeing goals and promote residents' quality of life.(Ramkissoon, H. ,2020).

People are constantly interacting with other family members, co-workers, friends, neighbours or even strangers, either in person or through online social networks. (David Boto-García et.al , 2022 )

The Via Transilvanica tourist route is an important point in social development, by creating links and facilitating interactions between locals and tourists.

**The concept:** Via Transilvanica is a long-distance road, a concept known and encountered all over the world, be it pilgrimage trails such as El Camino, the Way of St. James, or the wild, long-distance trails of North America such as the Appalachian Trail. (<https://www.viatransilvanica.com>)

The project's signage is an integral part of the overall concept, so we've designed a route where no hiker is allowed to get lost. Along the more than 1,400 miles, hikers will find the trail's symbol in the form of natural stone (andesite) bollards installed mile after mile, along with signposts at intersections and paint markings very often. These andesite bollards are works of art sculpted individually at the sculpture camps on the Tășuleasa Social campus by Romanian and foreign sculptors. The bollards are the identifying element that makes Via Transilvanica one of the largest outdoor sculpture exhibitions in the world that we invite you to discover on the move.(<https://www.viatransilvanica.com>)

**Mission and Values:** The mission is to maintain, promote and identify development opportunities for the first long-distance trail in Romania, as well as to create a solid common platform that will sustainably unite all stakeholders (hikers, hosts, authorities, partners, volunteers, local communities). (<https://www.viatransilvanica.com>)

Being a Tășuleasa Social project, Via Transilvanica is first and foremost a social project, because it has the community at its center. The people of the road are the people who have built this route, the people who walk it and will walk it, the people who offer hospitality on the route and the people who carry its news further within the country and beyond its borders. Perhaps the best illustration of the social character of this project is the kilometre markers, which teach us that art is not a luxury, but a social circuit.(<https://www.viatransilvanica.com>)

**Purpose:** Via Transilvanica aims to reinvent (especially rural) tourism in Romania, to make it easier for travellers to access the communities along the route and their stories, helping them to develop sustainably and responsibly. (<https://www.viatransilvanica.com>)

### **Integration of the habitation axis of Bistrița -Năsăud county into the Via Transilvanica tourist route**

Via Transilvanica measures 1420 kilometres and 32,000 m positive difference in level, including two alternative routes and several loops that lead to various points of interest. The route overlaps with forest roads, national, county or municipal roads, easement roads, pastures or other tourist paths. The entire route is divided into seven regions called "lands": Bucovina, Upper Land, Terra Siculorum, Terra Saxonum, Terra Dacica, Terra Banatica, and Terra Romana. Each county is divided into recommended stages and the average distance of a stage is 20 km. In the Hiking Guide, you will find a detailed description of each county and each recommended stage. (<https://www.viatransilvanica.com/ro>)

The recommended hiking season is from May to October, and preparation for the hike requires the most detailed information from official sources.

(<https://www.viatransilvanica.com/ro>)

The Via Transilvanica tourist route analysis is realised at the Bistrița -Năsăud county level. At the national level the route presents a distinct organisation for each region, county crossed. The administrative territorial unit in this case is located in Ținutul de Sus.

Leaving Poiana Stampei also leaves the Bucovina region. From here you go on to Lunca Ilvei, which is already in Bistrița-Năsăud county, at the foot of the Rodnei Mountains, where the 277km-long region of Ținutul de Sus begins. (<https://www.viatransilvanica.com>)

## 2. Methodology

The realisation of the article uses statistics and field research as a method of analysis.

Statistics is a branch of science concerned with collecting, organizing, analyzing data and drawing inferences from samples of the entire population. (Ali Z, Bhaskar SB.,2016).

The process of statistical analysis requires access to data sources.

At the country level, the Romanian National Institute of Statistics manages one of the most complex statistical databases, called TEMPO-Online, which is made available to the public via the TEMPO-Online web service. (Necula et.al , 2019 )

The content of the TEMPO-Online database comprises statistical indicators, metadata associated with statistical indicators (definition, methodology) and a continuous time series that begins with 1990 (with monthly, quarterly and annual periodicity). (Necula et.al, 2019)

The Tempo package is highly flexible offering a convenient set of custom functions to access open data from the TEMPO online database. (Necula et. al ,2019) Researchers and data scientists in academia, government, and industry can use these functions to download, explore and visualize statistical data in an automated and convenient manner. (Necula et. al, 2019). Foreseen usage of the package can be categorised as automated data pipelines for analytics, data visualization and exploration, or data download as an independent step for future processing. (Necula et. al, 2019). Another source of statistical data is the county Statistical Yearbook - 2023

## 3. Results

To present the results clearly, the research is structured as follows: I. Definition, description and localization of habitational axis; II. Social-demographic analysis.

I.A definition of the term analyzed HABITAT 1. Element of the human ecosystem consisting of environmental and psychosocial factors. 2. An urban structured space occupied by a human community. 3. Balanced and unitary set of living conditions necessary for civilized, modern man; (p. ext.) the environment in which man lives. (<https://dexonline.ro/definitie/habitat/definitii>)

The habitational axis is a term that utilizes the principle of the geographic axis to describe a line or route that connects different living areas in a city, town, village or region.

This can include roads, boulevards, parks and other public spaces that facilitate access and connectivity between housing and other urban amenities such as schools, shops and workplaces.

As a result of the field research carried out, the habitational axis formed by the Via Transilvanica tourist route is made up of the following localities: Monor, Poșmuș, Jeica, Mărișelu, Măgurele, Orheiul Bistriței, Pietriș, Cușma, Domnești, Monariu, Bistrița, Dorolea, Bistrița Bârgăului, Mureșenii Bârgăului, Ciosa, Lunca Ilvei (Figure 1)

Description Habitational axis: Between the localities Monor-Poșmuș-Jeica-Mărișelu the axis is continuous (forms the first axis), due to the geographical characteristics of the area and the structure of the road transportation infrastructure in Mărișelu the axis splits in two directions, two residential axis.

The second axis: Mărișelu-Măgurele-Orheiul Bistriței-Pietriș-Cușma-Dealul Negru, county road DJ172 G (connecting point)

Third axis: Mărișelu-Domnești-Monariu-Bistrița-Dorolea . In the area of Cușma, the axis joins and makes the fourth axis Bistrița Bârgăului-Mureșeni Bârgăului-Ciosa-Lunca Ilvei. (Table 1 )

**Figure 1 . Location of the Habitational Axis crossed by Via Transilvanica**



Source: <https://www.viatransilvanica.com/ro>



Via Transilvanica crosses the county of Bistrița-Năsăud over a distance of about 200 kilometres, the difference of 77 kilometres is areas without settlements (hills, mountains). County roads crossed by the tourist route : DJ172: Monor - Șieuț - Șieu; DJ173: Bistrița - Budacu de Jos - Cetate; DJ173A: Bistrița Bârgăului - Tiha Bârgăului; DJ172D: Prundu Bârgăului - Lunca Ilvei; The Via Transilvanica route passes through the village of Cușma, which is accessible via DJ172G.

From here, the route continues west towards the village of Petriș and east towards Bistrița Bârgăului. E58: The route intersects the E58 near Bistrița, which connects the cities of Dej and Suceava.

**Table 1 Description of the component localities of the habitational axis**

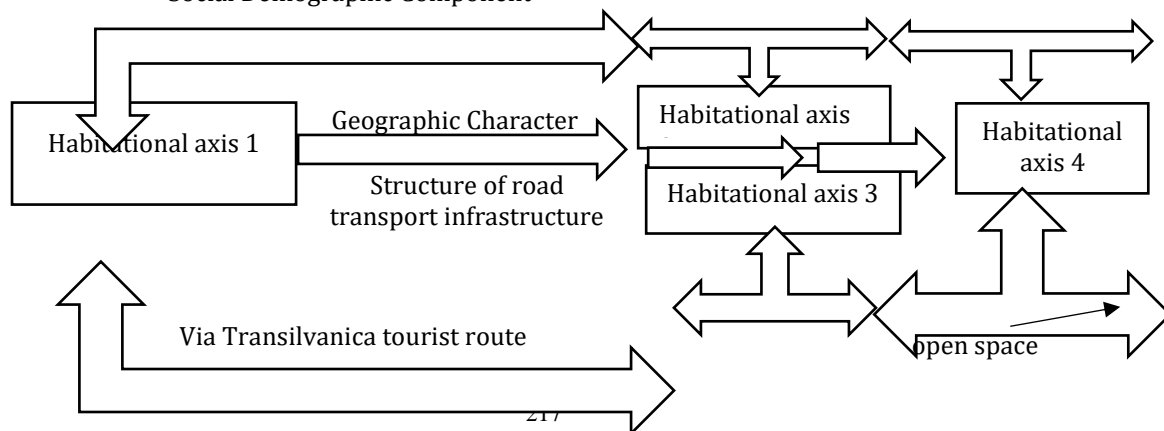
Name	Classification	Tourist Attractions (most important)
Monor	Village of residence of Monor commune	Cloud Volcanoes Nature Reserve (2 ha)
Poșmuș	village from Șieu commune	Teleki Castle
Jeica	Village in Mărișelu commune	Via Transilvanica
Mărișelu	Village of residence of Mărișelu commune	Râpa cu Păpuși" nature reserve (2 ha)
Măgurele	village in the commune Mărișelu	Via Transilvanica
Orheiul Bistriței	village in commune Cetate	Nature reserve "The Daffodil Glade on the Budacului Valley Plateau" (6 ha).
Petriș	village in commune Cetate	Via Transilvanica
Cușma	village in Livezile commune	Nature reserve "Piatra Cușmei" (5 ha).
Domnești	village in Mărișelu commune	Nature reserve "Râpa cu păpuși" (2 ha).
Monariu	village in the commune Budacu de Jos	Former Evangelical Church, today Pentecostal Church, historical monument of national importance
Bistrița	municipality county residence	Symbol of the city Evangelical Church
Dorolea	village in commune Livezile	Via Transilvanica
Bistrița Bârgăului	Village of residence of Bistrița Bârgăului commune	The Bistrița Ardeleană Keys
Mureșenii Bârgăului	village in Tiha Bârgăului commune	Via Transilvanica
Ciosa	village in Tiha Bârgăului commune	Via Transilvanica
Lunca Ilvei	Village of residence of Lunca Ilvei commune	Crovul de la Larion Nature Reserve (Natura 2000 Site) (3.015 ha)

Source: Realised by the author

It is worth mentioning that in the analyzed localities, where no important tourist attractions were found in the field research, the Via Transilvanica tourist route is listed as a main tourist attraction.

II. The social demographic analysis is carried out at the level of the four residential axis that make up the habitational axis crossed by the Via Transilvanica tourist route. ( Figure 2)

**Figure 2. Sketch representation of the concept of the analyzed habitational axis**  
Social Demographic Component



Source: Realised by the author

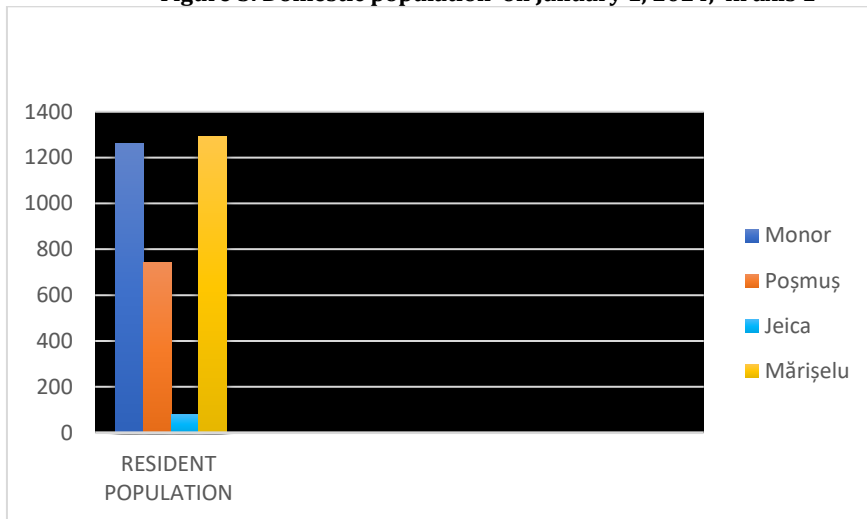
In Figure 2 is in open space format tourist route continues (not limited) outside the county of Bistrița - Năsăud.

In the paper Open Space, Andrea Maria Hartz states that a general planning category, open space fulfils a large number of often overlapping functions. The quality and facilities available determine the potential of open spaces and in what form and to what extent they can be used and fulfil specific functions. (Hartz, Andrea Maria ,2018)

It analyzes the population by domicile on January 1, 2024. The population by domicile on January 1st of the reference year represents the number of persons with Romanian citizenship and domicile on the territory of Romania, delimited by administrative-territorial criteria, and Graduates by levels of education.

A.Habitational axis 1 : Monor-Poșmuș-Jeica-Mărișelu

**Figure 3. Domestic population on January 1, 2024, in axis 1**

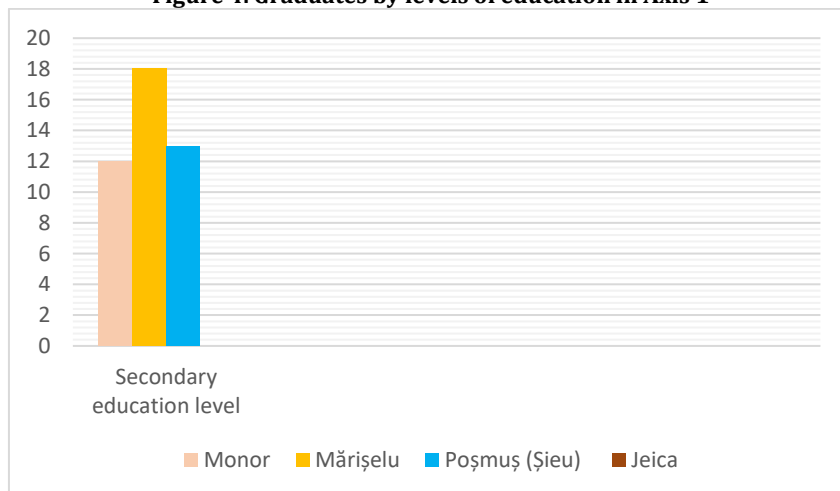


Source: Realised by the author,

data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>

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**Figure 4. Graduates by levels of education in Axis 1**



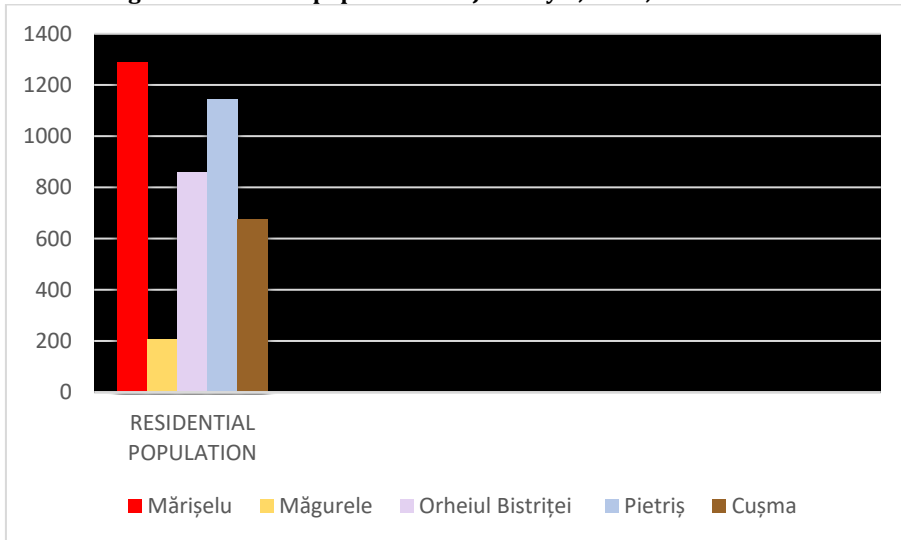
Source: Realised by the author,

data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>

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According to the statistical yearbook of Bistrița -Năsăud county within the analyzed axis as school structure there is a general school in Monor, Mărișelu, two educational units in Șieu. The population of Poșmuș learns (goes to school) in Șieu, in Jeica there is no school, and the population is older.

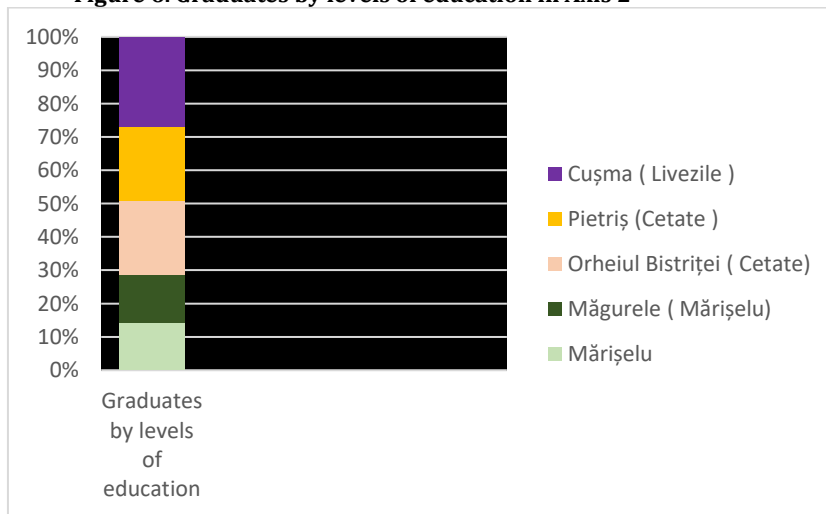
B. Habitational axis 2 Mărișelu-Măgurele-Orheiul Bistriței-Pietriș-Cușma  
**Figure 5 Domestic population on January 1, 2024, in axis 2**



Source: Realised by the author,  
 data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>  
[https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar\\_BN\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar_BN_2023_final.pdf)

Due to the rural conditions found in Romania, people from the village commute to the common centre to continue their studies

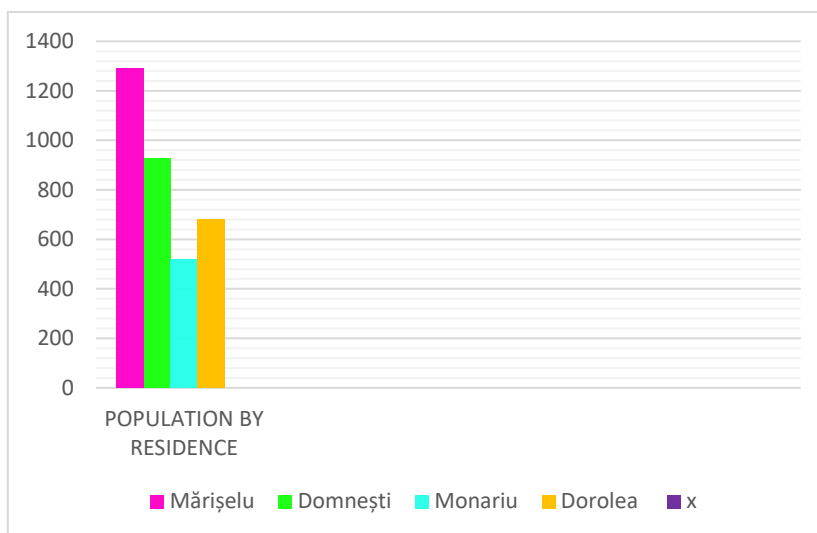
**Figure 6. Graduates by levels of education in Axis 2**



Source: Realised by the author,  
 data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>  
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C. Third axis Mărișelu-Domnești-Monariu-Bistrița-Dorolea

**Figure 7. Domestic population on January 1, 2024, in axis 3**



Source: Realised by the author,  
 data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>  
[https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar\\_BN\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar_BN_2023_final.pdf)

Bistrița is the only city in the housing axis studied and is therefore listed separately in the statistics. (Table 2)

RESIDENT POPULATION on January 1, 2024, - 94523 ;

**Table 2 Graduates by levels of education in Bistrița**

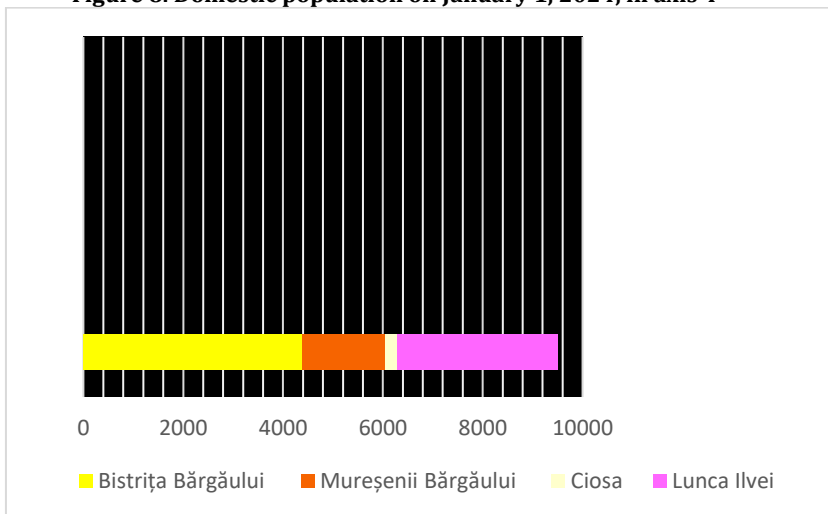
Graduates form	Number
Secondary school	857
High School	1066
Professional	288
Post-secondary (including special education)	260
University - graduates with diploma (bachelor, master, postgraduate courses, doctorate and postdoctoral advanced research programs)	169

Source: Realised by the author,  
 data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>  
[https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar\\_BN\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar_BN_2023_final.pdf)

To be mentioned in axis 3 due to the co-optation of Bistrița in the structure (the main educational centre in the county) the population migrates to the city by commuting to continue their studies.

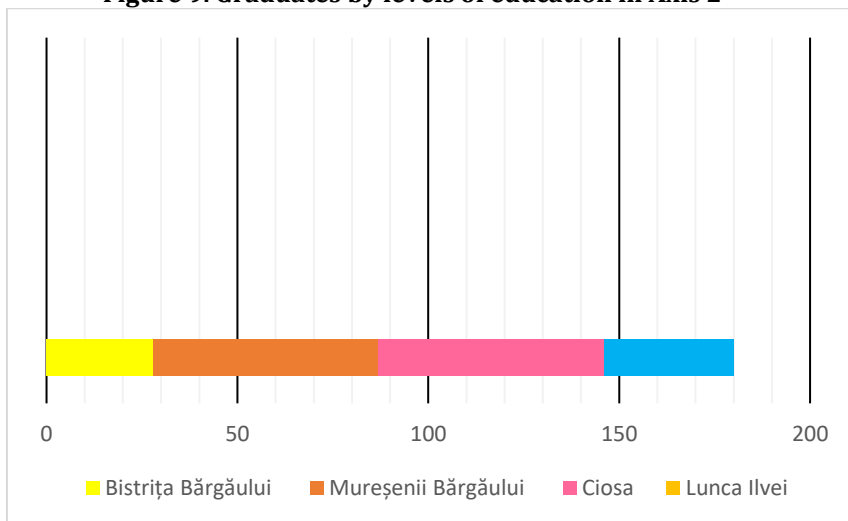
D. The fourth axis Bistrița Bârgăului-Mureșeni Bârgăului-Ciosa-Lunca Ilvei.

**Figure 8. Domestic population on January 1, 2024, in axis 4**



Source: Realised by the author,  
 data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>  
[https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar\\_BN\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar_BN_2023_final.pdf)

**Figure 9. Graduates by levels of education in Axis 2**



Source: Realised by the author,  
 data source: <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online>  
[https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar\\_BN\\_2023\\_final.pdf](https://bistri ta.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Anuar_BN_2023_final.pdf)

Locals from Mureșenii Bărgăului and Ciosa travel to Tiha Bărgăului for their studies

The event that brings together the communities of the habitational axis and Via Transilvanica is the Via Transilvanica Marathon, a mountain bike sports leisure activity.

The start of the marathon is given in the Tășuleasa Social Campus, and the race starts towards the neighbouring village of Ciosa on a forest road, continues on the contour of mountain paths, part of it on a forest road, but also through bright glades and areas of hayfields towards Poiana Cătunenilor. After a few descents and moderate climbs, you reach Lunca Ilvei, followed by a longer, more difficult climb to Poiana lui Gălan. (<https://maraton.viatransilvanica.com/competitii/maraton/>)

The last 14 kilometres to the finish line are along the contour, with small climbs and descents through the forest and then on a forest road, with medium difficulty. The finish line is also on the Tășuleasa

Campus. You run on the dirt track and forest road, only 2 km on asphalt, no steep climbs or descents, no mountainous or rocky sections, and no technical areas. The difference in level is 1,567 meters. The level of difficulty is easy-medium.

(<https://maraton.viatransilvanica.com/competitii/maraton/>)

The start of the mountain bike race is given in the Tășuleasa Social Campus, and the race starts towards the neighbouring village of Ciosa on a forest road, continues on the contour of mountain paths, part of it on a forest road, but also through bright glades and areas of hayfields towards Poiana Cătuneniilor. After a few descents and moderate climbs, you reach Lunca Ilvei, followed by a longer, more difficult climb to Poiana lui Gălan.

(<https://maraton.viatransilvanica.com/competitii/mountain-bike/>)

The last 14 kilometres to the finish line are along the contour, with small climbs and descents through the forest and then on a forest road, with medium difficulty. The finish line is also on the Tășuleasa Campus. The route is dirt and forest road, only 2 km of asphalt, no steep climbs or descents, no mountainous or rocky sections, and no technical areas. The difference in level is 1,567 meters. The level of difficulty is medium.

(<https://maraton.viatransilvanica.com/competitii/mountain-bike/>)

Events such as the Via Transilvanica Marathon contribute significantly to the social development of the Bistrița-Năsăud area by :

A. Strengthening the community: Participation in joint events strengthens the bonds between community members. People have the opportunity to interact, collaborate and share experiences, which contributes to a sense of belonging and solidarity;

B. Volunteering and employment opportunities: Organizing and running events requires the involvement of a large number of volunteers and temporary staff. These opportunities provide practical experience and potential employment for local people;

C. Improved health and well-being: Participation in sporting events such as marathons encourages an active and healthy lifestyle. Social and cultural events can also reduce stress and improve the well-being of participants;

D. Promoting local culture and traditions: Events provide a platform for the presentation and preservation of local culture and traditions. This helps to maintain cultural identity and educate younger generations about their heritage.

#### 4. Conclusion

The present study provided a detailed analysis of the demographic and social dynamics along the Via Transilvanica tourist route in Bistrița-Năsăud County. The results highlight several aspects essential for understanding how this route influences local communities.

First, a significant demographic diversification was observed in the areas adjacent to the route, with an increase in the number of young people and young families settling in these regions. This trend can be attributed to the economic and recreational opportunities offered by the proximity of the tourist route. Secondly, the social analysis revealed a strengthening of community cohesion, thanks to the tourism and cultural activities promoted by Via Transilvanica. These activities facilitated interaction between locals and tourists, contributing to cultural exchange and developing a sense of local pride.

On a social level, Via Transilvanica facilitated an increase in community cohesion and intercultural interactions. The tourist and cultural activities associated with the route encouraged local community participation and promoted a sense of belonging and local pride.

The Via Transilvanica tourist route not only promotes tourism and economic development but also plays a crucial role in the social and demographic revitalization of Bistrița-Năsăud County. Continuing to monitor and sustain these trends is essential to maximize the long-term benefits for local communities.

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## BURNOUT AND COPING STRATEGIES IN FINANCIAL EMPLOYEES

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**Abstract:** *Burnout is a critical issue among employees in the financial sector, where intense stress and constant pressures can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion. The present study explores the causes of burnout and identifies effective coping strategies, designed to reduce the negative impact on employee productivity and health. Through a multidisciplinary approach, the importance of organizational and personal interventions in preventing and managing burnout is highlighted, thus contributing to a healthier and more balanced work environment. Objectives/Hypotheses: Identifying coping strategies among men and women and the relationship with the financial field. Methodology: Analysis of data resulting from specialized tests applied to the subjects included in the research. Results: Burnout and coping strategies influence the quality of employees' work performance. Conclusions: Understanding the effects of burnout and coping strategies is a topic of great importance within organizational and managerial psychology.*

**Keywords:** burnout, coping strategies, financial field, research.

### 1. Introduction

In the financial environment, where pressure and fast-paced work are omnipresent, emotions play a crucial role in determining the mental health of employees; burnout, an extreme form of professional stress, is a serious problem in this industry, and emotions have a significant impact on its occurrence and evolution (Koesten, 2005: 98).

First, it is important to understand that the financial environment is characterized by high demands and constant pressure to perform. Employees in this field are subject to tight deadlines, fluctuations in financial markets and complex responsibilities, all of which contribute to increased stress levels. Emotions such as anxiety, frustration and fear become an integral part of the professional life of these employees and can increase the risk of burnout.

Anxiety is one of the most common emotions encountered in the financial environment, the pressure to achieve results and satisfy customers can generate performance-related anxiety, which can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion over time; In addition, the fear of failure and its associated financial consequences can increase anxiety and worsen professional stress (Jawahar, Mohammed, Schreurs, 2022: 137).

"Frustration is also a common emotion in this environment, employees may be frustrated by the lack of control over situations, excessive bureaucracy and the lack of adequate resources to carry out their tasks; this constant frustration can lead to psychological discomfort and increase the likelihood of developing burnout" (Glaserová, 2019: 34).

### 2. Research Concepts

#### 2.1. Burnout

Burnout is an extreme form of occupational stress that can affect people exposed to high pressures and demands in the work environment. It is important to note that burnout is not just temporary tiredness or exhaustion; it is a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that can have serious consequences on the health and well-being of the individual. Burnout can affect employees in a variety of professional fields, but is often associated with sectors that involve high pressure, tight deadlines and intense responsibilities, such as the financial, medical or technology sectors.

There are several symptoms and signs that can indicate the presence of burnout. These include persistent fatigue and exhaustion, lack of motivation and interest in work, decreased professional performance, increased irritability, social distancing, and even physical and emotional health problems such as headaches, sleep disorders, or anxiety and depression.

Factors that can contribute to burnout include continuous overwork, lack of control over work, or lack of social support and recognition from colleagues and superiors. In the financial sector, for



example, employees can be exposed to high performance demands, pressure to achieve results, and the risk of financial losses, all of which contribute to their stress and exhaustion (Leiter, Bakker and Maslach, 2014).

Another factor that influences the occurrence of burnout is organizational culture. Studies show that organizations that promote a work environment based on excessive competitiveness and rigid control, at the expense of collaboration and flexibility, are more likely to have employees who experience burnout. Thus, an unhealthy work climate can intensify feelings of inadequacy and burnout (Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

Furthermore, fear is a pervasive emotion among employees in the financial sector. Fear of financial loss, fear of costly mistakes, and fear of regulatory compliance consequences are just a few examples. These constant fears can cause high levels of stress and contribute to the depletion of an individual's emotional resources.

Faced with these challenges, managing emotions becomes crucial to preventing burnout in the financial environment. A first step is to become aware of and acknowledge one's own emotions. By developing a deeper understanding of their emotions, employees can identify stressors and develop effective strategies to manage them. Open communication and social support are also important in managing emotions and preventing burnout. Creating a work environment where employees feel free to discuss their stress and anxiety can reduce isolation and promote the sharing of resources and coping strategies. Developing emotion regulation skills can also be beneficial in preventing burnout. Techniques such as mindfulness and meditation can help employees regulate their emotional reactions and maintain their well-being in the face of professional challenges.

In addition to managing emotions at the individual level, it is essential that organizations in the financial sector adopt policies and practices that promote employee well-being. Implementing stress reduction programs, providing resources for counseling, and promoting a work-life balance can contribute to creating a healthier and more sustainable work environment.

In conclusion, emotions play a significant role in the occurrence of burnout in the financial sector. Anxiety, frustration, and fear can amplify the risk of professional exhaustion, affecting the mental health and well-being of employees. By being aware of and appropriately managing these emotions, both at the individual and organizational levels, it is possible to reduce the incidence of burnout and create a healthier and more productive work environment in the financial sector.

Preventing and managing burnout often involves a holistic approach that addresses both environmental and individual factors. Organizations can play an important role in creating a healthy and balanced work environment that promotes employee well-being by implementing stress reduction programs, providing resources for counseling, and promoting work-life balance. Studies suggest that employees who feel empowered and supported by their colleagues and superiors tend to be less affected by burnout (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). At the individual level, it is important for employees to recognize their limits, prioritize their health, and develop skills for managing stress and emotions. Techniques such as mindfulness, regular exercise, and time management can be helpful in maintaining balance and preventing burnout (Wright, Bonett, 1997: 492). Social support also plays an essential role in combating burnout. Studies show that employees who have a strong social support network are less likely to develop symptoms of burnout (Hobfoll, 1989). In conclusion, burnout is a complex and widespread problem in many professional fields. Both individual and organizational efforts are needed to effectively prevent and manage this form of burnout. By creating a healthy balance between personal and professional life, implementing effective stress management strategies, and supporting a healthy work environment, the risks of burnout can be reduced.

## **2.2. Burnout and coping strategies in financial workers**

Burnout is a major problem in the modern workplace, and financial workers are often at the forefront of those affected by this phenomenon. This sector often involves high performance pressures, intense responsibilities, and tight deadlines, which can lead to chronic stress. In the financial environment, characterized by constant fluctuations and economic uncertainty, burnout is becoming an increasingly common challenge. In addition, the risk of burnout is accentuated by the need to comply with strict regulations and cope with a competitive environment.

Recent studies have shown that financial workers are at increased risk of burnout due to the nature of their work. For example, “constantly high performance demands, pressure for immediate results, and fear of financial failure” are factors that can significantly contribute to their emotional and physical exhaustion (Taris, Le Blanc, Schaufeli and Schreurs, 2005). Employees are also often forced to juggle multiple tasks and constantly changing demands, which adds additional stress (Maslach and Leiter, 2016).

#### *Symptoms of burnout in finance*

In finance, burnout can be difficult to recognize initially, as employees are often accustomed to working under constant stress. However, symptoms can build up over time and include persistent fatigue, decreased efficiency at work, difficulty concentrating, and a state of emotional detachment from work tasks and colleagues. “Burnout not only affects employees’ mental and physical health, but also their performance, reducing their ability to work effectively and adapt to new challenges” (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Employees frequently experience increased anxiety, sleep problems, and even the development of conditions such as depression or hypertension.

#### *Factors that drive burnout in the financial sector*

In the financial sector, burnout is often driven by a combination of external and internal factors. External factors include excessive workload, tight deadlines, and the constant pressure to maintain high performance despite unpredictable external circumstances, such as economic changes or market fluctuations. Internal factors, on the other hand, include a perception of lack of control over one’s work and a lack of support from colleagues or management. Another important element is the impact of technology on employees in the financial sector. The rapid pace of technological change, especially in the fintech sector, can increase stress and amplify feelings of inadequacy or burnout. Employees are often required to learn new skills in a very short time, which can lead to a feeling of cognitive overload (Sonnetag and Frese, 2003).

#### *The role of organizations in preventing and managing burnout*

Employers in the financial sector play a key role in preventing and managing burnout. According to research, organizations that promote a healthy work climate and strong social support within the team have happier and more productive employees (Hobfoll, 1989). Introducing organizational wellness programs that provide access to psychological counseling, stress management training, or resources to improve physical health can significantly reduce the risk of burnout (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Also, recognizing employees’ work and providing positive feedback can contribute to creating a positive work environment. “When employees feel that their work is appreciated and recognized, they are less susceptible to emotional and physical exhaustion” (Maslach and Leiter, 2016). On the other hand, an authoritarian management style, with rigid demands and excessive control, is a significant factor contributing to burnout, emphasizing the feeling of lack of control over one’s own career.

### **2.3. Coping Strategies**

Coping strategies are the ways in which we manage our stress and deal with the difficulties and pressures in our lives; these strategies are essential for maintaining mental and emotional health in the face of the challenges we encounter in our professional environment and in our personal lives (Stephenson, DeLongis, 2020: 57). Managing burnout in employees in the financial sector requires the adoption of effective coping strategies, both at the individual and organizational levels. Coping strategies can be divided into two main categories: proactive strategies and reactive strategies. Proactive strategies are those that aim to prevent burnout before it fully sets in. A relevant example is establishing clear boundaries between personal and professional life. Employees in the financial sector, especially those in management positions or fast-paced transaction teams, are often required to work outside of office hours, leading to a work-life imbalance (Wright and Bonett, 1997). Implementing flexible work policies, such as work-from-home or flexible work schedules, can help reduce stress and maintain emotional balance.

Mindfulness is another proactive coping technique that has gained popularity in recent times, with promising results in reducing symptoms of burnout. A study by Hülshager et al. (2013) demonstrated that practicing mindfulness can significantly reduce stress in the workplace and improve employees’ ability to cope with high demands. Techniques such as meditation and controlled breathing help employees regain their composure and manage their emotions more effectively, which can prevent the onset of burnout.

Reactive strategies are those that intervene when burnout is already present. These include psychological counseling or personalized coaching. Once the symptoms of burnout have been identified, it is essential that the employee receive support, either through individual therapy or professional coaching programs. “Early interventions are key in preventing the worsening of burnout and its long-term effects” (Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema, 2005). Coaching and therapy can help employees develop effective stress management techniques, such as cognitive restructuring or time management. Problem-focused coping involves directly addressing the source of stress or the problem, while emotion-focused coping involves managing and regulating emotional reactions to stress (Montero-Marin, Prado-Abril, Piva Demarzo, Gascon and García-Campayo, 2014).

Problem-focused coping involves clearly identifying the source of stress or the problem and taking concrete steps to resolve it. This may include analyzing and solving the problem, actively planning action steps, seeking relevant information and advice, and accepting control over the situation. For example, if a person is facing a difficult task at work, they might make a detailed plan to approach the task step by step and seek advice from colleagues or managers. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping involves managing and regulating emotional reactions to stress. This may include openly expressing emotions, using relaxation and de-escalation techniques, cognitive refocusing, and seeking social support and connections. For example, if a person feels overwhelmed by stress and anxiety, they might practice deep breathing techniques or meditation to calm their mind and body, and share their feelings with a trusted friend for emotional support.

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1. Research objectives

1. Identifying the relationship between burnout and coping strategies in female financial employees.
2. Identifying the differences between men and women in terms of coping strategies.

#### 3.2. Research hypotheses

1. It is assumed that there is a correlation between burnout and coping strategies in women for positive refocusing.
2. It is assumed that there are significant differences in terms of refocusing attention as a coping mechanism depending on the gender of the participants.

#### 3.3. Applied instruments

The instruments used in this research were the following questionnaires:

- Maslach Burnout Questionnaire
- Cognitive-Emotional Coping Questionnaire (CERQ)

#### 3.4. Analysis and interpretation of the results

1. It is assumed that there is a correlation between burnout and coping strategies in women for positive refocusing.

*Table 1-Results of hypothesis 1*

Dimension	Gender	Normality Tests		Pearson/ Spearman	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Statistic	Sig.		
Positiv refocusing	Female	.086	.200*	<b>Pearson= -.451*</b>	.012
Burnout	Female	.135	.187		

2. It is hypothesized that there is significant differential attention to refocusing as a coping mechanism by gender of participants.

*Tabel 2-Rezultate hypothesis 2*

Dimensions	Gender	Normality Tests Shapiro-Wilk		T-test / Levene	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Statistic	Sig.		
	male	.141	.100		
	female			<b>Levene Sig=</b>	
Refocusing attention		.109	.200*	<b>.145</b>	<b>.001</b>

Thus, we applied the Pearson test for a parametric correlation, obtaining a correlation coefficient of  $-.451^*$ . Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed, so there is a correlation between burnout and coping strategies in women for positive refocusing.

Burnout is often the result of a combination of factors, including excessive pressure, continuous overload, lack of control over work, lack of recognition and support from colleagues and superiors, as well as the lack of balance between professional and personal life. In work environments where demands are high and deadlines are tight, such as the financial, medical or technological sectors, the risk of burnout can be increased.

Recent studies suggest that there is a significant link between the level of burnout and the positive refocusing strategies adopted by women. Burnout, an increasingly common problem in contemporary society, is often the result of chronic stress and overexertion in the professional or personal environment.

Women, in particular, may be susceptible to burnout due to the multiple roles they fulfill in society, such as their professional careers, family responsibilities, and other social commitments. (for more details see Otovescu, Otovescu, 2010) In an attempt to cope with this stress, they resort to various coping strategies to maintain their balance and regain their positive energy.

Positive refocusing is one of these strategies, involving approaching problems or stress with an optimistic perspective and focusing on the positive aspects of the situation. Women who use this strategy try to find meaning and purpose in their activities, find internal resources to cope with difficulties, and cultivate their personal resources to maintain their emotional balance.

Research suggests that women who adopt effective positive refocusing strategies are less susceptible to burnout and can better manage the stress and pressures of daily life. Understanding these links between burnout and coping strategies may provide a solid basis for developing interventions and support programs designed to help women manage stress and maintain their emotional and mental well-being.

After applying the normality test, it is found that the distribution of scores is normal. According to the results in Table 1, the sig for the female gender is 0.200, while for the male it is 0.100.

Consequently, we used the Levene test for a parametric distribution, obtaining a sig of 0.001. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed, indicating the existence of significant differences in attention refocusing as a coping mechanism between the genders of the participants.

Attention refocusing involves directing attention from sources of stress or discomfort to more positive or constructive aspects of the situation. If this assumption is confirmed, it could suggest that there are differences in the adaptation strategies adopted by women and men in the face of stress or daily pressures. Studying these differences could contribute to the development of more effective and personalized interventions for managing stress and mental health, depending on the individual's gender.

## Conclusions

In the financial context, where pressure and the fast pace of work are constant, the impact of emotions on employees' mental health is crucial. Burnout, as an extreme form of professional stress, is a serious concern in this industry, and emotions play a significant role in its onset and progression. In this essay, we aim to investigate the role of emotions in generating burnout among employees in the financial sector, examining the ways in which negative emotions can amplify the risk of burnout and identifying effective strategies for managing them.

Coping strategies are the tools we use to adapt to stressful situations and to deal with the difficulties and pressures in our lives. They play an essential role in maintaining our mental and emotional

health in the face of the challenges we face, whether within the professional environment or in our personal lives. By identifying and using effective coping strategies, we can better manage stress levels, build psychological resilience, and promote improved overall well-being. These strategies may include relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, recreational activities, open communication with others, finding constructive solutions to problems encountered, and other practices that help us face life's challenges with more confidence and resilience.

In conclusion, this study highlights a significant link between burnout and coping strategies in women, especially in terms of positive refocusing. Data analysis confirmed the initial hypothesis, demonstrating that these coping strategies are associated with lower levels of Burnout among women.

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## METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF PAUL FIREBAND

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**Abstract:** *This paper seeks to explain the idea of methodological pluralism according to Fireband and its impact on the course of science in its recent developments at the epistemological level and the human and social level as well, considering that the crisis of science is primarily a human crisis. This idea was born according to Fireband from a deep criticism of the idea of unilateralism, which he considers to be a naive idea and which It made him take a completely different view than the scientific statements that preceded him. This study concluded that the idea of methodological pluralism or methodological anarchy within Fireband's epistemological system has its legitimacy in view of the openness of science to new, richer horizons, and this openness is not available to it unless we move beyond the dogma of a single method, and this different view of the method and science together had an impact on aspects The different social and historical aspects of man, and this is why his criticism is considered a radical criticism.*

**Keywords:** Methodological pluralism, epistemology, the crisis of science, the dogma of method, radical criticism.

### 1. Introduction

Paul Fireband (1924-1994) is considered one of the most prominent contemporary philosophers of science who presented a critical reading of the philosophy of science that differs from its predecessors, and is characterized by a revolutionary character over all scientific methods that came before him and over all known patterns in the field of science and its philosophy, to the point where some came to call him a philosopher of science. The troublemaker (Hamdan, 2013: 113) and the anarchist, due to the intensity of his revolt against all current epistemological patterns and his opposition to scientific rationality and Western science in general. In this article, we will attempt to examine the foundations from which Paul Fireband set out to build his revolution against science, based on a concept that is considered central to Fireband's epistemology, which is the concept of methodological pluralism, given that this concept was the product of a specific system to which the philosopher adhered, a system that took on an evolutionary character based on His criticism of the prevailing methods of science and proof of the inconsistency of these methods, leading to an alternative that complements these methods and helps them more open to new possibilities that take science out of its dogmatism.

### 2. Problem of the study

In this article, we try to answer the following problem:

Is it possible to talk about a single approach to science, or are there other methodological alternatives? What is the position of man within this pluralism, given that the crisis of science, from Fireband's perspective, is primarily a human crisis?

This problem is divided into partial questions:

What are the circumstances and factors that led to the emergence of the idea of methodological pluralism?

What is anarchism in Fireband's epistemology?

What is methodological pluralism and what is its role in the development of science according to Fireband?

### 3. The importance of the study

This research paper aims to try to answer a problem whose echo is still hesitant in epistemological philosophical thought to this day, evolving as a result of discussions between the dialectics of a single approach and multiple approaches. Considering that what Fireband achieved is considered an advanced link from what preceded it, and thus the idea of research into the necessity of methodological pluralism grew.

#### **4. Purpose of the study**

The aim of the research is not limited to simply presenting the foundations and conditions of methodological pluralism in Paul Fireband's epistemology. Rather, we aim to explain the importance and nature of this cognitive theory and its implications for science and the advancement of human knowledge, through a cognitive 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. The circumstances and factors that led to the emergence of Fireband's idea of methodological pluralism:**

##### **6.1. Intellectual factors and conditions:**

The one who studies the life of this remarkable personality will find that he grew up in an epistemological environment that had a direct influence in building his pluralistic intellectual project, as he was born in the city of Vienna, grew up in it, and studied in its universities, which at that time and beyond were a center of radiation and activity, scientific, philosophical, and epistemological. It suffices to mention that it was the headquarters of the poles of our circle (logical positivism), including Schlick, Carnap, Weizmann, Wittgenstein, Karl Popper, and other figures of contemporary thought, art, and science (Al-Sayyed, 1997: 61).

##### **6.2. The epistemological aspect (critical tendency):**

Another motive that shaped the perception and anarchist position of science was the contact with philosophers of science, especially at the University of Vienna, and in particular the critical rationalism of Karl Popper, which reduced the problem of science to the method. We demonstrate that famous position of Popper in his book *The Logic of Scientific Revelation*, in which he dealt with the scientific method from the negative side in order to form that Popper's critical tendency, as well as the scientific revolution that physics witnessed, especially with Einstein, which represented a major rift in the stages of physical scientific knowledge,

Relativity became the basic characteristic of science instead of the idea of the absolute and the constant, as well as the law of uncertainty of the physicist Hansenberg, who argued that it was not possible to determine the electron and control its speed and location, thus collapsing with it one of the scientific principles, the regularity of deterministic phenomena, which classical science has always praised. (Al-Jabri, 1986: 10)

##### **6.3. Cultural and psychological aspect:**

What distinguishes Western society is the cultural and social pluralism that lives under democracy, and Fairband's influence on this idea appears when we were shocked by his strange position in dealing with scientific knowledge, as he believes that the best way to deal with this scientific knowledge is the method of free voting in fair elections, and in this way it gives to the people the opportunity to express their opinion. According to him, we accept laws and scientific facts without submitting them to a vote and making it a basis for making important decisions. (Al-Sayed, 1997: 147) The anthropological aspect and democracy were a positive aspect, not a negative one, revealing to us the role of difference and customs in building his scientific project. On the other hand, this man was distinguished by his extensive travel, which had a reflection on his thinking and the formation of his pluralistic awareness. All of these formulations were the beginning of the formation of Fireband's idea of methodological pluralism, which eventually made him recognize all human methods and knowledge alike and establish the idea of anarchism.

#### **7. Anarchism in Fireband's Epistemology:**

The relativity of scientific knowledge according to Fireband and his critical tendency towards ancient philosophies led to the establishment of a contemporary view of the scientific method, which was linked to the idea of anarchism. So what do we mean by the idea of anarchism? Referring to dictionaries, we find that anarchism is a Greek term derived from the Greek word *avapxia*, which means without a ruler, king, or president. (Greek, 1990: 276)

This term is translated as the word anarhia (anarchy), which is made up of two parts: the first is an, which means opposite or negation, and the second is arhia, which means authority. The literal translation of the word is no authority or no system. (Frank, 2004: 25) In the philosophical dictionary of Jamil Saliba, anarhia is the defect that arises from the loss of directing authority, or from its failure to carry out its functions, or from a conflict of tendencies and desires, or a lack of order and arrangement. (Saliba, 1982: 168)

Anarchism is a social and political ideology that glorifies individualism and volition. The human will plays a decisive role in moving the wheel of history because it unleashes imagination and freedom of choice. The will is not governed by a fixed law and is not surrounded by logic. Anarchism inspired its concepts from the ideas of great philosophers such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, who prevailed over the will over the mind and made Among them is the true inner essence of the personality, as it is what drives psychological life and behavior Existence is no longer a development of the absolute idea or logos (Badawi, 1977: 05). Thus, anarchism is a doctrine that calls for the abolition of political control, stating that the state is the greatest enemy of the individual and that its abolition eliminates pests and evils. In general, it means the destruction of authority and state institutions on the grounds that they are against humanity and therefore it is We go rejects every political or social restriction that eliminates the individual, but rather makes the latter a fundamental focus within these different systems. (Wahba, 1997: 166)

Fireband argued that there is a difference between philosophical relativism and epistemological anarchism. The former considers all traditional heritage or theories to be true or false in equal proportions, while epistemological anarchism emphasizes absurd and banal matters in the hope that this will lead to new forms of life. (Fairband, 2018: 25) But what distinguishes anarchism in Feyerabend's epistemology?

Contemporary epistemology according to Feyerabend has been characterized by a critical tendency toward the scientific method, by undermining confidence in it, removing centralization from it, and replacing it with the idea of anarchism or methodological pluralism. In his criticism of the rules of the scientific method, he ends up rejecting the idea of a unity of scientific method, which is the only rule that Feyerabend claims to accept in His controversial slogan, "Everything passes," is the only principle he accepts that does not advance the progress of science The only principle that Fairband claims to accept in his controversial slogan "Everything passes" is the only principle that he accepts that does not advance the progress of science, since the conviction that one perspective provides the truth is blind to the truths provided by other perspectives, and belief in a truth often What results is some repression. (Fairband, 2017: 20) Thus, his intellectual project is based on rejecting that classical perception that is based on that methodological authoritarianism. Therefore, according to Fireband, anarchism contributes to building knowledge and science and eliminates the idea of the distinction that exists between scientific knowledge and non-scientific knowledge, and this is what makes it different from political anarchism, which seeks to destroy all the rules that relate to aspects of life. Thus, Fireband presented a new approach in the philosophy of contemporary science that was not known by the ancient epistemology of By stripping science of the constraints of science And his call for methodological liberation, especially when he emphasized the idea of methodological and epistemological anarchism, this concept that he moved from a political nature to an epistemological one. The idea of the existence of a scientific method that includes fixed, precise, strict, and absolute principles that help to carry out the process of scientific research is an incoherent idea according to Fireband. Indeed, this idea faces logical, historical, and practical difficulties. Infinite when compared with the facts of the history of science When we read the history of science carefully and precisely, we find one rule, no matter how acceptable and based on strong epistemological foundations, that is, at one time or another, violated and violated. (Al-Sayed, 1997: 146)

Accordingly, Fireband calls for science not to be captive to a specific method because its reality is reduced to chaos (a chaotic project). Accordingly, science at its core is not systematic knowledge. To say that method is the fixed element of science may be understood to mean that science has fixed methods that do not change, and this is an understanding that does not express About the truth of science because many sciences have changed their methods with the progress of science. (Zakaria, 1984: 25-26)

Thus, epistemological anarchism is a contemporary philosophical vision founded by Fairband, which is based on making science open to all knowledge and methods after destroying that monolithic vision of the method, because understanding the truth of science is conditional on believing in the idea of anarchism, which is one of the contemporary concepts that is associated with Fairband's philosophy, and this appears clearly in many of his author's works. The famous *Against the Method*, *Three Dialogues on Knowledge*, and *Goodbye, Mind*.



## **8. Methodological pluralism and its role in the development of science according to Fireband**

The idea of methodological pluralism according to Fireband, or what he expresses it, is based on the principle of the abundance of methods and theories through the idea of anarchism and non-methodology, which made him mock the question of the appropriate method for science? He considers it a false question that does not express the truth of scientific knowledge or science, which is what classical epistemology fell into, which centered on methodological monism. For him, methodological pluralism represents anarchism or epistemological anarchism. If we want a title for Fireband's philosophy of science, we can call it anarchic rationalism, "which strongly rejects the establishment of cognitive authority with a specific method and also rejects the establishment of authority for science itself" (Al-Khouli, 2002: 422).

The idea of relativity and pluralism, which was clearly demonstrated in Feyerabend's philosophy, made his philosophy critical and carries the meaning of revolutionary over everything that is ancient for the sake of the development of knowledge, especially the idea of method, because the scientific philosophical spirit imposes that position, because what distinguishes the scientist is his ability to test the prevailing opinions at the popular level or Ordinarily or in scientific circles, or both together, with a critical mind that is not led by the authority of spread and fame and only accepts what appears to it. (Zakaria, 1984: 212)

Fireband says, "My purpose is not to replace a set of general rules with another, different set, but rather my purpose is to convince the reader that all research methods in their entirety, even the most obvious ones, have limits" (Fairband, 2018: 21), to confirm through his epistemic position that All scientific methods contain shortcomings, limitations and drawbacks, which make comparison between them impossible and therefore they are all valid for scientific knowledge.

Since the mistake that previous philosophers of science made was establishing new methods through rejection of previous methods, it is said that if we contemplate past history, we will find that in contrast to every rule that we want to defend, there are circumstances in which progress can be achieved by breaking this hall, and this means that research methods At best it is based on approximate rules. (Fairband, 2018: 21)

Accordingly, Fireband wanted to establish, through this methodological pluralism, a systematic democracy that accepts all methodologies, just as political democracy accepts the coexistence of all races and cultures, because scientific progress is not a linear progress toward truth or a process of coming together toward an ideal point of view, but rather an expanding ocean of alternatives, each of which pushes The others lead to greater clarity in the details, and they all contribute, through a process of competition, to the growth of our understanding. Science does not have its own method that distinguishes it from any other intellectual activity.

Or makes it worthy of a greater degree of respect because it provides true, honest knowledge, as the idea of a scientific method that includes strict, unchanging, and absolutely binding principles faces great difficulties when compared to the results of historical research, as there is no single rule, no matter how possible it may seem or based on epistemological foundations. It is well established and has been overtaken at some point. (Fairband, 2018: 11-19)

On this basis, Fireband rejects consistency and absoluteness in his project, especially the methodological one, because the history of scientific research is change and multiplicity, the latter of which is considered the main pillar on which his thought was based, and this is what appears clearly in the famous book *Against the Method*. Pluralism is an essential characteristic of scientific knowledge or science because it makes the circle of scientific knowledge expand to include all human knowledge, whether scientific or non-scientific, according to the old concept, especially the experimental and positivist concept.

Because no matter how necessary and basic the rules of the method that philosophers of science rant about seem necessary and fundamental to us, there are always circumstances that require not only ignoring these rules, but adopting their opposite. (Al-Sayyid, 1997: 147) For the phrase "everything is valid in science" to express the truth of science, there is no methodological or cognitive preference. The principle that science must recognize is progressive scientific pluralism as opposed to static monism. (Fairband, 2018: 12)

In his book "*Against Method*", Fireband attempts to lay out a preliminary outline for an anarchist theory of knowledge, the first edition of which was published in 1975, which has had numerous reprints and translations into many languages, and which we consider to be the final nail in the coffin of that

ahistorical justificatory view of scientific knowledge and its central question. In doing so, he attempts to use traditional philosophical theories to explain the goals, value, and basic data of science. Among these theories, and most notably the theory of the logical positivists and Popper's positivism, he considers the question about method to be a false question, and that science has never been the interpretation of one specific method, but rather a chaotic project (anarchic enterprise), that is, it does not recognize any authority, and all methods can work in it. Depending on the timing of the scientific event. (Faisal, 2024: 154)

### **9. From methodological anarchism to humanism:**

Fireband's epistemology and his anarchist project carry within it a humanistic tendency. He was an advocate of the humanistic position through which he seeks to achieve the greatest possible freedom for man by eliminating all restrictions and obligations that limit man from realizing his humanity. This is evident from his saying, "Science is essentially anarchic work." "Theoretical anarchism is more humane than science and more likely to promote progress than the methodological alternatives of law and order. (Al-Sayed, 1997: 148) But where does this humanism appear?

This humanistic tendency appears in Fireband's call to return to what is imaginative and metaphysical, that is, the non-scientific cognitive aspect in the term of positivism, because many ideas have become reality after they were seen as false illusions, turning imagination into reality, and scientists, if they want science, must follow their imagination, according to his expression. Rationality, objectivity, and logic have become classic terms that do not express the essence of scientific knowledge. Rather, the latter has become associated with a person freed from the constraints of method and its authority. Fireband's book *Against Method* was a plan for an anarchic theory of knowledge in which he attacks authoritarianism in all its forms and the authority of science in particular, and elevates the importance of imagination. Before reason, here he says, "Let people free themselves from the chains of systematic rules and choose whatever they want without pressure or coercion." (Faisal, 2024: 158) He believes that if it is possible to achieve progress in the field of science, this will only come about if scientists break all the perceived rules of rationality, and the one rule that Feyerabend agrees with is his strange slogan, "Everything passes" (Al-Sayyid, 1997: 148)

Based on his humanistic tendency, Fireband calls for scientific theories to stem from the free choice of man, because in light of anarchism there is equality between different types of knowledge, as he equates the achievements of traditional medicine, such as Chinese acupuncture, witchcraft, and others. Indeed, he goes even greater than that. Fireband advocated on thinking based on myths and considering it an integral part of correct human knowledge that constitutes the social heritage, (Fairband, 2018: 30)

### **10. The epistemological limits of Fireband's idea of methodological pluralism**

The intellectual project that Fireband came up with, represented by methodological pluralism, was able to solve the biggest problem in the philosophy of science, which appeared strongly in the nineteenth century as well as the twentieth century, especially with Karl Popper, which is the issue of method. However, the epistemological conception that Fireband presented was not free from criticism. Many philosophers of science, especially his contemporaries, also opposed him. Firebandian anarchism is the essence of everything good in science. On this basis, it abolished the boundaries separating scientific studies from non-scientific studies, defended metaphysics in exchange for science, equated tribal ideas based on reason and social and cultural inheritance, and believed in equality between different ideologies in a democratic society. Rather, it defended myth and astrology and considered them more advanced than scientific theories. From this, Fireband can be considered one of the most ardent enemies of rationalism and science alike, and therefore he is against humanity. At the time he wanted to address the problem of science, the depth of its crisis, and at the time he called for the principle that theories were abundant and scientists demanded that they be achieved, he cast a shadow of doubt on this principle and even on his entire philosophy. (Faisal, 2024: 158) This is what made Thomas Kuhn consider that metaphysical issues are non-scientific issues, in which we agree with Karl Popper.

### **11. Conclusion**

The idea of methodological pluralism presented by Fireband contributed to deepening the outlook on the idea of method and human knowledge in general, which attempted to eliminate the barriers between science and non-science, so that knowledge could be viewed from a comprehensive perspective that accommodates all different ideologies and alternatives, which contribute to enriching

the human experience and opening it up to the unknown and raising the flames. Everything is permissible and everything passes. Thus, Fireband was able to present a liberal vision for science and mankind that transcended both ancient and modern epistemology.

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## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TRANSHUMANISM. UNESCO AND EVOLUTIONARY HUMANISM

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**Abstract:** *The last century has seen the implementation of totalitarian and despotic regimes all over the world, Eastern Europe, the former czarist empire, and China being some good examples in this sense. The lure of utopia has led to the imposition of regimes and ideologies that caused an infinite amount of pain and suffering without delivering the promised goods. Although Marxism and Communism (albeit not only them but also Fascism, Nazism, and a few others) as such are materialistic and atheistic, they function like a religion and have enchanted the minds and hearts of many. The present-day world is not dis-encharmed and the sacred banned from it. It has shifted. This enchantment has produced other totalitarian and despotic ideologies that are rooted deep in the past. Their expression are new kinds of religion. An example thereof can be seen in Julian Huxley's evolutionary humanism and the blueprint for UNESCO, which must build the condition for unifying the world mind and allow man to be the steward or lord of the evolution.*

**Keywords:** enchantment, religion, tyranny, totalitarianism, social engineering.

### 1. Introduction

It is usually assumed that the present-day world is fully secularized and that religion has left the place, being replaced by a so-called rational and pragmatic mankind that dispenses with religion. As some authors have shown, the myth of disenchantment of modernity is exactly that: a myth or worse a fairy-tale, the mythology of the age without myth and enchantment. In the nineteenth century, one could find occultists, magicians, and scientists in the same room. A good example of this is Marie Curie and her husband who regularly visited a medium and were convinced that there is much more to reality than what the scientific quantitative approach affirms (Josephson-Storm 2017: 1-3). That such prominent scientists would take part in such activities as occultism seems a scandal from a certain point of view that assumes a certain perspective on modernity, the supposed age of adulthood of mankind. The standard model of understanding modern world is the one expressed by Max Weber in his formula *die Entzauberung der Welt*, a formula that still blinds and binds us today. Modernization is considered to be the same as the apparition of instrumental reason, the gradual alienation of humanity from its natural environment, and the production of a bureaucratic and technological world devoid of mystery, wonder, or meaning. It is equated with secularization as the process of elimination of the supernatural out from society and the world. There are some religious revivals too, but science and magic are still considered to be opposites. Still the basic attitude – *die Gesinnung* – in those two endeavors is the same: imposing man's will upon the forces that are operating in nature and using them for man's own ends. Universal mechanism – the clockwork mechanism is not very far away from magic, even in its contemporary form, which is inspired by cybernetics, information technologies, or organizational sciences. According to Josephson-Storm, the birth and development of the social sciences took place in special environments where one could partake in theosophy, spiritualism, magic, and that representatives of those sciences did have contact with the so-called occult. Max Müller, Max Weber, and Marcel Mauss are some names that met European esotericism. One should not forget another great name of philosophy that had contact with the occult and has strongly influenced modern and contemporary life, directly and indirectly through Karl Marx, G.W. Hegel and his philosophy of the self-actualization of the Absolute Spirit, a paradigm that can be found in the Hermetic tradition, in Jakob Boehme and others – Nicolai von Kusa or John Scotus Erigena and their not-so-Christian theologies. Modernity is associated thus with the myth or religion of progress, being at the same time the expression of a break with the past, with the affirmation of novelty, a kind of periodization, but also a kind of localization since some countries were identified as the wellspring of it. For France, Britain was the source of modernity and for what is now Germany, France was the model.

Modernity is a qualifier applied to different things ranging from artistic and philosophical currents, peculiar historical ruptures, sociological processes, urbanization, industrialization, and different types of rationalization (Josephson-Storm, 2017: 8). The critique of modernity accomplished by the Frankfurter School is based on the classical model, although some conclusions that people like Marcuse make are right, especially when it is about the instrumental and technological reason as a new force of oppression. The

oppressive and negative role of the technical system was described by Jacques Ellul, even if he does not share the same views with the members of the Frankfurt School. The critique of the Frankfurt Schools can be summed up as follows: through science and technique mankind objectives nature and the same process applies to man too, man becoming an object of the same instrumental reason. One should not take for granted the opposition between myth and reason, reason and religion, and so on. The concepts of science and religion that are now universally used were born in Europe and so in contradistinction to another notion, that of superstition (Josephson-Storm, 2017: 14). This concept was meant to devalue certain beliefs or certain forms of knowledge. In the end, superstition began to mean something that was not scientific. Though magic/superstition was denied and marginalized through the years, it still came through in the new age of modernity and rational science. It didn't evaporate as expected by some circles. Religion becomes superstition in the eyes of some representatives of the official science, replacing magic in the role of superstition. If organized religion fades, it does not mean that people won't turn to other forms of enchantment like the beliefs in spiritualism, for example, or to forms of belief imported from elsewhere, like India. Fear of disenchantment and despiritualization led to the rise of spiritualism and other occult movements and from there, the birth of religious studies (Josephson-Storm, 2017: 19). The preoccupation with the paranormal, or even with cryptids, movies and TV series about or with witches, superheroes, vampires, parallel worlds, aliens, beliefs in psychic powers, in ghost, demonic possession, etc. prove the persistence of a magical and mythical background for so-called secularized culture, at least in the United States. Belief in the paranormal is practically a kind of norm, while not believing in it is restricted to a minority (Josephson-Storm, 2017: 25-26). The groups that do not go well along with the belief in the paranormal are defined in religious terms, for example, Evangelical Christians. Meanwhile, they tend to believe that ghosts, apparitions, and aliens are caused by the demons or witches. A form of disenchantment lets another form of enchantment in. Belief in the supernatural can lead to disenchantment (Josephson-Storm, 2017: 29), more precisely when one believes a variant of monotheism/deism. Disenchantment, as Josephson-Storm, shows can be found in some fairy-tales from the British islands, fairytales that lament the departure of the folk of the fairies. Such a view is expressed even by other people who assert this as a matter of fact. One can wager to affirm that the steel cage of modernity is the product of another kind of enchantment, whose effect on human reality will be described here.

## **2. Modern world is enchanted**

The history of the modern world hides many surprises. The standard interpretation of modernity is not a true depiction of historical reality. The sacred did not disappear from the world. The world is still sacralized, but the sacred has changed its object and changed its kind. It no longer pertains to the transcendent divinity of Christianity or the Neoplatonic One – although this element is still present. It pertains to other objects and finds its expressions in different types of religion, which do not seek to build or express a relationship to the transcendent cause of reality. A religion is not necessarily built around an experience of God, or gods, but it can center around progress or man, or a political form, and so on. As Jacques Ellul observed the present-day world is full of sacred, full of different sorts of religions such as communism, Maoism, Ecologism, Revolutionism, Emancipation, etc. The political enemy is sacred, the wars are religious – ideological, and revolution is identified by some groups with a godly act (Ellul, 2004: 83). Social movements are sacralized, and so-called victims are sacralized (immigrants, minorities, and in a certain way nature itself). Nature and the cosmos lost their sacred aura, which has been transferred to other domains, but mythical thought has not vanished. Myth belongs to mankind as such, even if its contents differ from an age to another. Myth, symbol and metaphor are coextensive to human thought.

The present-day world is caught in the power of the myth despite imagining itself as the age of reason and pragmatism. Myths are continuously produced and the ones that are now invading the consciousness of mankind are different from the older ones one is accustomed to finding in different ancient mythologies. Such modern expressions of mythical thought are the myth of development, underdevelopment, progress, revolution, etc. And last, but not least, there are two values that enjoy religious significance, namely science and technology. Mankind is caught in the myth of development (under-development), of self-management, of man as the maker of his own history, of growth or degrowth nowadays, of revolution, of building one world governed by an unelected corps of people – technocracy, and of transhumanism and post-humanism. Some of those can be seen as a subset of the belief in emancipation, as the ends of the process of progress/evolution. If the Christian message is no longer heard, this is because mankind has not reached the peak of rationality and maturity as the Enlightenment would like to make the world think. The rise of instrumental reason and technology is supposed to have chased away the magic and the enchantment from the world and reduced everything to mechanism – be it in sense

of classical physics or in a modern sense, which had reduced man and life to information processing machines. Contrary to his view, modern society presents another image. Society has not been emancipated from the enchantment of different types of religions and metaphysics. These religions might be new or relatively new and not always acknowledged as such. One of those is the religion of technology or the industrial religion as Saint-Simon would express it. Christianity is now confronted by a multiplicity of religions, of beliefs that makes it much more difficult to be heard. The message of the Christian faith, as Ellul puts it, refers to the Truth, but today man has many truths at his disposal, many myths and theories that pretend to offer truth or many truths.

One of those is the religion of technology and technocracy. Not science and rationality are the main obstacles of Christianity, but other belief systems – even secular religions and their disguises. Central to these new religions is in different guises the belief of the self-deification of man by means of technology and social engineering, an idea that permeates and in-forms our lives, even if we like it or not. The spiritual and mental structures that make the infrastructure of such intellectual constructions is the belief in the progress and evolution of the human race. Transhumanism is an expression therefor and it can be seen as official orientation of the world institutions like the United Nations and its agencies like UNESCO whose underlying purpose is to promote the instauration of a world order that leads to a stage of development of humanity that Teilhard de Chardin named the Omega point. Julian Huxley's book on the role and function of UNESCO proves this point.

A good example of technocracy and messianism can be found in the work of Julian Huxley. His booklet on UNESCO offers an insight into the ideas that undergird such institutions. Such a view is expressed by Julian Huxley in his booklet on the role and purpose of UNESCO and in his conviction that humanity is the peak product of comic evolution/progress and that man is the stewardship of this process, which man can direct. This organization is bound by two sets of aims. One is international, that is UNESCO exists to serve the ends of the UN, ends which pertain to the whole of humanity. These ends have been established not by the people, though but by a number of thinkers and politicians, which think they are the saviors of the planet. The other aim is to promote all aspects of education, culture, etc. Peace has to be built and the condition of achieving it is to establish it on the intellectual and moral solidarity of man (Huxley, 1947: 5). Assuring peace and the dignity of man cannot be built solely on political and economic arrangements. The preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO authored by the former British prime minister Atlee has engraved this idea, whose realization demands the total unanimity of the people in the quest for a better world, and their lasting and sincere support to the process of creating a world peace. The objective of the organization is "advancing through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the people of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind, for which the United Nations Organization was established and which its charter proclaims" (Huxley, 1947: 5). The end of advancing this mutual and global understanding of all people depends on the use of all means of mass communication, propaganda, and indoctrination. Since creating unanimity and universal consent are necessary maintaining, increasing, and diffusing knowledge is also in play. Those are the means to achieve the desired result. Culture, knowledge, education, and science are objects of interest and activity of the organization since they represent key areas of human life and through them ideas and conviction can be imprinted in the hearts and soul of the individuals. To this task comes the one concerning information and its spreading through mass communication – the press, TV, cinema, radio, and nowadays the internet. One could say that censorship should be added to this list.

Huxley insists to accept a qualitative dimension to knowledge and not only a quantitative one. Therefore, science has to be taken in its broadest sense, referring to all human intellectual endeavors, knowledge and learning, from mathematics to theology, physics, sociology, philosophy and so on. Their practical applications, too. Arts and culture come to the purvey of UNESCO since both of are expressions of the individual and society. UNESCO has to concern itself with culture in a second sense, of cultivating the mind and in the sense of the material and material apparatus of the entire mankind. Cultural backwardness is not desirable from the point of evolutionary humanism, because this would be a hindrance to the progress of mankind, a hindrance to the agenda UNESCO is designed to contribute to. It would limit the progress of the world's inhabitants; they wouldn't be accessible to the tentacles of UNESCO and its social engineers. It encompasses everything, humanity as a whole, not just individual aspects of life – the duty of advancing the common welfare of humanity. This advancement depends on the correct application of science to human life -social, biological, psychological, etc. The same process must take place in the realm of spiritual and emotional satisfaction. The right application of arts is demanded in the realm of spiritual and emotional satisfaction and UNESCO has to play an important role in it.

The main end of UNESCO is to accomplish a comprehensive study of all higher activities of humanity, to promote them and their usages in a coordinated manner, under a certain set of aims (Huxley, 1947: 27). Just studying is not enough, you must apply, as Bruce Lee put it. Not only UNESCO has to study all these problems in a comprehensive manner and in a correlated, holistic way, it has also the role of guidance in promoting all its policies from theory to practice and guiding individuals and governing bodies to the right application. This agency of the United Nations is a very peculiar and important, even when one thinks that it deals only with education, a process that characterizes only mankind (Huxley, 1947: 29). Applying art in a wide manner to the sphere of human activities, spreading it further to bring balance in the life individuals, is a task incumbent to this world-wide organization. Technological progress, industry, and concern with day-to-day problems and with earning daily bread have disrupted the life of individuals, affecting their spiritual and cultural life in a negative way. This must be changed and equilibrium must be restored. Art plays an important role in this, but not only art. A kind of ascetic discipline is needed. To stimulate and elevate the quality of life of the people another task has to be fulfilled, namely the act of disciplining the mind to produce mystical states and other results, which are purported expressions of spiritual satisfaction; applying psychological techniques to government and preventing the abuse of democracy is another area for UNESCO (Huxley, 1947: 28).

From all the aforementioned ideas, one can rightfully conclude that UNESCO is hence to be understood as a completely technocratic organization, and a totalitarian one at that. Efficiency is a requirement to engineer world peace and the elevation of the quality of life. And technology is not limited to material realm. There is technique to write a poem, to think clearly and correctly – logic, to meditate, to interrogate, to organize things, etc. To be effective, UNESCO has to find out the causes that create problems and troubles in people's lives. Researching the causes and mechanisms of the issues people face in their material and spiritual lives, discovering the causes that prevent progress, or that distort the doings oriented to is a necessary prerequisite and a tool for the social engineer. UNESCO must promote the efficiency of this technical process, as he dubbed it (Huxley, 1947: 28). Invading the life of the people and of the private sphere or even the body is a consequence of this technocratic program.

The approach should be holistic, and the research has to correlate science and art to each other in their application and to a general scale of values, so as to be able to discover the general direction of evolution. Education has a special role in this process because there would be no advancement of the pool of knowledge that makes up the social tradition that furthers the progress of humanity. Education should be lifelong and not only to give individuals the capacity to earn a livelihood or to ascend socially. Only through it can society and mankind become aware of their destiny and role as a trustee of evolution and thereby enabling themselves to improve and steer evolution/progress. Education is a tool for furthering the process of achieving world unity, and as such is for utmost importance for UNESCO. It fulfills an instrumental role. Promoting literacy is a step toward this goal just as helping underdeveloped lands, but all of this is not for the sake of those countries and culture. The aim is to create the general framework of mind and also functionaries of world unity and progress – technicians, statesmen, teachers, etc. A study of the distribution of intelligence is needed to determine the grade of special aptitudes in diverse people, which all have a genetic basis. A study of temperament is also a provision because temperament plays can derail people from attaining what they wish or what they want to achieve. Researching how to rescue people from their temperament that might hamper them in accomplishing themselves falls also in the area that UNESCO endeavor to study. By saving people from their own temperament, the technocrats can help them to do something useful for the world. Understanding psychoanalytical techniques and the human psyche is necessary to attain some tools or mechanisms that will allow regulation and intervention in the cognitive operations relating to representations and affects. This would make the world happier and more efficient

As to science, it is not to be interpreted in a positivistic, empirical way. Science, in the sense of applying of all aspect of organized knowledge of phenomena, will be applied to man and society. Science, as already stated, is not to be confined to the hard sciences, but will include other aspects – even revelation, myth, rationality, and experiment. All this brought together would lead to an increased knowledge and control over society and man, a knowledge apparently almost as good as in the standard hard sciences, although the difference between those two branches would remain. As already stated, in this approach eugenics plays a role, even if it was and still is a borderline subject (Huxley, 1947: 37). This variant of eugenics has to be truly scientific, according to him. The elevation of the quality of life of mankind depends on it. A change of mind and of heart is needed to approach this subject-matter. Technological and industrial development has done many things but has led many people to abandon spiritual and aesthetic values, to abandon preoccupation with beauty, and has created an uglier world. Therefore, UNESCO has to concern

itself with instilling a new framework of mind to counterbalance this tendency. Art should be applied in this sense, to create the much-needed balance.

Such a giant enterprise can't go further without having an ideological frame, a worldview that guides it, and establishes its aims, regulations and the policies necessary for the desired activity. It is "a working hypothesis concerning human existence." UNESCO can't proceed in a piecemeal manner. This worldview is not to be grounded on existing theologies and religions, or political-economic doctrines be they Marxism, capitalism, semi-planned economy, etc. That would be sectarian and a denial of UNESCO's universality and would incur hostility from many groups. Neither spiritualism, rationalism elan vital theories or cyclical theories of history are admitted. It is a proponent of equality and human dignity, and it should not accept that the state is higher than the individual (at least in theory). The basis of this worldview and of UNESCO is humanism, but not any kind of it. It is a new kind dubbed evolutionary humanism. It must be scientific in his structure.

"It cannot, however, be materialistic, but must embrace the spiritual and and mental as well the material aspects of existence and must attempt to do so on a truly monistic, unitary philosophic basis." (Huxley, 1947: 7)

### 3. Evolution and progress

The evolutionary aspect is essential to understand the philosophy of UNESCO and the UN. Evolutionary biology offers a new way to understand the universe. Julian Huxley and Aldous Huxley are the sons of Thomas Huxley, Darwin's bulldog after all. Darwinism proves, according to him, the existence of progress *im Weltall*. Evolution is taken to encompass all historical processes that cause change and development in the cosmos and it takes place in three main areas: the inorganic, the biological, and the realm of mankind. Evolution is brought about in society by the use of speech and conceptual thought.

Another name for it is cumulative tradition, the ground of social heredity. This is how societies change and develop. Evolution here is under the stewardship of mankind. Consciousness and conscious decisions modify it. Conscious selection is at this level the main mechanism of evolution. The evolutionary process consists in for the most part in changes in the form of society, in producing tools and machines, in using old inborn potentialities. (Huxley, 1947: 9): this is a conflict between ideas and values, worldviews, and so on. From this has sprung the modern state. Along this process comes an increased control over the environment and the power to cause changes in it due to technological and scientific developments. A by-product is that the grade of dependency on the environment and whims of nature has decreased and the independence from it has increased. Under this condition, the way man perceives himself has transformed and had acquired a greater degree of individuality appears and greater mental powers, a trend towards fuller knowledge. Mankind has reached a peak of the evolutionary process, when it can inject value s in it. This conception of Huxley is not as new as it seems. The British author acknowledges its similarity with Hegelianism and Marxism, though he criticizes both conceptions for lacking a foundation in biology. One problem evolutionary humanism has to solve is, of course, overpopulation. Huxley and UNESCO show their Malthusian or Neo-Malthusian bent; world peace must be achieved, too – the most important task that humankind has to fulfill.

Another step toward the next stage of evolution comes into play. The social organization must be conceived anew. The state has to act accordingly and due its due diligence toward evolution. Taking control of the evolution needs a proper social organization. Otherwise, mankind won't be able to accomplish its goals or to attain "the highest degree of individuality and wealth for the common man". Progress entail going beyond the existing possibilities in society and mankind, overcoming what is (Huxley, 1947: 15). Society and the individual can be reconciled, and they are not in opposition. For attaining the purpose of UNESCO a harmonious relationship between these two has to be build – another task that falls under the purvey of UNESCO. Both Fascism and Communism, but also individualism as it existed in the US should be avoided. Despite his misgiving of individualism, Huxley affirms that the well-developed individual is the highest outcome of evolution, but his development is conditioned by the surrounding society. Thus, UNESCO has to work in the context of society and it should direct its attention toward agencies and organizations, which work this shared end – educational systems, research organizations, art centers, the press (and the internet, today).

There is more than one way to describe the purpose of an organization. Attaining world peace and taking the evolution in one's hands, entails a peculiar and difficult process. It is an act of imposing a unitary view all over the globe referring to the aims of society and human existence. „Unifying the word-mind" (Huxley 1947, 2010: 17). According to him, evolution is a feature of the universe and life. Biology has helped detect such a direction in the whole creation, not only in the realm of human life. The evolution



in this domain he calls progress (Huxley, 1947: 12). The salient features of this process are an increase in the complexity of organization, in the realm of biology/human life an increase of the control over and independence towards the environment and an increase of mental capacities (in the supposed later stage of this development). Another trait is the fact that it opens the door for further progress, always. It is a self-propelling activity. But surprise-surprise, just the Kantian revolution puts the man at the center of knowing, this process leads to man as its sole inheritor (to date). Being the highest form of organism it is not, as Huxley says, anthropomorphic vanity, of course. And humankind is what might be called in Heideggerian terms “the Shepherd of Being” since Huxley thinks of him also as the sole trustee of this process, although this tendency goes in the direction of trying to become the lord of creation and of what can be accomplished in the future. Therefore, UNESCO and ONU for the matter must work on this background. The twin concepts of progress and evolution are central for both these institutions. From the evolutionary process/progress, the tendencies that are good and promote the desired results can be read, and so are the ones that are wrong from this point of view. Conquering nature, the increase in control over it seems to be central to this endeavor. Otherwise, there would be no further advancement – progress. Though acquiring control over nature is necessary, it should not represent a value in itself. Nevertheless, the applications that stems from conquering nature are essential for humanity to fulfil its role as this steward/lord of evolution. This is true in regard to complex social organization. He recognizes that knowledge may do some good things in one area of life, and not so good in others. Thus, there should be a global organization that oversees this kind of activity meant to promote evolution. The tasks of UNESCO are therefore manifold, including balancing the different activities and the outcomes that they produce. There should be a firm grip on medicine (application of medical science), studies of agricultural productivity – soil erosion, mechanization, social welfare, and building birth-control facilities. UNESCO has to prove its approach against the touchstone of evolutionary progress. And one conflict or antagonism that is the main focus of attention for UNESCO is the one between internationalism and nationalism, between national sovereignty and world sovereignty (Huxley, 1947: 13). Human evolution (progress) is going ahead faster than in other areas of biology and has led to the creation of a pool of idea that is self-perpetuating.

This is an important factor in the existence of mankind. UNESCO has to take it into account. This pool of common ideas and knowledge can evolve and develop. Thus, social organization is the key factor in human progress and the means to build a frame and scaffold for it. It is useful for either limiting the unwanted tendencies that dwell within or for furthering the promising ones. This makes possible for man to take control and direct evolution. As such, the different pools of knowledge and tradition created by humanity have to be unified, because the multitude of these pools, which might be hostile to each other or in competition, makes it impossible to attain the degree of efficiency of a unified one (Huxley, 1947: 13). Overcoming this differences and conflicts demands political unification. In this wise, the English thinker hopes to show the necessity of building a central world government, to which UNESCO has to its bidding. UNESCO must participate in the act of bringing about the world political unity, albeit it does not lie in its competence to realize it. By means of policies of UNESCO the foundations thereof could be laid down - mutual understanding between people, brainwashing, etc. Nationalism And particularities isolates people, therefore, it is opposed to the endeavor of UNESCO and of the UN. It is a hindrance in the way of evolution.

The whole enterprise is obviously a technocratic one, based on scientism and technology. The betterment of human welfare, the elevation of the quality of life is to be done using science. Differences of opinion in this regard are not really allowed. Global and international campaigns should be organized in this sense, to convince them of the necessity of doing so and of the necessity of controlling and policing the evolution. Just as people have learned to distinguish between the good uses of knowledge and technique and wrong ones (nuclear bombs, for instance), they have to accept to distinguish between the different components of evolution and that there is a need for an authority that should govern it. Huxley, like someone who divinizes science and progress still held to the idea that technology is neutral and you can distinguish between good and wrong /bad uses of science/technology. But just as the same movement in martial arts can be both a block/deflection and a hit, this distinction can't be maintained. Modern technique is not neutral as Jacques Ellul, among others has shown, but represents a huge spiritual challenge for humanity. Similar views were penned by Nicolae Berdyaev who announced that man has entered a new era. Under the layer of machine and economic power, there was something else. The coming to be of a new anthropological regime, namely the one of “organization”. This regime affects all the areas and dimensions of life. Technique is not something pertaining only to the material. It affects our relationship with the world, with society, with ourselves, and so on. It is an ontological mutation that takes place in mankind. According to the Russian thinker through technology man becomes cosmurge (it

creates “worlds”). Mankind replaces its natural and social world with a world based on organization – which according to Baptiste Rappin is the end toward which management and organizational sciences tend. Technology builds a second nature – on organization, a world - that creates a rupture within the existing communities, a world devoid of and opaque to symbolization, without any organic and symbolic coherence. It creates a barrier between man and nature and it engages in a limitless process. It disorganizes mankind in its inner life and tends to make man a machine. World War I has shown what a society organized around progress and technology shall bring about. Technique is not only material – a way to produce artifacts, but intellectual and spiritual, too. There is strategy, logistics, management, PR techniques, Human Relations, and so on. And technique aims at reproducing something with the lowest effort and best results, effective results (Cérézuelle, 2021: 236-237). It is an infinite quest for efficiency and power. The totalitarian and despotic structuration of society is not political, but social – thinkers as Bernard Charbonneau and Jacques Ellul have found out even before the second world war. The essence of totalitarianism and violence lies not in ideologies that are explicitly totalitarian but in the profound changes caused in the social and mental structures cause by technological progress and industrialization and in the mindset associated with those. The progression and the expansion of the state and the progress of technology all lead to the same place, to a society organized along the efficiency demand and looking like an army in a war and like an industrial plant.

#### **4. World unity and stewardship of evolution. Eugenics**

This political unification must bring about a unity of mind. The so-called one pool of scientific knowledge has to entail a common, unitary point of view a set of common aims (Huxley, 1947: 47). “Unifying the world mind requires this”. To do this, UNESCO must provide help and programs to all poor countries, not to help those cultures per se – they are tribal and nationalistic – but to achieve the needed level of scientific advancement, which will foster the global unity of thought. A unitary scale of values has to prevail all over the world and has to be imposed. A world of one scientific ideology is the main purpose of UNESCO, which is part of a giant mechanism meant to instill uniformity and thought and feeling all over the globe, eradicating free thought and cultural multitude. This is one of the main functions of UNESCO and the results that would come/are coming from it, even though he affirms the need for preserving the plurality of cultures. Educational systems and social mechanisms must be put in place to achieve this brainwashing and uniformization, instilling the only correct way of thinking that should allow man to become the Lord of evolution.

Directing evolution and annihilating national and ethnic differences nation is a means to an end. This end is transhumanism/post-humanism, although the purpose of UNESCO is not formulated in these terms. “Directed evolution” is an umbrella term, too. Under the facade can be found older ideas of eugenics that Huxley promotes. The eugenicist point of view is unmistakably stated: “There remains the second type of inequality. This has quite the implications; for, whereas variety is in itself desirable, the existence of weaklings, fools, and moral deficient cannot but be bad. It is also much harder to reconcile politically with the current democratic of equality.” (Huxley, 1947: 20). The English author proposes an amendment to the principle of equality of opportunity, which reads like equality of opportunity within the limits set by the aptitude one has. He continues by stating it as a fact that a large amount of the population does not possess the ability to make use of higher education. Many young men are weak, and, for example, cannot pass the test to get into the army, and many other people are neither intelligent nor scrupulous enough to be entrusted with political responsibility and power. These defects are seen as being probably cause by civilization itself, and he acknowledges that this would be a burden that society probably won’t be able to get rid of. Democracy, social and political systems generally speaking, have to adapt to the truths of biology, in this case, to this kind of inequality. This is a major and urgent task which the world has to carry out. Thus, general education of the public and much new research has to be done and UNESCO has to be in both of these activities (Huxley, 1947: 21). What does UNESCO have to do?

“It means that it should encourage all studies and all methods which can be used to ensure that men find the right jobs and are kept away from the wrong jobs – to ensure that individuals find outlets satisfying to their temperament, and work appropriate to their talents, while at the same time ensuring society is not overburden with people in positions for which they are inadequate or, still worse which they are likely to abuse.” (Huxley, 1947: 21)

There are two kinds of eugenics with different implications. Preserving variety is a good thing, just as the inequality of mere difference, but inequality of level or standard would not be desirable. Eugenics should be concerned with rising the quality of life to a desirable level. Even if he admits that the problem posed by the existing “weaklings” and defective human beings might be intractable, UNESCO

must try to examine all the facets of this problem and to inform the public about them in hopes in making the unthinkable thinkable and acceptable. Since the reach of UNESCO is global, including all aspects of human and social life, its working philosophy must be a unitary, monistic one, a kind of humanism informed by science. The working philosophy of UNESCO is not neutral, though he states that its philosophy cannot be sectarian. Its approach, as already mentioned, is scientific and evolutionary. This is essential to it. UNESCO has to pay attention to the social mechanism of the cumulative tradition of mankind, which he considers to be the basis of social heredity. Through social heredity society and man changes and develops. UNESCO has to be at the forefront of getting control of human evolution and its governing. What is this evolution of humanity that is the essential background of UNESCO (and other institutions)? Is it to achieve as much progress possible in the shortest span of time (Huxley, 1947: 12)?

If the afore-mentioned institution does work in different regions of the world to promote its vision of the world, not to help other nations and people for their sake per se. The actions and programs of UNESCO, and, thus, of the United Nations are not those of a benevolent and neutral actor, but of an interested party that seeks dominance. An actor who seeks to impose his own ideology and vision of the world. Ethnic, cultural, or national particularities are a hindrance for the institutions that would impose one global government. The name of this utopian, control-oriented religion/subsets of religions can be that used by Huxley, namely, evolutionary humanism (it includes the faith in progress, technocracy, and scientism). This is another form of process theology, not unlike Hegel's or Teilhard de Chardin's, that considers evolution as a process that produces a deified human being. For Julian Huxley, the existence of man attests, in fact, the existence of a direction of evolution, a kind of teleology, a trend toward the apparition of mind in the cosmos. The universe would necessarily produce mind/minds – humans and other rational beings. The universe contains the trend towards intelligence, toward sentience. The possession of mind and awareness makes man an agent of evolution. This contradicts the conviction that existence is ultimately meaningless. Julian Huxley's spirituality is a good example of such a religion – a pantheistic one – that tries to unite the uniqueness of man with its denial. It is a religion and spirituality that is opposed to theistic religions, which speak of a transcendent and personal God, outside space and time, distinct from the universe he created. Even in this interpretation of existence, man is called to be the shepherd thereof (Huxley, 1992: 78).

### **5. Emancipation, technology, and progress**

This new spirituality or religion is supposed to free man from constraints and elevate him over nature and history, to produce the so-called emancipation. This conception is a technocratic one, bound with the idea of knowledge as power. It is a religion bound to the idea of technique, with the search for efficiency. Faith in progress is faith in man and his accomplishment, that is idolatry. It also produces a sacralization of history – history is the place of the self-revelation of the Absolute Spirit that acquires self-knowledge and actualization in man (Hegel's view but also Hermetic theological point of view). History, evolution, the whole universe are caught in the movement of betterment – of amelioration. Progress can be defined as such: „Mouvement nécessaire vers le mieux ou marche générale vers la perfection finale” (Taguieff, 2004 : 11)

To believe in progress means: „Croire au Progrès, c'est se mettre en position de croire à la réalisation graduelle, dans l'histoire, des idéaux de liberté, d'égalité ou de justice. De croire aussi à la marche progressive de l'humanité vers la satisfaction de tous ses besoins, condition supposée de l'accès au bonheur.” (Taguieff, 2004: 120-121)

Modern societies, political systems, and modern/contemporary understanding of mankind are based on the ideology of progress. Modernity is, as mentioned, considered to be the era of rationality and maturity, an era that had left behind the age of religion and metaphysics, of myth. History is made by man and goes in a definite, positive direction. At a political and social level, some voices that claim the right to build society from the beginning anew and demand that society and man should be governed along scientific principles. A new myth is born, the myth of technocratic governance, which has its roots in some philosophical works of the past. This new myth depends on the birth of the rational and empirical sciences and the application of mathematics to physics, as Galileo did. From the point of view of the history of mankind, the past and its legacy are devaluated. Technological progress is a sign interpreted as a sign of progress in general and the conviction that society can be organized along with scientific methods comes to light. Henri de Saint-Simon was or is one of the fathers of this horrid conception, which he based in the study of hydraulics. He can be seen as the father of the conception of organizing society along networks, long before Norbert Wiener and the invention of cybernetics.

## 6. Conclusion

Despite the claims of increased rationality, attaining freedom, and going forward toward a better, and superior state of being, the ideology of progress, the religion of technology, and modern utopian thinking have led to a society plagued by false consciousness and self-righteous, believing that it has set itself free of the past, religion and myth. Instead, the new historical development has carried out a new enchantment of history and of time, producing a kind of secular or atheistic mysticism, the cults of Freedom, Equality, and Reason, an ideology of suspicion and pragmatism, a sacralization of technique, etc. The final state of perfection is, according to some variants of this all-pervasive mode of thinking, God stripped of the personal form (Taguieff, 2002: 121), or self-deification of man/society. The supposed limitless growth of reason, science, and technology humankind would lead inevitably to the creation of Heaven on Earth, to a state of bliss wherein all wars have ceased, wherein poverty is gone, and so on. Science and commerce, the reorganization of society, the reeducation of man, and the elimination of hindrances (for example, people and cultures that think otherwise) were deemed to accomplish all of these. According to the theory, such a state of bliss would be attended by following some utility principle, making good use of new policies and technologies, which would create a maximum of well-being and/or happiness for the greatest number of people (and this by letting everyone expressing and following his or her own interests). This utopic ideal was achievable by democratization, etc. Pierre-Andre Taguieff observes that from all of those ideas unforeseen consequences followed, and that in spite of their claims regarding the betterment of human condition, horrific results came to pass. Totalitarian social and political structures and ideologies were born. And from them sprang new imperatives that people have to accept otherwise they would be treated as non-people, get stripped of rights, and dignity etc. Imperatives such as being open, open-minded and the unending and unlimited claims to rights without any claims for duties are some of the practical consequences caused by this religion (Taguieff, 2002: 124). The corollary of all these conviction and ideas was that the past must be destroyed, overcome and the people have to be reeducated. The dissenters were branded as enemy of progress, of the people, reactionaries and so on. The results of governing societies according to utopian views and to the religion of progress – at least in Eastern Europe and China are known to all. The ideology of progress and the trust its supporters put in the process of historical process had led to the development of radical views of human existence which call for the abolition of all limits that are restraining it. Life should become easy; the individuality of each human being should be lived without any restraints (Taguieff, 2002: 15). Progress, utopia, and hedonism go hand in hand, and, of course, scientism. This radical ideology of Enlightenment and can be found alive in the ideology of trans- and post-humanism. In a certain sense, the ideology of progress is an ideology of hope, the best antidote to despair or *Weltschmerz*. As such the ideology of progress is characterized by a hedonistic point of view (Taguieff, 2004: 68), hedonism that permeates also the modern conceptions of natural right as opposed to the classical views thereof (Strauss, 1950). The idea of evolutionary humanism and the technological system within which humanity is does not go toward emancipation but to tyranny and the destruction of liberty and freedom of thought, etc.

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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL RESISTANCE THOUGHT IN ALGERIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** *At the beginning of the twentieth century, Algeria, under French occupation, experienced significant intellectual, economic, and political changes. These shifts had a profound impact on Algerians, who faced increasing pressures and coercion. This situation led to the emergence of a form of militant resistance. Algerians were forced to adapt to these changes by taking into account various factors and variables that shaped their understanding of their circumstances and how to confront the reality of occupation. Several international and domestic factors contributed to the development of this new mindset. Global tensions were rising due to imperial expansion and colonialism. Additionally, the French colonial administration implemented reform measures from time to time, which influenced the Algerian response. For example, some Algerians were allowed to represent the country in parliament. French-Arab schools were also established, opening up educational opportunities. This, in turn, provided space for ideological growth and fostered movements advocating for change, freedom, and political development. As a result, a new sense of national consciousness began to take shape. This emerging awareness helped to form the foundation of a new militant discourse, which reflected the growing determination to resist colonial rule and pursue national liberation.*

**Keywords:** Intellectual, development, national struggle, national movement, ideology

### 1. Introduction

The global changes at the beginning of the twentieth century had a significant political, economic, and social impact on both colonized and colonizing nations. This period saw the rise of anti-racist ideologies such as fascism and Nazism, the growth of nationalist movements, and the redefinition of modern state-building concepts. In Algeria, these changes were reflected in its subjection to French laws, as well as its adoption of French economic, social, and urban systems.

Civilizational transformations were evident, especially in the political sphere. Signs of parliamentary and representative politics, rooted in the French system of governance, became clear. However, these developments were marked by contradictions, as they were grounded in racial discrimination and the "Frenchization" of key strategic positions. For instance, roles such as governors, judges, and municipal council presidents were exclusively reserved for the French, further entrenching inequality and exclusion.

In response to this, the Algerian resistance movement persisted, although it took on a new form. This time, resistance was expressed through participation in councils and the pursuit of social demands, all within the framework of a progressive libertarian ideology. In other words, elements of a socialist vision began to emerge in opposition to the liberal regime, which had gradually transformed Algerians into subjects of procedure since the early twentieth century, while the French settlers secured autonomy over Algeria's financial and civil affairs

The political and economic situation in early twentieth-century Algeria had a profound effect on Algerians, particularly as parents and citizens under French rule. Some Algerians managed to escape the harsh grip of the French government, partially due to reform measures introduced from time to time. These included allowing Algerians to represent themselves in parliament and the establishment of French-Arab schools, which opened up educational opportunities. This educational access contributed to the formation of movements advocating for change, as well as intellectual and political development. Furthermore, the introduction of print media played a crucial role in shaping public consciousness, advancing ideas of national identity, citizenship, and republicanism. These terms became central in the emerging militant discourse, signaling the modern development of the concept of sovereignty among the Algerian elite. This elite was composed of individuals who graduated from French schools and the reformist elite, grounded in religious traditions, who emerged from the mosques and zawiyas (religious schools).

This period marks a pivotal moment in defining Algeria's national intellectual framework for political action and struggle. The Algerian elite, both secular and religious, grappled with how to rebuild

militant thought and chart political horizons. These political challenges are addressed through a sociological reading of Algeria's national struggle movement from the early twentieth century onward. The systematic approach to analyzing and interpreting political reality during this decisive period helped determine the intellectual foundation of Algeria's national movement.

## **2. Challenges of Political Reality**

### **2.1 National Militant Thought and Features of Libertarian Ideology**

National militant thought in Algeria began to flourish during a time of rising ideologies opposed to racism, such as fascism and Nazism. Nationalist movements developed alongside liberal thought and modern bourgeois aspirations. These ideals were often expressed by "a small elite of young Algerians living in cities, educated and French" (Ageron, 1982: 112). This group embraced Enlightenment discourse, which promoted individual freedom and integration. Their demands for political equality reflected a liberal understanding of national political struggle, pushing for reforms within the framework of French Algeria. The French administration perceived these demands as part of a growing national movement against its authority, as they called for "the abolition of tax disparities, the spread of education, the expansion of political representation for Muslims, and an end to the system of civil dependency" (Ageron, 1982: 115).

While these demands adhered to Islamic values, they also expressed a desire for political organization rooted in parliamentary representation and the right to political participation. This aligned with the social contract theory, which aimed to consolidate modern intellectual ideas about political authority, in contrast to traditional Islamic values of allegiance and obedience to the sacred norms of the Imamate. These norms, inherited by the Islamic world, maintained a social hierarchy that excluded any notion of grassroots political participation. Instead, these relationships were built on loyalty, which formed the cultural and political foundation of Algerian society, especially in the *zawiyas* and rural areas.

As global and local events evolved, Enlightenment ideas advocating for individual rights and social values began to resonate with the Algerian youth elite. Although this ideological trend was established, it failed to mobilize the wider Algerian population into a mass movement capable of challenging colonial forces (Bouhouche, 1997: 206). Despite their demands—such as advocating for Algerian rights, reducing daily suffering, and urging the French administration to honor the terms of the social contract—the movement was limited in scope. Their publications, such as the newspaper *Al-Haq*, and their association meetings, highlighted the contradictions between the Enlightenment values promoted by France and the colonial injustices it practiced against Algerians.

Among their demands were "the abolition of the Andjana law, granting loans to farmers and traders, opening training centers for Algerians in industrial professions, and educating Muslim children" (Ageron, 1968), all of which reflected their desire for equality as citizens and active participants in the French government.

The Algerian youth elite, whose social affiliations had expanded, did not conceal their liberal aspirations. They emerged as a national intellectual force, playing a pivotal role in creating a rift between the authority of traditional leadership (like the Emirate and the Caliphate) and the modern parliamentary authority they sought through party and federal mechanisms. Their aim was to secure political positions and actively participate in governing the country. This competition for power can be understood through the lens of scientific theory about governance, which defends justice and strives for social balance. This legitimacy, driven by social necessity, could not be fully realized in French-occupied Algeria without embracing the cultural and ideological constants of the Algerian people, particularly the Islamic religion, which reinforced the awareness of political unity and national consciousness as part of an Islamic nation with its own distinct identity.

The Algerian youth leaders were keen to uphold Islamic principles, recognizing the importance of integrating Islamic values into their political aspirations. This was evident in their advocacy for the teaching of Arabic, the language of the Quran, alongside French in schools, and their respect for Islamic holidays, rituals, and values. They even supported the Ottomans (as fellow Muslims) in their war against the Italians (Bouhouche, 1997: 205). These actions garnered admiration both internally and externally, though they failed to gain full support from the broader Algerian populace. Many Algerians did not believe in the idea of integration with the French, particularly since it involved conscription into the French army, which they viewed as an attempt to harness Islam to serve Christianity. To them, their struggle was a jihad against Christian domination, and the capitalist colonial policies of discrimination only fueled their resentment. They did not see these policies as mere violations of their rights but as

foreign practices imposed upon them, practices that would only be lifted when the occupation was removed from their land and system.

This dual sense of identity—rooted in both religion and land—was essential to their resistance, as highlighted by historian Paul Gavril, who observed that "France was fighting in Algeria a nation motivated by religion and patriotism" (Saadallah, 1992: 519). In this context, religion was seen as the foundation of national identity, making liberalism an idea ahead of its time in occupied Algeria, despite being embraced by figures like Prince Khalid. Prince Khalid, a descendant of the religious leadership of Emir Abdelkader, was significantly influenced by the intellectual movements of the Alawite order and the Egyptian reformer Mohamed Abduh, as well as his scientific and military training at the prestigious Saint-Cyr Military College (Gomorrhah, 2002: 164). These influences drove him to align with the integrationist and reformist movements of the Algerian youth.

Prince Khalid demanded political reforms in Algeria and, as a media figure, was able to promote his reformist ideas and political demands. However, his efforts were met with hostility from France, which saw his calls for reform as a direct incitement for the Algerian population to revolt against the European settlers in Algeria (Bouhouche, 1997: 207). This reaction from the colonial authorities was an indication of their deep suspicion and resistance to any movement that challenged their control, no matter its size or influence.

Despite the elite's efforts, the movement led by Prince Khalid and the Algerian youth did not resonate fully with the broader Algerian population. Their liberal aspirations, centered on concepts of sovereignty and national identity, were ahead of their time in the context of colonial Algeria. Yet, this movement laid the intellectual groundwork for modern political thought, introducing ideas that would later shape the concept of the modern state. These ideas, born out of liberalism and reformist thought, provided the intellectual pillars necessary for Algeria's eventual struggle for independence.

## 2.2. Socialist Ideology

The restrictive policies imposed by French colonialism on Algerians led to the acquisition of agricultural lands, forests, pastures, fields, endowments, and personal real estate. These resources were heavily taxed, creating a social structure governed by the *Code de l'Indigénat* and civil police forces established by the French administration after the fall of the Second Empire.

Algerians faced an inevitable fate with the rise of a colonial production system that transformed the rural population into a small group of major feudalists. Meanwhile, the urban population became wage laborers in the factories and workshops of the old capitalists. With few options, many Algerians complied in order to survive poverty and displacement. These conditions forced migration towards coastal areas, where Algerian cities became "vital links for economic movement, serving as stations for major agricultural markets" (Stora, 2004: 95). These cities became hubs for intellectual exchange and contact with new ideas, while others sought opportunities by migrating outside Algeria, particularly to the Near East and Europe, especially France.

Since these new conditions were imposed on the Algerians, not of their own making or choosing, they resisted them both secretly and openly, at home and abroad. Their rebellion was part of the very dynamic of the new conditions that France had created. Algerians were even recruited into the French ranks during the fight against Germany. These circumstances reshaped the social fabric, destroying the basic structures of Algerian society. At the same time, they created an educated elite, which began to analyze the contradictions and injustices within society. This elite reignited the rebellion, struggling against capitalist imperialism.

For the Algerians, this revolutionary movement was more than just a resistance effort. It signified an emerging political consciousness that fueled national fervor. They expressed this by aligning with trade union ideas that defended the middle class. This movement also re-examined concepts of sovereignty and state-building, leading to the adoption of socialist ideals that resonated with the national elite in Algeria. Many of its leaders, including Masali al-Hajj and Hajj Ali Abd al-Qadir, joined central organizations like the French Socialist Party, as well as the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (Star of North Africa). These affiliations had profound intellectual and ideological effects on the revolutionary movement and the nature of political power after Algeria's independence.

The *Communist Manifesto* sparked strong reactions against colonial and exploitative regimes, as well as the liberal notion of political power. Revolutionary movements, including those in Algeria, rejected the concept of power as merely a tool for monopolizing the will of the people and widening the divide between owners of production and politically oppressed workers. The Manifesto called for the workers of the world to unite as a revolutionary force against capitalist exploitation. The *Étoile Nord-*

*Africaine* was part of this intellectual current after its founding in 1926 as a revolutionary national organization in the diaspora (France), closely linked to its leader, Masali al-Hajj.

This organization could not escape the ideological pressures of the *Communist Manifesto*, as it addressed the exploitation faced by Algerian workers both in the diaspora and within Algeria. The *Étoile Nord-Africaine* sought to transform the wage earner into an owner and advocated for a national struggle for Algerian sovereignty. This objective led to its eventual separation from the French Communist Party, which sought to maintain communist control over Algerians rather than support their independent efforts. Masali al-Hajj emphasized this, saying, "The Algerians want independence in their homeland, not communist tutelage... We have left the communism of death and adhered to patriotism, which is the symbol of life" (Ageron, 1982: 352).

Thus, the *Étoile Nord-Africaine* was not just an institutional organization with a fixed intellectual path. It was a movement born out of the colonial occupation's harsh realities and ideological struggles, contributing to the development of a political culture that left a lasting impact on Algerian memory.

The North African Star Movement, as a political party, marked the beginning of a transformation. This movement planted the seeds for a new vision of governance, grounded in political economy mechanisms, particularly a socialist orientation. National leaders were set to replace religious leaders, and populist movements would take over from sectarian groups. In this new order, religion would play a national role, preserving Algerian identity and its social structure. This was the core political demand of the struggle movement. The legitimacy of the nation became a key principle, prioritizing unity among the movement's ranks, overcoming political and ideological differences, and condemning the oppression faced by the Algerian people and their political parties. Despite their various demands for independence and integration, all these groups contributed to shaping the mechanisms that would transform the concept of political struggle in Algeria.

This transformation was deeply influenced by intellectual debates at both global and local levels. The national elite began to distinguish itself from the traditional elite, leading the struggle by embracing change and the material and political developments of the time. This elite promoted socialist, communist, and liberal capitalist ideologies, all of which viewed governance from a materialist perspective. Liberalism, in particular, championed the right of individuals to participate in society, under the banner of democracy and freedoms, expressed through elections, parliaments, and other such mechanisms. The leaders of the national movement sought to incorporate these ideas into the broader framework of social necessity and the fight for independence. Figures such as Ben Jaloul, founder of the *Federation of Algerian Muslim Electors (FEMA)*, and Farhat Abbas, founder of the *Algerian Democratic Union (UDMA)*, utilized these ideas in their calls for the unification of Algeria with a French boycott.

These political parties, despite excluding a direct demand for independence, emphasized parliamentary representation and equality between Algerians and French settlers by calling for the repeal of the *Andjana* law. They represented a transitional political movement that laid the groundwork for militant thought. They began adopting modern political terms, such as "parliament," "democracy," "popular representation," and "elections," which were unfamiliar to Arab-Islamic culture. These terms portrayed Muslims not only as citizens but also as individuals with an awareness of their role within a legal system, as outlined by social contract theories. However, these changes created divergent reactions, with significant implications for the struggle movement and the fate of the national cause.

This divergence was primarily ideological, with the movement split between two camps: those demanding integration and those advocating for independence. The independence camp sought to restore Algerian sovereignty over political and economic institutions and to free society from the French administration's control. On the other hand, the integrationists pursued the recognition of political rights without racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination between Algerians and European settlers. They aimed for Algerian integration into a modern state system, where power is based on a set of duties and the relationship between individuals and the state is governed by laws, regardless of who holds power. This reformist ideology introduced new national ideas that clashed with traditional customs, the foundation of Algerian society.

The integrationists, led by figures like Farhat Abbas, aimed to blend Arab-Islamic identity with liberal reformist ideals. They sought to create an Algerian political model grounded in Enlightenment thought, using modern political vocabulary to express national sovereignty. However, despite their efforts to preserve Islamic identity, their approach failed to resonate widely. This failure was due to the nature of the conflict, which was fundamentally about the fate of a nation seeking to reclaim its historical and cultural identity. The situation required a revolutionary approach, not just integration, as the socialist vision gained traction by aligning with popular sentiment and the daily struggles of the people



under colonial rule. The French occupation rejected even the integrationist project and reneged on its reform promises, such as the *Bloom-Violet* project, which excluded Algerians from meaningful political participation.

This rejection made the liberal camp realize the deep-rooted sensitivity of the Algerian people towards integrationist thought for several reasons:

**a)** Liberalism was closely tied to global imperialism and, specifically, to the French occupation. The French military and economic oppression contradicted the very modernity that liberal thought claimed to bring. The concepts of government and state-building, as envisioned by the liberals, were alien and contradictory to the socio-cultural identity of the Algerian people. The French administration's racism placed the Algerians outside the legal framework of liberalism, a fact that no amount of concessions could disguise in its dealings with the Algerian political elite.

**b)** The social life of the Algerian people is deeply rooted in a set of rules, many of which are formulated through religious rulings. These rules foster a perception that equating themselves with the French amounts to ideological betrayal, a denial of their history, and a renunciation of their cultural and religious identity. As a result, the Algerian people's natural resistance to the integration project was strong, as they saw the demand for equality within the French system as incompatible with their aspirations for independence.

This realization led Farhat Abbas to eventually abandon the integration project. He declared, "the liberation of the civil man will be the task of the civil society itself, and in order to achieve this, the masses must be mobilized, so our duty is represented in the slogan of the people for the sake of the people" (Amoura, 2002: 176). Abbas had initially hoped that Algeria could adopt French democracy while preserving its customs, traditions, and language, but this vision became more aligned with the independent orientation. The people responded to this shift, and many of the political elites joined the cause, aligning themselves with the struggle on behalf of the Algerian People's Party (PPA), which represented various social groups. This party was founded by Messali Hadj as a continuation of the *North African Star*, which had been dissolved by the Popular Front government on January 26, 1937 (Amoura, 2002: 180).

Despite the alignment of the political elites with the popular movement, ideological differences persisted among them. Some were oriented towards socialism, while others leaned towards liberalism. Nevertheless, the power of the people became the critical factor in establishing political leadership and conferring legitimacy. This time, legitimacy was derived not from lineage or tribal connections but from the heroism of national struggles. Islam, as previously mentioned, remained a crucial factor in this patriotism. It carried values that resonated with both Arab and Islamic nationalism, uniting the Algerian people around a shared identity that transcended political ideologies.

### **3.1 Reformist Trend**

The period following Algeria's association with France from 1930 onwards represents a significant phase in the maturation of Western modernity concepts and the revolutionary movements that sought to overthrow traditional perceptions, which were often condemned by the reformist groups of the time. Within this environment, the Islamic religion could not escape the pressures of these revolutionary movements. From the perspective of liberal thought, Islam, like other traditional institutions, was seen as an obstacle to progress. It stood in direct opposition to European cultural expansion and played a key role in preserving conservative values, especially in the occupied Islamic lands.

Although Algerians resisted French occupation in the name of their Islamic identity, this resistance did not exempt them from being influenced by the modern intellectual movements that spread across various political and ideological spectrums at the time. Nor did it shield them from the social complicity and submission to the inevitability of historical change, which they had to respond to according to the circumstances imposed upon them. This complex reality shaped both the popular and elite attitudes towards religion and ideology.

### **A. Social and Religious Dynamics under Colonial Rule**

The changes Algeria underwent during French occupation were not part of a deliberate social reform project aimed at improving society. Rather, they were driven by a political agenda that employed violence and oppression to subjugate the Algerian people, marginalizing them and forcing them into a state of backwardness. This was reinforced by colonial strategies that dismantled traditional societal structures, leading many to seek refuge in religious myths and superstitions. These beliefs played a

particularly strong role in rural and Bedouin areas, where the populace turned to saints and religious figures as protectors in a reality characterized by ignorance and heresy.

This dynamic was not merely a reflection of an ideological stance but a response to a lived reality. Algerians were trapped in a society devastated by wars of resistance, plagued by infectious diseases, burdened by heavy taxes, and whose basic tribal structures were destroyed. Many were displaced, and the elites who once led the nation found themselves in political disarray, with some serving as mere intermediaries for the colonial administration under laws such as the *Andijana* law. As Djeghloul (1988: 4) observes, this society was "a society whose elites clashed with political failure, and some of them turned into just a mediator for the colonial occupation state."

One of the significant consequences of this colonial domination was the erosion of Islamic values. Deprived of its traditional leadership and jurisprudence, the Algerian people turned to myths and superstitions to fill the spiritual and intellectual vacuum left by the decline of the Islamic *Imamate* and *Caliphate*, which had been extinguished by the end of the Ottoman era and further obliterated by French colonialism. The colonial authorities targeted the core of Islamic education, dismantling its traditional systems and replacing them with new educational structures that promoted secularism (*laïcité*) and compulsory education as weapons against the Arabic language and Islam.

The French colonial government's education policies were cemented by laws such as the 1883 law, which imposed new teaching principles that marginalized Islamic education. As Djeghloul (1988: 6) explains, these principles were "based on *laïcité* and compulsory education, to be a weapon against the Arabic language and Islam." This approach was further reinforced by the 1892 law, which restricted Quranic schools (known as *kuttabs*) from teaching during school hours and limited Arabic language instruction to only two hours per week. These efforts were part of a broader attempt by the French to dismantle the religious and cultural fabric of Algerian society, deepening the social and political alienation felt by many Algerians.

Through these oppressive measures, the French sought to undermine the religious and cultural identity of the Algerian people, pushing them toward assimilation into French culture while attempting to erase their Islamic heritage. However, this imposition also fueled the rise of a reformist movement that sought to revive Islamic values and resist colonial domination, laying the groundwork for future nationalist and revolutionary movements.

### **B. The Impact of French Political Strategy and the Formation of the Algerian Elite**

The political strategy adopted by the French administration in Algeria, alongside the construction of a colonial settlement state, played a significant role in the emergence of a new class of elites. Some members of the traditional leadership, marginalized for a long time, gained access to French schools and Arab and foreign institutes outside Algeria. This educational exposure allowed them to absorb modern developments, both domestically and internationally. They were key figures in transforming Algeria's modern history into a political narrative, one that reframed cultural convictions through a realistic understanding of political and social challenges.

These elites, whom Djeghloul (1988: 5) calls "new men," emerged from a distinct form of equality and were instrumental in reconstructing the social structure under the influence of a violent and authoritarian modernity. This transformation was dictated by the political and intellectual movements of the time, which included diverse socio-political and religious trends. These elites began to question the cultural references of Algerians and pondered the way out of colonial occupation. The rise of intellectual media—facilitated by the advent of writing, printing, and publishing—allowed them to spread their ideas, promote the national struggle, and articulate their political and ideological positions. Each faction sought to gain popular legitimacy, not necessarily through well-developed political programs, but through the mobilization of demands that rejected the occupation and expressed the conflicting intellectual currents within the national movement.

### **C. Islam and the Reformist Movement**

Islam played a central role in the ideological and political struggles of the period. Although the concept of reform did not seek to ideologize religion, it was clear that Islam—an enduring aspect of Algerian identity—became a rallying point for resistance against the French administration. Leaders of the national movement employed Islam in their political competition, attempting to win over the popular base, which was deeply rooted in religious institutions such as *zawiyas* (religious lodges) and *turūq* (Sufi brotherhoods) that retained their authority in both rural and urban areas. These religious institutions served as a focal point of resistance to colonial policies of exclusion and marginalization.

Colonial authorities attempted to undermine the influence of these religious centers by curtailing their activities and promoting policies of secularism, which led to a decline in religious thinking and jurisprudential development. Faced with these challenges, political elites, representing various ideological orientations, sought to maintain the separation of religion from politics, urging France not to interfere with Islamic values. The Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, led by Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis, played a pivotal role in the Islamic awakening and the broader Arab liberation movements of the time. The association sought to revive Islamic understanding and correct religious misconceptions, fighting against the superstitions and heresies that had infiltrated the faith, particularly through Sufi practices prevalent in the Islamic Maghreb.

Ibn Badis, a fierce critic of Sufism, saw it as a source of religious innovation and doctrinal misguidance. He lamented that the younger generation had become detached from productive jurisprudence due to the colonial repression of Islamic institutions. The French administration's policies, aimed at weakening the influence of religious resistance and jihad, had forced many religious leaders to retreat into mysticism and detachment from worldly affairs. The colonial authorities turned many religious lodges into sanctuaries for superstitions and places of escape for Algerians disillusioned with their tragic reality under occupation.

#### *D. The Muslim Scholars' Rationalization of Islamic Concepts*

In response to these developments, the Algerian Association of Muslim Scholars, led by Ibn Badis, sought to rationalize Islamic concepts and correct the damage inflicted by colonial policies. The association's mission was to reform Islamic thought, fight against the secularization efforts of the French administration, and restore the prominence of Islamic institutions. This effort was part of a broader movement to resist the cultural and religious erosion brought about by colonialism. Despite the obstacles posed by the French occupation, the association's efforts contributed significantly to preserving the Islamic identity of Algeria and laying the groundwork for future nationalist movements that would eventually lead to independence.

The political strategy of the French in Algeria, while aimed at consolidating their control over the colony, inadvertently led to the rise of a new intellectual elite and a reformist movement centered around Islamic values. This movement, led by scholars and religious leaders like Ibn Badis, played a critical role in shaping Algeria's national identity and resisting colonial domination. Through their efforts to rationalize and revive Islamic thought, these reformists were able to mobilize the population and contribute to the broader struggle for independence.

France's colonial strategy aimed to hybridize the Algerian identity, both culturally and politically, through a complex manipulation of religion. On the one hand, the French colonial authorities sought to banish religion from the public sphere, yet paradoxically used it to exert control over the population. This tension contributed to the unique character of religious reform in Algeria, which intertwined deeply with political concerns. The reform movement, inspired by figures such as Sheikh Mohamed Abdou, emphasized the liberation of minds, purification of doctrine, and the eradication of ignorance as prerequisites for individual and national decolonization. Sheikh Bashir Al-Ibrahimi, a prominent leader of the Association of Muslim Scholars, highlighted this connection, asserting that "the Association of Scholars liberated minds, refined ideas, and awakened feelings," with the natural outcome being the liberation of the soul (Al-Ibrahimi, 1994: 170).

#### **E. Religious Reform as Resistance to Cultural Invasion**

Religious reform in Algeria was not merely a matter of faith but a form of resistance against the cultural invasion brought by colonialism. The reform movement in Algeria was part of a larger Islamic renewal, heavily influenced by the intellectual and militant currents from the Arab East, although these movements entered Algeria later. Despite this delay, their impact on the reform project and militant thought in Algeria was profound. Muslim scholars and intellectual elites responded to the French occupation with a dual approach: neutral resistance on one hand, and the rational employment of Islamic principles on the other, mobilizing religious values to strengthen their resistance efforts. By the 1930s, this approach became more pronounced, as religious reformers faced several key transformations that shaped the movement:

- 1. Dismantling of Traditional Land Ownership Systems:** The colonial authorities dismantled Algeria's traditional throne ownership system, a method of collective production that ensured political unity. The seizure and redistribution of land by the French administration destroyed a vital economic and cultural resource. This land, once governed by Sharia law and religious customs that established social relations between landowners and farmers, was replaced by secular institutions

imposed by the French. The transformation of land ownership altered the fabric of Algerian society, weakening its cohesion and displacing religious norms.

2. **Cultural and Intellectual Siege:** The French occupation imposed severe restrictions on the Algerian people, limiting their movement and imposing a state of insecurity that stifled intellectual growth, particularly in religious and linguistic matters. This environment allowed heresies and superstitions to thrive, filling the vacuum left by the decline of traditional religious learning. Despite these challenges, institutions such as *zawiyas* and *turūq* (Sufi brotherhoods) continued to exist, preserving some form of religious continuity, albeit in a weakened state.

3. **Fragmentation of the Arab-Islamic World:** By the early 20th century, European colonial powers had taken control of much of the Arab world, leading to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the separation of Islamic nations. This fragmentation created a cultural rift among Arab and Islamic groups, weakening their ability to collectively resist European aggression. The decline of the caliphate, which symbolized political sovereignty with religious legitimacy, further complicated efforts to restore Islamic unity. This fragmentation was accompanied by the introduction of secular, Western concepts into Arab-Islamic societies, particularly in urban centers, where institutions with utilitarian and Enlightenment purposes were established under the pretext of modernizing the region.

### **The Emergence of Regenerative Thought**

Amid these cultural and political shifts, Algerian intellectuals found themselves navigating between two dominant ideological currents: liberal Enlightenment thought, which embraced Western modernity and political liberalism, and conservative thought, which rejected these ideas in favor of maintaining Islamic traditions. The tension between these two perspectives created space for a regenerative reformist current to emerge. This movement, defending the Islamic community, sought to correct misconceptions, eliminate religious negativity, and rationalize Islamic law. These reformers positioned themselves against Western-inspired Enlightenment rationalization, which had infiltrated Islamic countries, including Algeria.

Religious and social reform became integral to the national political struggle, as the reformers recognized that decolonization was not only a political project but also a cultural and intellectual one. They believed that by renewing Islamic thought and rationalizing Sharia, they could counter the negative effects of Western colonial influence while preserving the essence of Algerian identity. This synthesis of religion and politics laid the groundwork for the national liberation movement, as religious reformers helped cultivate a sense of cultural pride and intellectual resistance, ultimately contributing to Algeria's struggle for independence.

France's efforts to hybridize the Algerian personality through the manipulation of religion and culture sparked a powerful reform movement that combined religious revival with political resistance. The struggle for cultural and political sovereignty in Algeria was deeply intertwined with the efforts of Muslim scholars and reformers to restore religious legitimacy and combat the colonial intrusion of Western values. This reformist current played a crucial role in shaping Algeria's intellectual and political trajectory, as it sought to reclaim the nation's Islamic identity while navigating the complexities of modernity and colonialism.

In the early 20th century, reformist thought in Algeria, particularly among the conservative religious bloc, began to emerge as a response to the cultural and political challenges brought about by French colonialism. Influential clerics, such as Sheikh al-Mawlid ibn al-Mawhib, played a pivotal role in this movement. Ibn al-Mawhib, a prominent religious authority and the Mufti of Constantine, was deeply influenced by the progressive ideas of reformist scholars like Sheikh Muhammad 'Abdo and Rashid Rida. He recognized that Algeria's decline, driven by ignorance and backwardness, could only be remedied through mental enlightenment and engagement with modern sciences, alongside a deeper understanding of Islam.

However, Ibn al-Mawhib's reformist vision was shaped by a cautious and pragmatic approach. He believed that reform should occur within the framework of the French colonial presence and advocated for Algeria's integration into the French state, with a focus on achieving equality between Algerians and French settlers. His call for progressive education in both Arabic and French aimed to uplift Algerians through knowledge and tolerance, while retaining a connection to their Islamic heritage. However, this approach posed a dilemma: while Ibn al-Mawhib sought to preserve Islam as a moral and spiritual foundation, his proposal for reform within the colonial system failed to resonate with many Algerians who longed for national independence.

His advocacy for integration, coupled with demands for equality, was met with resistance from both the colonial administration and the broader Algerian public. The French authorities had no interest in granting equality to Algerians, as doing so would threaten their control over the territory and open the door to political participation by the colonized population. Furthermore, many Algerians rejected the notion of integration into a colonial system that had marginalized and oppressed them for decades.

The limitations of conservative reformist thought became evident as the national struggle for independence gained momentum. While Ibn al-Mawhib emphasized the need for Algerians to reconnect with the true teachings of Islam, his vision did not align with the revolutionary aspirations of the broader nationalist movement. Reformist leaders like Sheikh Abdul Hamid bin Badis, associated with the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars, advocated for a more radical departure from colonialism. They sought to resist French integration policies and preserve Algeria's national identity, emphasizing the need for an "Islam of thought and consideration" that would inspire social and political renewal.

This reformist Islamic claim, which promoted rationalizing religious practices and re-employing the provisions of Sharia, aimed to awaken society and build a militant national consciousness. By rejecting the passive, traditional Islam that had prevailed under colonial rule, reformers sought to empower Algerians to resist French cultural and political domination. They also worked to counter the colonial administration's use of religious figures to coerce Algerians into supporting France's war efforts, particularly during World War I, and opposed the policies of naturalization advocated by some political elites.

In summary, the conservative reformist movement in Algeria, led by figures like Ibn al-Mawhib, was a complex blend of religious renewal and pragmatic accommodation within the colonial framework. However, it ultimately failed to galvanize the broader population, as its call for reform within the confines of French rule was at odds with the growing demand for full national independence and the preservation of Algeria's Islamic and cultural identity.

The neutral position of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars on political engagement, focusing instead on religious reform and education, reveals a distinctive approach to the national struggle in Algeria. The association, established as an educational organization with defined goals, deliberately avoided deep involvement in political issues. This choice created a vacuum in the national discourse, which was filled by various intellectual and militant debates. These discussions gained momentum in the context of rapid economic transformations and colonial investments that reshaped Algerian society. As a result, the social role of religion in Algeria was redefined through two main proposals, both of which sought reform but approached it differently:

#### 1. The Secular Proposal:

This view was supported by the Algerian elite, who advocated for the separation of religion from political and civil matters. According to this proposal, human society is capable of achieving discipline, progress, and freedom without religious oversight. Religion, in this perspective, should be a personal choice and should not dictate political or civil legislation. This secular-liberal view of religion, as articulated by thinkers like Benjamin Constant, maintains that freedom is a fundamental right, and any authority that restricts these freedoms is illegitimate. Algerian secularists believed that the Islamic religion should remain a private matter, and that religion should not be used as a standard in governance. They argued that Algerian nationalism should not be framed exclusively in religious terms but rather be aligned with liberal values of individual freedom and national progress. However, they recognized that religion remained a significant part of the nation's cultural identity and legitimacy in its struggle for independence.

#### 2. The Reformist Proposal:

In contrast to the secular approach, the reformist view sought to preserve the foundational role of Islam in Algerian society. Reformists aimed to rationalize Islamic law (Sharia) and protect it from theological misinterpretations, particularly those associated with extreme forms of Sufism. They viewed Islam as an essential pillar of Algerian culture, customs, ethics, and legislation. Reformists advocated for a revival of Islam that would allow it to serve as a dynamic and regenerative force in the face of colonial occupation. They opposed the secularist integrationists who, influenced by French liberal values, denied the existence of an Algerian nation and argued for full integration into the French state. The reformists, as represented by *Al-Shihab* newspaper, rejected this notion, viewing it as a betrayal of the values of Algerian nationalism rooted in Islam.

One of the key moments in this intellectual debate occurred when some Algerian deputies, under the influence of French culture, claimed that there was no Algerian nationalism to speak of. They argued that Algeria's future was intertwined with France, and therefore, full integration with the French nation

was the only logical path forward. This was seen by the religious reformist thought as a betrayal of the values of the Algerian nation, which are derived from Islam. It was regarded as a form of "political mysticism," akin to the saying: "I searched for you, O France, only to find myself— I am France," mirroring the words of the mystic who says: "I searched for you, O God, only to find myself— I am God"

It was a clear response, as expressed by *Al-Shihab* magazine, to all those who needed to hear it, aiming to strip these liberal and secular representatives (the deputies) of their legitimacy in representing the Algerian nation, which "exists in the annals of history and in the present reality, possessing its religious and linguistic unity."

With the interface between the two proposals, new forms of national struggle emerged in Algeria, characterized by a moderate reformist approach. The elite of the Association of Algerian Muslim Scholars played a key role in reorganizing the resistance under the banner of religion, deliberately distancing themselves from political conflicts (whether French political or Islamic religious). This is evident in their reformist demands, which, while rooted in religious principles, also had political objectives. Their efforts aimed to unite the Algerian people under the banner of Arabism and Islam, educating the youth about the distinct Algerian identity and preparing them for future struggles. The direction of Algeria's future, shaped by the revolution of November 1954, became a historical reference for the political, economic, and social transformations that followed. These changes, linked to the national struggle, required mobilizing all ethno-cultural elements, such as religion, identity, and language, elevating them to a sacred status, which in turn legitimized the resistance in its various revolutionary forms.

## 2. The Revolutionary Trend in Building Militant Thought

Revolutionary thought in Algeria did not emerge in November 1954. Instead, rebellion—the essence of the revolution—has always been a means for Algerians to reclaim their social identity. This struggle manifested through various uprisings against the French presence, perceived as a threat to the social fabric. The response to colonial rule was characterized by acts of rebellion and defiance against the oppressive policies imposed by the colonial government. These actions represented a rejection of colonialism, reflecting the ideological rifts within the Algerian national movement. This movement was shaped by the ongoing conflict within Algerian society and influenced by global events such as the First and Second World Wars, along with the values that arose during the Cold War between the Eastern and Western powers. These factors significantly affected the development of militant thought in Algeria, as well as the dynamics between the French government and Algerians (the elite).

The Cold War shifted the competition for power toward economic dimensions, altering the legitimacy of the national political struggle. Consequently, the revolution became a central concept and a mechanism for achieving national interests, opposing the colonial powers driven by imperial expansionism—defined as exercising control beyond national borders. This ongoing conflict produced symbols and principles that contradicted one another between the two dominant ideologies: communism and capitalism. These ideologies had a profound impact on the construction of militant thought and revolutionary action in Algeria as a French colony.

a) In response to the communist trend, the French argued that "the revolution in Algeria is the creation of the rules of the communist theory, which is based on employing the existing ethnic, social, and ideological opposition and exploiting it to resist the existing regime in the style of terrorism and propaganda" (Pervillé, 1985). According to this perspective, the call for freedom and the liberation of Algeria was seen as a fabrication of international communism, and the Algerian national movement was purportedly a product of the French Communist Party. This narrative began with the establishment of the North African Star as the first organization and subsequently evolved into the Algerian People's Party, which founded the Movement for the Victory of Democratic Freedoms, leading to the emergence of the Algerian National Movement (MNA) and the National Liberation Front (FLN). Thus, the French thesis attributed revolutionary action to a communist framework, disregarding the liberal demands articulated by the intellectual elite since 1919 through the Algerian youth movement and the Prince Khalid movement advocating for autonomy. These groups were not aligned with communist ideology but instead supported integrationist liberalism, maintaining loyalty among citizens.

b) Under the pressures of economic and social forces from both the East and the West, revolutionary ideology emerged in Algeria as part of the struggle for legitimacy. This involved balancing social and political modernization with the desire for freedom, as articulated in the manifesto, alongside cultural and religious reform led by the Association of Muslim Scholars. Radical perspectives, as represented by the People's Party and its political offshoots like the Movement for the Triumph of

Democratic Freedoms, the National Movement, and the National Liberation Front, revealed fundamental differences within the revolutionary ranks. These divisions highlighted the conflict between centralists and supporters of the People's Party, as well as between radicals and liberals. This complexity contributed to the character of the struggle, which Muhammad Harbi described as "La lutte des clans." In this context, popular framing based on ideological beliefs was often absent, resulting in a shift toward personal convictions.

The revolution became a military, social, and political necessity, marking a pivotal moment for testing the values of struggle. This development was largely influenced by the reaction of the Algerian people, whose cultural values served as the primary reference for any political legitimacy. The pioneers of the revolutionary movement, particularly the popular factions, recognized this and re-emphasized these cultural values to build their capacities for leadership. They sought to guide a population suffering from economic and social oppression. Notably, Masali al-Hajj transformed these cultural values into a revolutionary vision that opposed French rule. This vision prioritized confirming the identity of the Algerian people by "seeking a revolutionary national government, an army, and restoring Arabic as an official language" (Harbi, 1980: 16).

The emergence of populism, encompassing cultural, religious, and ethnic dimensions, redefined the concept of national struggle in the Algerian revolution. This shift was rooted in the beliefs of the followers of Masali al-Hajj, who considered any political program or direct intervention essential for solving the national issue. They understood that neglecting public awareness and unity could lead to reckless actions. As social and political behaviors became contingent upon "revolutionary awareness," the resistance for independence embraced notions of sacredness and sacrifice (Harbi, 1999: 52). This ideology arose under the pressures of class relations shaped by the capitalist colonial mode of production, which undermined the traditional agricultural economy. As a result, many Algerians found themselves transformed into a working class of impoverished peasants and laborers.

The political discourse during this period highlighted the divide between the rich and the poor, influenced by external factors. It drew its foundations from the deep roots of Arab nationalism, particularly its spiritual dimensions. This was evident through the affirmation of Algerian values and national commitment, as well as the strengthening of popular patriotism. The revolutionaries emphasized the creativity and moral superiority of the uneducated. This populism forged a bond between the Movement for the Victory of Democratic Freedoms and the People's Party. The movement became embedded in the ideological fabric of society, and resistance emerged as a necessity, embracing revolutionary violence as a means of expression. This was a continuation of previous popular resistance, or jihad, led by populist leaders. Such a shift became a crucial variable for measuring the legitimacy of the national political struggle concerning sovereignty and independence in Algeria.

The features of this struggle began to emerge amid the crisis within the Algerian People's Party and the movements advocating for the victory of freedoms. This crisis highlighted the division among leaders, separating them into factions of voters and centralists. These leaders were committed to political legitimacy, a concept that held little meaning during French occupation. This turmoil led to a shaky perception of the party among middle-class social and cultural activists. The leftist members of the split movement began questioning Algeria's Arab identity and Islamic heritage. In response, these leftists, as members of the French Federal Committee, voted overwhelmingly—28 out of 32—to employ force against the Central Committee to reject this notion (Harbi, 1980: 65).

Because these principles form the foundation of Algerian mass populism, the leftists struggled to revitalize populism and secure political legitimacy. This situation prompted the party's youth, mobilized through its newspapers and organizations, to establish a clandestine revolutionary wing. The French authorities discovered this wing in 1950, but it was later reorganized under the name of the Revolutionary Front for Unity and Action. This newly formed group ultimately facilitated the November 1954 revolution, which redefined Algerian national thought and established new values and standards to clarify the concept of national and political struggle.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The construction of militant thought in Algeria assumed ideological dimensions that reflected a continuous narrative of the national movement during the French occupation. This struggle unfolded on two fronts: one internal, marked by tensions within the National Party and among various national factions, and another external, directed against the colonizer. The nature of this conflict hinged on how concepts derived from Western experiences, as well as geopolitical and economic transformations, influenced the organizations of the Algerian national movement. These transformations were

exacerbated by the presence of French elements in Algeria, particularly concerning public order and the principle of settlement.

This ideological struggle manifested as a response from the national movement's leaders, establishing a reaction against the French administration. At that time, integrationist trends clashed with independence movements, leading to distinct ideological options that defined the national struggle:

1. **Reformist Trend:** This religious intellectual model was characterized by two main aspects. The first was the influence of Sufism and traditional Islamic practices, which collided with early resistance efforts, such as those led by Prince Abdul Qadir. This aspect focused on solidifying spiritual values and the ascetic methods tied to national identity. The second aspect was represented by the reformist thought of the Muslim Scholars Association, which promoted a renaissance discourse for the entire Islamic nation, rooted in a shared language and history. However, the reformist trend faced limitations due to the adverse conditions imposed by the French colonizers, who systematically marginalized Algerians socially and economically. Consequently, this Islamic orientation adopted a pacifist approach, advocating for a separation of religion from politics to protect Islamic doctrine from cultural and social exclusion.

2. **Socialist Trend:** This trend significantly influenced the militant thought of the revolutionary elite, linking their activities to Western socialist revolutionary ideas, particularly scientific socialism. These ideas emphasized anti-colonialism, class disparities, and justice. The resonance of these concepts among oppressed peoples, including Algerians under colonial rule, prompted educated elites to adopt them as a revolutionary and developmental framework following national independence. The conviction emerged that socialist principles could address the aspirations of the Algerian people and their national movement against French colonialism, perceived as an imperialist force exerting economic pressure on vulnerable populations. This was echoed in the words of Mujahid Arab Martyr Ibn Mahidi, who articulated that the objective of the Algerians taking up arms was to expel the imperialist occupier, establish a social democratic republic, and construct a socialist system. The revolutionary elite and the Algerian Communist Party coalesced around these socialist principles, rejecting ideologies that deviated from the cultural specifics of Algerian identity, particularly regarding religious beliefs and Islam as a progressive reference.

3. **Liberal Trend:** This strand of militant thought in Algeria drew on Enlightenment principles, advocating for secularization and the liberation of production from totalitarian controls and religious moral constraints. However, because it espoused a bourgeois capitalist ideology, it struggled to find a place within the national revolutionary struggle. Despite this, there were individuals sympathetic to liberal ideas, promoting innovative ideologies aimed at fostering democracy, which allowed them to navigate the political landscape amid the tensions between socialist and reformist doctrines.

The ideological contestation reflected in both the socialist and liberal trends significantly shaped the national movement's thought and its militant elements, who spoke on behalf of Algerian sovereignty. These figures transformed into revolutionary symbols and established criteria for legitimizing the national struggle against colonialism. Ultimately, this ideological and intellectual process responded to a legitimate demand: the urgent necessity to liberate Algeria from French colonial rule and redefine sovereignty through the lens of freedom.

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## E-LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN ALGERIA

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**Abstract:** *The term e-learning gained popularity in the 1960s. This type of education has since permeated various fields and educational circles. E-learning represents an effective solution to issues related to equal opportunities in education. It allows everyone to access education without exceptions, free from barriers such as age, nationality, time, and location. This development is largely due to the efforts of UNESCO and other organizations focused on advancing education. Additionally, advancements in "information and communication technology," which include computer technologies, multimedia, and the global information network, have significantly contributed to the rise of more efficient and higher-quality forms of e-learning. Algeria is one of the developing countries that has engaged in virtual education for several years. The country has established centers and institutions that enable learners to attend lessons remotely, outside traditional educational settings. These initiatives utilize modern technologies to stay current with global developments. However, despite these efforts, Algeria still faces numerous challenges. This research aims to clarify the key components of Algeria's experience in e-learning. It also identifies the main obstacles faced by this educational approach and proposes potential solutions.*

**Keywords:** e-learning, online education, communication systems, correspondence education, higher education

### 1. Introduction

Since the last century, the world has experienced significant scientific and technological advancements. This progress has prompted many countries to reevaluate their educational systems and identify their weaknesses. The shortcomings of traditional educational institutions became evident as they struggled to accommodate the growing number of students eager to continue their studies. Moreover, "the need for education has increased as a logical response to the challenges arising from the speed of scientific and technological change, and its expansion to include all areas of life" (Zaytoon, 2004: 277).

Faced with these challenges, traditional educational institutions recognized their inability to meet the educational needs of this large segment of society. This inability stemmed from insufficient resources, inadequate educational frameworks, and a lack of qualified technical and administrative staff. At the same time, the public became increasingly aware of the importance of education. As a result, "the industrially developed countries have taken a radical and comprehensive approach to their educational systems with the aim of comprehensive change in educational thought and educational practices. This review has led to the establishment of new educational systems that align with the nature of scientific and technological excellence" (Zaytoon, 2004: 280). These new systems aim to help as many students as possible fulfill their educational ambitions while overcoming obstacles in their educational journeys. They also provide a comfortable and flexible learning environment, with curricula that cater to students' interests and career goals, allowing them to leverage modern technologies and resources.

One of the most significant developments in this area is "virtual education," which has addressed many challenges faced by traditional education systems. This approach enables a broad range of individuals to pursue their education and achieve their goals by eliminating temporal, spatial, and geographical barriers. The close relationship between educational technology and communication technology has also played a vital role in advancing virtual education. Institutions worldwide now offer innovative learning opportunities with modern features, diverse options, and pathways for hundreds of thousands of people (Madani, 2007: 11-12). Many developed and even developing countries have embraced virtual education as an effective solution to meet the various challenges of contemporary life, particularly technological challenges.

Algeria, as a developing country, has adopted this educational system, facing challenges that are often more significant than those encountered by developed countries. The required changes to its educational system are more profound, considering the unique characteristics of the target population and the educational environment necessary for the success of this type of education.

## 2. Research Problem

This research aims to address the following questions:

- What is the current state and future outlook of virtual education in Algeria? How can we evaluate the Algerian experience in this field?
- What are the main challenges facing this type of education in Algeria?
- What solutions can be proposed to overcome these challenges?

Research Objectives:

- Understand the nature of virtual education compared to traditional education.
- Examine the initiatives undertaken by Algerian schools and universities to ensure the success of this educational model.
- Identify the challenges faced by the virtual education experience in Algeria.
- Propose potential solutions to address these challenges.

## 3. Significance of the Study

This study highlights the role of the virtual education system in expanding educational opportunities, promoting knowledge, and achieving educational equality. It also evaluates how Algerian educational institutions can learn from international experiences in this field. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of investing in educational improvement while addressing the obstacles faced by these institutions and seeking solutions to overcome them.

## 4. Research Methodology and Approach

This study employs both analytical and descriptive methods to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Algerian experience in virtual education.

The Concept of Distance Education:

Virtual education, often referred to as distance education, is a structured form of education where learning groups are separated, and interactive communication systems are used to connect learners, educational resources, and teachers (Shlosser & Simonson, 2015: 1). This definition includes four essential components:

First, this form of education relies on established institutions, distinguishing it from self-directed learning. These institutions may include traditional schools or colleges, as well as non-traditional organizations (such as commercial companies) that adopt virtual education to train their employees and enhance efficiency.

Second, the concept of distance encompasses not only physical separation between teachers and students but also temporal distance. This means that the teaching and learning processes do not occur simultaneously, with spatial and temporal distances being intentionally defined.

Third, communication systems refer to electronic media such as television, telephone, the Internet, and postal correspondence used in distance education.

Fourth, effective learning relies on the interaction between learners, resources, and teachers. These resources must undergo suitable educational design to facilitate understanding. They can be visual, tangible, or auditory (Shlosser & Simonson, 2015: 1-2).

Various terms are used interchangeably with virtual education or to emphasize specific aspects of it, including home study and independent study. Virtual education represents a learning situation where communication tools—such as publications, telephone and telex networks, television, and computer systems—play a crucial role in bridging the distance between teachers and learners. This enables opportunities for joint interaction (Zaytoon, 2004: 281).

## 5. Other definitions include

Holmberg's Definition: One of the simplest and most recognized definitions, Holmberg describes distance education as encompassing all study methods and educational stages without direct and continuous supervision by teachers present in traditional classrooms. However, the educational process is planned, organized, and guided by an educational institution and its instructors (Mahmoud, 2014: 13).

Moore's Definition: Moore defines virtual education as a teaching method where teaching behaviors are partially separated from learning behaviors. This occurs through communication between teachers and learners, facilitated by printed, electronic, audio, and visual educational materials that transfer information between both parties (Madani, 2007: 16).

**Peters' Definition:** Peters describes virtual education as a means of disseminating knowledge and acquiring skills through efficient organization of the components of virtual learning, utilizing multimedia technology to produce high-quality educational materials that support learners in gaining knowledge in their respective environments (Madani, 2007: 16).

UNESCO defines virtual education as an educational process where most or all teaching is conducted by an instructor who is physically distant from the learner. In this context, most communication occurs through a specific medium, which can be electronic or printed. The American Society for Distance Learning (USDL) further defines it as the process of acquiring knowledge and skills through a medium that facilitates the transfer of education and information. This includes various technologies and different forms of learning for virtual education (Mahmoud, 2014: 14).

Additionally, virtual education can be described as a modern educational method that depends on the learner being in a different location from the source of education, which may be the teacher, a book, or even a group of learners. Currently, virtual education leverages communication technologies and computer systems to facilitate the learning process (Le Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle, 2020: 4).

From these definitions, we can conclude that virtual education comprises several key elements:

- There are temporal and spatial boundaries separating the learner from the teacher.
- There is interaction between the teacher and the learner in a cohesive cognitive educational environment, as well as interaction among learners themselves.
- The process relies on various communication media and technologies (print, audio, visual, electronic) to convey information to the learner.
- It is supported by technical and administrative planning and organization of the educational process, following carefully designed courses.

## **6 Motives for Switching to Virtual Education**

Many countries have shifted towards virtual education technology due to several compelling reasons. This transition has become essential, as global trends and organizations dedicated to scientific development emphasize its necessity. Key motives include:

- **Unequal Educational Opportunities:** A significant segment of society seeks training and educational attainment. However, many individuals face obstacles to enrolling in universities for various reasons, including age, health, social status, or professional conditions.
- **High Costs of University Education:** The financial burden of higher education in many countries has left a large group of students unable to pursue their educational goals.
- **Imbalanced Distribution of Educational Institutions:** The uneven geographical distribution of educational facilities makes it challenging for many individuals to enroll, effectively denying them their right to education.
- **Increasing Demand for Education:** The growing number of students wishing to study has led to a shortfall in traditional institutions, which often lack the necessary resources and equipment to accommodate them.
- **Technological Advancements:** The technological developments witnessed since the last century have generated a rapid influx of information. This has created a need for a new type of education that effectively utilizes modern technology.

## **7. Objectives of Virtual Education**

Based on the motives for adopting virtual education, we can identify the objectives this system aims to achieve:

- **Achieving Equal Opportunities in Education:** This is often described as "education democracy," which emphasizes that "everyone has the right to access available educational opportunities." Virtual education helps overcome time, age, and geographical barriers, allowing all individuals to learn without commuting. As noted by Al-Sanbel (2001), "This type of education helps to achieve the democratization of education, as education is transferred to every citizen wherever they wish. It also contributes to making education a continuous and extended process throughout life" (p. 84).
- **Promoting a Culture of Self-Learning:** Virtual education encourages self-learning and self-training, developing learners' skills and experiences. This shift moves away from traditional rote learning, fostering autonomy that enhances the quality of education.
- **Leveraging Modern Technologies:** Virtual education provides students and teachers with various digital tools, such as websites and CDs, to enhance their learning experiences.

- **Creating a Supportive Educational Environment:** This approach aims to improve academic achievement for many students while offering good training and professional growth opportunities for employees. By harnessing qualified learning resources, virtual education contributes to developing effective professionals, which positively impacts societal development across various fields.
- **Reducing Classroom Pressure:** By accommodating more students, virtual education alleviates overcrowding in classrooms, enhancing the effectiveness of teachers and creating a more comfortable atmosphere for both students and instructors.
- **Organizing the Educational Process:** Virtual education facilitates the planning of school schedules, exam systems, and student evaluations, ensuring that goals are clearly defined and achievable.

## **8- Features and Characteristics of Virtual Education**

Virtual education offers several advantages, including:

- **Increased Learner Freedom:** Learners have greater freedom to study and pursue education compared to their peers in traditional education systems. These systems often require adherence to a strict schedule imposed by the educational institution (Zaytoun, 2004: 284).
- **Innovative Educational Material Preparation:** Virtual education employs specialized methods for preparing educational content. This approach ensures that the course structure, its formal elements, and presentation methods are effectively integrated. The course does not merely present educational material; instead, it simulates the teacher's role through guided educational dialogue. This method fosters a sense of communication between learners and the "hidden teacher" embedded within the course design (Zaytoun, 2004: 284). The interactive process is a key feature of this educational approach.
- **Alignment with Modern Educational Principles:** Virtual education adheres to various principles of contemporary education. These include motivating learners, recognizing individual differences in learning styles, and allowing learners to select courses that align with their professional interests and desires. This flexibility ensures that education is tailored to meet individuals' professional, personal, and social needs while connecting to the labor market.
- **Utilization of Modern Technologies:** This educational approach leverages advanced technologies and contemporary communication tools, setting it apart from traditional education as a reflection of scientific and technological progress.
- **Overcoming Barriers to Traditional Education:** Virtual education addresses many challenges that restrict access to traditional education. These challenges include issues related to regularity, time, location, working conditions, admission requirements, age, and evaluation systems. Moreover, it facilitates access for a broader age range, including adult workers and homemakers, who may not fit into the typical age brackets defined by traditional institutions (Zaytoun, 2004: 287).

## **9- Stages of Virtual Education**

Virtual education has evolved through several key stages:

### **9.1 Teaching by Correspondence**

This early form of virtual education involved the exchange of letters through postal mail. It achieved significant success in Western countries, particularly in Germany, the United States, England, and France, and was also adopted by several developing countries, including Algeria. The target audience for correspondence learning primarily consisted of adults with professional, social, and family responsibilities. This demographic remains a focus of distance education today (Schlosser & Simonson, 2015: 9).

### **9.2 Open Universities**

Open universities allow learners the freedom to select materials that suit their needs and preferences. This stage of virtual education utilizes various resources, such as printed materials, audiovisual content, CDs, and correspondence through regular mail, television, and radio programs that explain the courses.

### **9.3 Video Conferencing**

Video conferencing represents a significant advancement in virtual education, incorporating both audio and video components to enhance interactivity in the learning process. It relies on satellite technology and satellite television broadcasting, making it one of the most important tools in virtual education due to its accessibility for teachers (Karima, 2018: 350).

#### **9.4 Virtual Education Using the Internet**

This is the most recent stage and reflects the global trend toward online education. The widespread availability of the Internet and the rapid dissemination of information have led to the emergence of new educational institutions that primarily rely on technology. These institutions are often referred to as monotypical institutions, with the more advanced versions being called virtual universities (Karima, 2018: 350).

#### **10. The Experience of Virtual Education in Algeria**

Like other developing countries, Algeria has embraced distance education for various reasons, including its vast geographical area and the goal of achieving universal education. This method has proven effective worldwide in disseminating knowledge while reducing costs. The Ministries of Education and Higher Education in Algeria have made significant efforts to promote virtual education. However, the Algerian experience is still in its early stages and faces numerous challenges and obstacles, which will be discussed further. Some notable Algerian programs include:

##### **10.1 Ministry of Education Programs**

###### **10.1.1 The National Institute for Education and Distance Learning**

Established in 1969 as the National Center for Generalized Education, this institution was transformed in 2001 into the National Bureau of Education and Distance Training. It serves as a valuable resource for learners of all ages, providing opportunities for those who have not had the chance to complete their studies (National Bureau for Education and Distance Training, 2020: 3).

Duties:

Instruction is provided in accordance with official programs, either through correspondence or by utilizing media technologies and communication to support individuals who could not continue their formal education.

The institute aims to reduce the school dropout rate by organizing support and alternative quotas for students requiring special educational assistance.

It implements appropriate methods and means of education and distance learning, particularly through information and communication technologies.

The institute establishes partnerships and cooperation with foreign bodies and institutions to enhance its activities.

It contributes to promoting the Arabic language, particularly for non-native speakers in Algeria.

It ensures the provision of complementary education within the framework of normative renewal and social and professional advancement (National Bureau for Education and Distance Training, 2018).

###### **10.1.2 The iPad Digital School as a Model**

The iPad Digital School aims to effectively integrate information and communication technologies within the educational environment. It seeks to foster continuous communication between schools, teachers, learners, and parents, providing students with greater access to automated media within educational institutions and enhancing their chances of academic success.

The "iPad" Foundation launched this digital school, targeting secondary and intermediate students with a special online program designed for those preparing for the baccalaureate certificate or the basic education certificate. This virtual school, named "Your Upbringing," serves as a comprehensive and integrated educational space for all stakeholders in distance education. It specifically caters to students, parents, and educational institutions (Dabab & Bruais, 2019: 159).

The iPad Foundation has also created a virtual school that allows students enrolled in public or private institutions to prepare for exams. The subjects taught in this virtual school align with the official curriculum outlined by the Ministry of Education. Launched four years ago for primary education, "Your Upbringing" provides access to 300 lessons for final-year students and 300 lessons for intermediate students, along with 3,000 exercises that include corrections and explanations. Students can communicate with their subject teachers through the program to seek further clarification. Additionally, parents can monitor their children's activities at school, including lesson schedules, attendance, academic performance, and feedback from teachers. The program enables teachers to access lists of students and their lessons, fostering a collaborative educational environment (Dabab & Bruais, 2019: 160).

## **10.2 Virtual Education Programs in the Field of Higher Education**

The University of Algeria is among the universities that have proactively adopted and employed the virtual education system. Among the goals it seeks to achieve through this are:

Absorbing the increasing numbers of teachers while gradually overcoming the challenges posed by the inverted pyramid structure regarding current teachers (quantitative criterion).

Improving training awareness and rapidly approaching international standards in terms of quality assurance (qualitative standard).

### **10.2.1 University of Continuous Training**

#### **10.2.1.1 Definition of the University and Its Teaching System**

It is a public institution affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education, established in 1990, aimed at providing educational services to those who did not have the opportunity to obtain it due to various circumstances. Since its inception, the institution has relied on the virtual education system and utilized a range of educational means and tools. This university comprises 53 centers and 11 annexes nationwide, supervised by university professors. Before the recent reforms, it allowed any holder of a baccalaureate degree or an equivalent certificate to join and complete his studies to obtain a certificate in applied university studies.

The teaching system at this university does not differ from that of a regular university in terms of educational programs and courses; the only difference lies in the laws and conditions of teaching. Students undergo a three-year training program that includes academic training in their field according to their specialization, with students required to complete and defend a graduation project in their final year of training.

As for the graduation patterns before the recent reforms, the university's graduation consisted of two phases:

**Pre-graduation Stage:** Registration required obtaining a third-year secondary level, called the preparatory stage, which has three divisions: Arts, Science, and Management and Economics. Students can choose their mode of education, whether regular or free, with compulsory attendance, taking into account the availability of teaching staff. At the end of this year, students take the baccalaureate exam (bac UFC), qualifying them for university admission. However, with the new reforms, the preparatory year for the entrance exam to the University of Continuous Training has been abolished, and enrollment now requires only a baccalaureate degree, similar to regular universities.

**Post-graduation Stage:** At this stage, registration is based on the baccalaureate degree obtained, and it includes two types of education:

**Face-to-Face (F2F):** F2F classes are scheduled based on the conditions of employed students.

**Distance Education Using Audio-Visual Means:** This is one of the primary tasks for which this institution was established. This is conducted through the university website, with programmed lectures and uploaded audio-visual lessons. It also provides electronic discs containing all necessary materials for learners. For inquiries and concerns, students can submit their questions via university email, and responses are sent to the same email. Regular communication and interaction between learners and professors occur twice a week to enhance the educational experience. Additionally, virtual education relies on radio and television classes, along with weekly lessons broadcast on national terrestrial channels (Larbi, 2017: 31).

#### **10.2.1.2 Reforms Witnessed by the University in the Field of Virtual Education**

The university has made significant advancements in its training performance in distance education, particularly after developing educational platforms that allow students to study from any location while benefiting from direct supervision by professors and engaging in various activities virtually. This setup enables students to progress academically without relocating.

The university has also undergone several reforms, launching remote registration programs for bachelor's and master's degrees in multiple fields, including economic, commercial, legal, political sciences, media, communication, languages, and automated media. Those wishing to enroll in higher education for a bachelor's or master's degree remotely must possess a secondary education baccalaureate certificate or a foreign certificate recognized as equivalent. Registrations were open from February 4 to February 24, 2021, through a dedicated website for this process, which was restructured to align with the reforms affecting the higher education sector by adopting the LMD system after granting the certificate of applied university studies (DUEA) (Algerian Study Website, 2021).

#### **2.6.1.3 Recent Projects of the University of Continuous Training in the Field of Virtual Education**

**FORTIF Training (Master):** This program focuses on training specialists and includes two components in distance education. It is a collaboration with UNESCO, CNED, the French CNAM, and the

A band 6. One key aspect of this program is preparing lessons on the Internet (Web) using the SERPOLET virtual learning platform for distance education.

### **10.2.2 National Virtual Education Project**

#### 10.2.2.1 Overview

The National Virtual Education Project was launched at the University of Algeria to address existing gaps in educational framework and improve training quality to meet quality assurance standards. This project originated at the University of Oran and aims to integrate new educational methods. The project has three main stages:

First Stage: This stage focuses on using technology, such as video lectures, to manage the increasing number of learners while enhancing educational quality in the short term.

Second Stage: This stage adopts modern pedagogical technologies, particularly "WAP," which refers to online learning or e-learning. The goal is to ensure quality assurance in the medium term.

Third Stage: This stage involves integrating and disseminating the distance education system. It promotes distance education through the Knowledge Channel, benefiting users beyond the university context (Maamri, 2013). Currently, education relies on a network of visual lecture platforms and e-learning resources available to most educational institutions. Access to this network is facilitated by the National Research Network (ARN). Thirteen higher education institutions have set up locations for both sending and receiving data, while 64 other institutions serve as receiving sites. This setup encompasses 77 higher education institutions, including universities, university centers, and higher schools. The Scientific and Technical Research Center serves as the project's central hub (Salami et al., 2016: 38).

The project features three visual lectures from several universities, including the University of Benyoussef Benkhadda, Harib Boumediene in Algiers, Saad Halab Boubagi Mokhtar in Annaba, Qasid Rabb Habbour Fafleh, Abdel Rahman Femirah in Bejaya, Hajel Khader Binta, Mentouri Bikbek Santine, and Farahat Abass Séf. Additional contributors include the universities of Sanya Bouhran and Abu Kerbe Kerbe Laydemant Touch, along with the Center for the Development of Advanced Technologies and the Research Center in Scientific Media and Mastery (Salami et al., 2016: 38).

#### 2.6.2.2 Modern Programs and Future Projects for Virtual Education at the Algerian University

COSELEARN: This program is a collaboration between the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Swiss Foundation Qualilearning. It focuses on training in the principles of distance education and involves nine countries from the Sahel and Maghreb regions. The program has two stages:

First Stage: In 2007, 34 experts were trained and employed as specialists and engineers in various Algerian university institutions.

Second Stage: This stage began in March 2009 and involved training assistant specialists (now specialists in e-learning) with goals such as:

Strengthening permanent support teams in technology.

Increasing the number of students by providing a technological environment that connects partner universities. Thousands of students gained free access to various services, including email, shared calendars, and document storage (Saidahm, 2018).

Avicenne Virtual: This is one of the largest virtual education projects in the Mediterranean region. It uses information and communication technology in education, combining technical, media, and educational factors when preparing programs and materials. A group of professors from participating universities supervises this process. Educational materials are accessible in more than six languages and include 15 Arab and European countries: Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Turkey, France, Spain, Cyprus, Malta, Italy, and Britain. Each center across these countries is known as the Avicenna Knowledge Center (AKC) (Qahham & Al-Sabti, 2015: 19).

Project auf - Master Branch: This project focuses on insight and visualization in computer-aided design.

Transfert auf: This project configures two components in the field of virtual education, using the ACOLAD virtual education platform.

DESS UTICEF: This master's program trains specialists in the use of information and communication technology to enhance education and training. Louis Pasteur University in Strasbourg and the CERIST Center for the Study and Research of Scientific and Technical Information oversee this initiative.



FPD.CARO: This initiative, led by the University of Bejaia, introduces new educational practices based on independence, social learning, cognitive conflict, self-learning, and knowledge building through educational activities (Gharaf, 2014: 74-75).

programmatically.IDE: This program directly supports ongoing reforms in vocational education. It addresses economic and industrial needs, aiming to expand media and communication technology in higher education and scientific research. The program also seeks to develop training through underutilized means (Saidahm, 2018: 15-16).

#### 10.2.2.3 The Equipment of Al-Jazari University to Implement the Virtual Education System

To ensure the success of virtual education at Algerian universities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has allocated a significant budget of 1.35 billion Algerian dinars. The electronic education system has been enhanced through a national network connecting libraries. This network aims to expand access to all institutions across the country, based on the following:

Video Lecture Network and Electronic System: This initiative focuses on optimizing human and material resources by creating a video lecture network that integrates all university institutions. It includes 13 sending sites and plans for 46 additional sites. The network was expanded starting from the 2009-2010 academic year, reaching preparatory schools equipped with virtual laboratories and multimedia teaching halls connected to a special video lecture network (Abassi & Foudi, 2020: 90).

E-Learning System: The e-learning system is based on a virtual learning platform functioning as a client-server model. This system allows for setting up and accessing resources online in an asynchronous manner. Teachers can utilize various methods, including lessons, exercises, and practical lessons. The system also offers tools for collaboration among professors, such as email, forums, and chat (Abassi & Foudi, 2020: 88-90).

The ultimate goal is to develop real online educational pathways that consider learners' needs and are founded on focused pedagogy. This approach follows a specific pedagogical charter aligned with new educational techniques that incorporate information and communication technologies, such as participatory training, structuring, sequencing, and scenario development. It adheres to standards related to IMS (SCORM, LOM) (Abassi & Foudi, 2020: 90).

### 11. Obstacles to Virtual Education in Algeria

Despite efforts to implement successful virtual education in schools and universities, Algeria faces numerous financial, human, and technical challenges:

#### 11.1 Physical and Technical Obstacles

Limited Material Resources: There is a scarcity of educational materials and software, inadequate equipment (e.g., computers), and insufficient internet coverage and speed.

Budget Constraints: The educational sector requires substantial financial resources for internet access that institutions often cannot provide.

High Cost of Communication: Electronic communication can be expensive.

Lack of Integrated Infrastructure: The absence of cohesive hardware, software, and communication networks hampers progress.

Weak University Sites: University facilities often lack organization, and there is a shortage of specialists in this area (Salami et al., 2016: 39).

Recognition Issues: Some official bodies do not recognize the certificates issued by online universities.

Cost of Educational Software: Designing and producing educational software is costly.

Inconsistent Standards: There is no unified standard for content creation.

Frequent Network Interruptions: Connectivity issues can disrupt learning.

Challenges with Implementation: Applying adaptive technologies can be difficult.

#### 11.2 Human Obstacles

Lack of Awareness: Many professors and officials lack knowledge of computer technologies and are more familiar with traditional education methods.

Student Resistance: Students often prefer traditional methods that require less effort, as they seek ready-made lectures (Belbakai, 2015).

Training Needs: Teachers, learners, and administrators require training in computer and internet use. However, there is a notable lack of interest in foreign language proficiency courses among teaching staff (Dabbah & Brouis, 2019: 164).

**Shift Towards Self-Learning:** The internet's role in education may lead to confusion and anxiety among learners without proper guidance and supervision.

**Negative Teacher Attitudes:** Some educators view technology as peripheral to the educational process, believing that traditional teaching methods are sufficient. Others perceive technological tools as competition for their roles (Dabbah & Brouis, 2019: 164).

**Low Student Engagement:** There is often a poor response from students to new educational methods.

**Brain Drain:** There is a lack of qualified specialists in technology fields due to emigration.

**Unclear Concept of Educational Technologies:** Despite advancements in developed countries since the late 1960s, Arab nations, including Algeria, still often refer to educational tools in outdated terms. Consequently, the concept of educational technologies is not fully embraced or applied in ministries of education, universities, or institutes (Dabbah & Brouis, 2019: 165).

**Incentives for E-Learning:** Clear incentive systems are necessary to motivate students towards e-learning. Currently, the lack of defined methods and incentives hinders the effectiveness of online education (Dabbah & Brouis, 2019: 165).

## **12. Suggested Solutions**

**Continuous Training and Support:** Implement ongoing training programs for teachers and administrators at all levels to enhance their skills in virtual education.

**Community Awareness Programs:** Raise awareness among community members about the benefits of virtual education. Organize initiatives aimed at correcting negative perceptions and promoting positive attitudes towards this mode of learning.

**Curriculum Development:** Ensure that curricula are continuously updated and aligned with established educational plans, facilitating the effective integration of virtual education.

**Re-engineering Educational Processes:** Revise educational and administrative processes to effectively utilize educational information systems and tools, especially digital communication technologies and self-directed learning resources (Dridi, 2017: 223).

**Program Reassessment:** Reevaluate and enhance existing programs, courses, and educational strategies. Focus on effectively implementing various information technology programs, including the knowledge economy, information systems, software engineering, networking, e-commerce, and artificial intelligence. Distance education should be prominently integrated into these programs (Dridi, 2017: 223).

**Improved Communication Networks:** Work towards establishing an advanced, cost-effective communication network to promote equitable access to education for all groups. **Accessible Educational Resources:** Develop and distribute educational materials in the form of e-books at minimal costs, ensuring accessibility for all learners. **Addressing Resource Shortages:** Tackle the shortages related to material resources and equipment essential for effective virtual education. **Technical and Administrative Solutions:** Identify and resolve all technical and administrative challenges that hinder the implementation of virtual education.

**Recognition of Distance Education:** Promote the integration of distance education in postgraduate studies, enabling the issuance of recognized certificates for those seeking educational advancement.

**Skill Development:** Encourage educational institutions to focus on developing general skills, including critical thinking, planning, cognitive and psychological adaptability, technological proficiency, and effective time and resource management.

## **12. Research Results**

Through our examination of the concept of virtual education and the Algerian experience in this field, the present study reveals the following findings: The experience of virtual education in Algeria is still in its early stages. It has not yet fully transcended the constraints of time and space. The understanding of virtual education in Algerian society is primarily limited to correspondence education. This limitation stems from a lack of awareness about virtual education and its advancements, which is further exacerbated by a general detachment from modern information and communication technologies.

## **13. Conclusion**

Virtual education in Algeria has yet to achieve a satisfactory level of quality. It continues to face numerous challenges, both material—such as insufficient equipment and resources—and human, relating to training and acceptance of new technologies. Additionally, the absence of a unified standard for content creation and technical issues regarding security and data integrity further complicate the situation. Despite the availability of innovative websites, Algeria suffers from a scarcity of experts in information technology, marketing, and management. There is also a shortage of professional educators who are specifically trained in these areas. These shortcomings adversely impact the quality of education and hinder scientific advancement and national development. Given these observations, Algeria must critically evaluate the shortcomings in its virtual education system. It should thoroughly analyze the challenges it faces and devise suitable solutions to overcome them. Moreover, establishing a forward-looking vision for the educational process—particularly in the realm of virtual education—is essential for the country's future progress.

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## CHALLENGES AND NOVELTIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY FAMILY SPHERE

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**Abstract:** *I consider it important to bring up how in contemporary society, the family remains one of the well-rooted realities, but which adapts to new social trends. The notion of "family" is in the process of evolving, and it is clear that this institution has undergone many transformations over the centuries. In fact, it is known that this institution enjoyed a series of defining elements that encompass the notion of family (children, household, protection, safety, affection, interaction, intimacy, moral values), but they are not always found together; Given the fact that there are changes in family members, a reorganization of each member's activities highlights an individualistic approach with different opinions about how the family is perceived today. Social transformations cannot remove the institution of the family, but add new perceptions of the forms of coexistence in the world. The fact is that only the shape of the nuclear family is changing, but not entirely. The institution of the family cannot disappear, but is in a process of adapting to the new social circumstances that value new technologies, for example, the media or social networks.*

**Keywords:** *family, choosing the partner for couple, celibacy, new methods of cohabitation: consensual union.*

### 1. Introduction

Throughout human existence, the family was the first social institution on the basis of which the human species was perpetuated and social groups were formed. As history means change, there are crystallized historical periods to which certain types of organization correspond: the peasant family in agrarian societies, the bourgeois family of incipient capitalism, the proletarian family of great industrialization. (Segalen et al., 1994)

Since ancient times, the most common form of family was the traditional one, individuals who lived in small households, but who had strong relationships between the members of the community in which they lived. Stone said that there was no emotional attachment within families. Individuals did not seek the emotional intimacy of their partner and did not consider this to be an important aspect of married life, as it is today.

Within marriage, sex was a source of pleasure, but not a proof of love in the couple, but rather, just a way of procreation. Marriages did not take place freely, young people were forced to marry according to their parents' interests. Individual freedom is subordinated to the social values of those times.

The main influences at the level of the family institution having as main reason the evolution of the media that had an important impact on people's perception of the changes that occurred in society. The media brought to the fore the opportunity to find out useful information in a short time. These aspects influenced the institution of the family through the information distributed much more quickly about the practice of divorce, marriage and alternative forms of cohabitation (celibacy and consensual union). Divorce is mainly discussed, more precisely, the free choice of the individual to separate from one partner and choose another, was no longer a taboo subject. Individualism manifests itself in the fact that people begin to have their own opinions about the relationships they are part of and to expose them to people. These aspects lead to new perceptions of life, so mentalities are changing. Also, contemporaneity brings with it the importance of international. (Popescu - Irofti, 2009)

Emile Durkheim's writings were the starting point for a "sociology of the family" that can explain how it is socially constructed and how it can evolve in the face of imminent transformations. That era marked a period of innovation, culturally, historically and socially. The birth of a modern society was the premise on which the sociology of the family was developed and the subject of individualism and the power of free thought at the level of the couple could be widely discussed. Durkheim, being a professor at the University of Bordeaux, France (1888) chose to develop a lecture called "Introduction to the Sociology of the Family" in which he exposed his main writings present in sociology: the division of social labor, the forms of religiosity and suicide. The French sociologist believed that in order to understand the forms of the current family (the traditional family) we must study ethnographic customs and traditions, not literary descriptions.

## **2. The family - between transformation and stability**

In view of the changes that are taking place in the institution of the family, I would like to bring up an interesting perspective, that of the "crisis of the family". The latter holds a privileged place in the history of the nineteenth century, and the themes that had an important impact on the evolution of the institution of the family are: the weakening of patriarchal authority, the weakening of the spirit of obedience. (Mihailescu, 1999). However, predominantly, there is the question of the existence of a "family crisis" in the twentieth century. If in the interwar period we find ideas about large families, the importance of kinship and the establishment of family functions in one's own home, an important factor of the "family crisis" is induced by the post-war period, which gives the state the possibility to take over family functions, and individuals can take care of extra-family aspects (work, education, travel).

## **3. New families in today's society – alternative lifestyles**

Alternative lifestyles are one of the consequences of contemporaneity by the simple fact that individuals think freely, and the institution of the family no longer has the same purpose as in the families mentioned above. At a conference on the importance of the family, the notion of "alternative lifestyle" was brought up for the first time. This subject began to enjoy the analysis of specialists in the field starting with the twentieth century, by the fact that it was of interest how the alternative family can adapt to society. The perspective of new family forms highlights the idea that individuals must live for themselves, not just for those they care for (children, caregivers).

From a sociological point of view, there is an overload of responsibilities on the family, so that this institution can no longer cope with all the expectations coming from society. "The family is a major problem in our culture. (Nisbet, 1957)

The main influences at the level of the family institution having as main reason the evolution of the media that had an important impact on people's perception of the changes that occurred in society. The media brought to the fore the opportunity to find out useful information in a short time. These aspects influenced the institution of the family through the information distributed much more quickly about the practice of divorce, marriage and alternative forms of cohabitation (celibacy and consensual union). Divorce is mainly discussed, more precisely, the free choice of the individual to separate from one partner and choose another, was no longer a taboo subject. Individualism manifests itself in the fact that people begin to have their own opinions about the relationships they are part of and to expose them to people. These aspects lead to new perceptions of life, so mentalities are changing. Considering the analysis of the family and the identification of changes in this institution in recent decades, we notice an alternative type of family, a form of cohabitation as a couple: the consensual union. Of course, this form of family has always existed, but the way in which it makes its presence felt is different.

In the current period, there is a great tolerance on this type of cohabitation, both in urban and rural areas. Many people, although they do not get married, do not live alone, but live with a partner, that is, they do not only have sexual and affective relationships but also manage together.

Given the fact that there is a dynamic at the social level, the number of couples living together without marrying shows an increased number in the 70s. Taking the example of Sweden, in the '70s, the cohabitation rate was 1%, in the '80s it was 12%, in the 2000s it was 40%. (Stan, pag 66-67 apud. Rotariu, 2007)

Celibacy is that model of coexistence represented by the individuality of people. From a sociological point of view, the underlying causes of the spread of this phenomenon are both objective and subjective: objective causes are sexual: sexual impotence, adaptation difficulties; psychorelational: lack of attitudes for partnership, depressive states, inferiority complexes; material causes: economic constraints, homelessness; and the subjective ones are the following: the existence of distorted images about the family and its tasks; lack of courage in assuming family and parental responsibilities; psychotraumas (caused by serious marital conflicts in the family of origin). (Voinea, 2005).

Also, another important aspect is represented by "a double valence, oscillating between good-bad, desirable-undesirable. On the one hand, we have a delightful vision, when the person who is assigned the status of "celibate" is envied by married people for their freedom, individual autonomy and the benefits of independence. But, on the other hand, there is a desolate portrayal of celibacy, which focuses on the dimension of loneliness." (Rusu Mocănașu, 2014).

## **4. Social values in the institution of the family**

Social values represent some of the significant aspects in the sociology of the family, and among the most important values are the following: love – the family is based on love, being a strong feeling, both

between couple partners and between parents – children or close relatives (extended family). I believe that the formation of a family must be based on the mutual love between its members, and economic, political or social aspects must not take precedence over it. Respect – represents one of the important social values in preserving the poitious relationships within this social group. Mutual respect leads to trust between partners or between other family members. Tolerance - represents an indispensable social value of the family, from my point of view. I consider this because each individual is different, different opinions can arise, and tolerance helps to balance family life. Finally, the moral values of the family represent those personal values, different from family to family (these can vary, from social status, age, to the financial part or gender of the individual). These values lead to the originality of each family, to the consideration that each family builds its own set of values that help its members to communicate in absolutely any situation in order to establish viable solutions.

When the modern family was consolidated, and the traditional one no longer represented a model of cohabitation sought among society, there was a valorization of individualism, of the individual's desire for freedom, thus, family values experienced a period of tolerance over the couple (equality between women and men from a decision-making and professional point of view; emphasis on emotionality and romantic love in the couple). In recent decades, discussions about family values and the diversification of opinions on strengthening a marriage have been considered, both in the US and in Western Europe, but also on other continents. Of course, in the debates on this topic, it was considered to think of intervention strategies meant to reduce the rate of divorce, celibacy and to bring new aspects about the formation of a family through marriage. Thus, W. Galston (Galston, 1996) proposes a three-point plan aimed at reducing divorce: (1) state-mandated premarital measures (promarital education in schools and churches); (2) interventions during marriage, which would mean encouragement through fiscal policies (tax exemptions, allowances, etc.) and by making working time more flexible, on the part of the state and private sector, through salary benefits, maternity leave, helping families in economic difficulty; (3) attention paid to the legal code relating to divorce, in particular the prohibition of divorce without unilateral fault (in which, if one partner wishes to divorce, he or she may do so, not being obliged to prove the guilt of one or the other)." (Galston, 1996)

Next, through this study, I intend to analyze the limits and challenges that can defend in the formation and consolidation of a family. I would also like to bring up several issues that are identified at the family level and that I would like to address in the chapter on sociological research. Among those of interest are the following: firstly, the instability in the couple is identified (mistrust, lack of communication, geographical distance between the two partners); ); secondly, it is highlighted, within the families in which there are children, the geographical distance that represents a reason for the occurrence of family conflicts, the increase in divorces but also a problem related to the loneliness of the children left in the care of the grandparents; Thirdly, new technologies bring to the fore problems related to communication and the formation of virtual identities through online discussion platforms or dating sites. Identity plays an important role because individuals can form a digital profile designed to reflect the positive side of their personality, without knowing their true identity.

Taking these aspects into account, potential problems are identified that can generate repercussions such as: sentimental disappointments, states of anxiety, mistrust in other partners or aspects that belong to the sphere of social deviance: economic deception, human trafficking. I would also like to bring up the phenomenon of jealousy that I have. Thirdly, problems arising at the family level can also be caused by the preponderance of the use of the Internet in everyday life, either at the level of the couple (woman and man) or within the extended family (parents, children, grandparents, relatives). If we analyze these elements through the prism of the Romanian saying "What is a lot hurts!" (through the idea that excess can be considered responsible for certain repercussions on the individual), we can think of the following meaning: both couples who use the Internet as a source of communication (through online discussion platforms) and other family members (mainly children), there can be harmful elements.

On the one hand, considering the couple, we can identify the following issue: the opportunity to socialize with other strangers of the opposite sex stands out. If we think about it, there may be the possibility of hidden identities of one of the partners. Subsequently, problems arise at the family level, the phenomenon of jealousy as an opposite. First of all, instability in the couple occurs due to misunderstandings that have arisen at the level of the partners. Misunderstandings arise through the lack of communication, especially face-to-face communication. Of course, in today's society, the internet offers a wide range of possibilities through the multitude of social networks and online platforms through which the "longing" can diminish.

For example, what the husband no longer finds in his wife or vice versa, he considers that he can find in someone else, another person, met on the Internet, using an online account with his own password (either social network or matrimonial site) or another phone number. As a result of these aspects, there may be economic deception, sentimental disappointments, but also the loss of the person in real life that leads to the dissipation of the family; From the perspective of other family members, for children, excessive use without adult supervision can lead to disappointments or situations of deception on children through hidden identities (pedophilia or human trafficking network).

From another perspective, the phenomenon of jealousy also has another value from a family point of view. As we have stated above, the family, by highlighting a couple made up of "him and her" can highlight a type of jealousy such as the loss of property, of the loved one and of the choice of another, the idea of replacement.

In the case of children, jealousy has a different meaning. More precisely, acts of "jealousy" can have their beginning during childhood, jealousy also presenting another facet in addition to the one mentioned above; most of the time, a child can become jealous, involuntary, one of the parents, and then in adulthood, colleagues, friends, the loved one depending on the environment of origin, family, care from the parents, the feeling of "envy" being noticed. Of course, jealousy manifests itself in the fact that the individual believes that the partner belongs to him in one way or another. Through a vision of history, we learn that Sophocles wrote in the fifth century BCE, one of the most important mythological legends of all time, "the history of Oedipus". The dramatic story of Oedipus and his friends has been the inspiration for many representative Greek literary works over the centuries.

The tragic events that mark the course of Oedipus' life emerge from the predictions of the oracle who told him that he would kill his father and marry his own mother. This whole story is highlighted by Sophocles in a bivalent way: of drama in all the power of the word, but also of the inner pain of the hero who cannot change his painful destiny. De altfel, domeniul psihanalizei a acaparat subiectul în momentul în care Sigmund Freud a analizat faptele mitologice ale lui Oedip ca parte a comportamentului copiilor, aflați în plină dezvoltare. Noțiunea „Complexul lui Oedip” evidențiază „manifestarea copilului (cu vârsta cuprinsă între doi ani și șapte ani) de a-și respinge inconștient părintele de același sex cu el, din pricina unei apropieri de natura afectivă fata de părintele de sex opus.” (Freud, 1899).

## 5. Conclusions

The variety of forms of marital cohabitation are subjects of wide interest in sociological research. Marriage is one of the most important aspects in strengthening the family through social, personal and legal aspects. In a society in the process of change and adaptation to the multitude of information that is easily found from community to community, from one country to another, marriage remains a binder between the formation of a family and its functionality in society. Throughout history, several models of marriage and the way individuals perceive marriage in society have been noted. Two of the models mentioned above, both the British and the French, highlight a multitude of significant aspects for the sociology of the family.

First of all, the French model brings up the way in which Christianity plays an important role both in the choice of the couple's partner, as well as in the customs and custom common customs on the basis of which the family itself is formed.

Secondly, the British model mentioned by Giddens highlights the way in which the institution of the family is perceived by the members of a state. We understand how the ethnic issue is visible in the Birtanian family model, related to marriages between persons and those belonging to a minority family. British marriage is also based on romantic love, but we note the notion of "patrilineal heritage".

The two models reflect the way in which the institution of the family is built in two societies with a perfect cultural diversity, but which retain some defining aspects of family formation, regardless of the evolutionary path.

Family life was undergoing a strong social change, with new perspectives on living together as a couple and a desire for independence of the partners. Therefore, the current transformations based on new methods of communication and the use of the Internet in absolutely any daily activity, lead to freedom of opinions, decisions and highlight changes in perspectives on how the family is seen, towards alternative family styles.

The "crisis" of the family, a paradigm of great interest, showed the transition from the traditional family to the modern one, and it is worth noting the weakening of patriarchal authority, the man having an important function in the family, but at a similar level to the woman whose professional career begins to develop.

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## PEASANT CULTURAL HERITAGE. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS AND TRANSMISSION METHODS

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**Abstract:** *The communist regime (1944 - 1989) meant a period of radical transformation for the Romanian village. However, peasant culture has been passed on in various forms, and if we consider that in 1948, 77% of Romania's population lived in rural areas, we assume that peasant culture has been passed on to more than half of the country's present-day population, to those descendants of the peasants who have remained or left the village. This article theoretically deals with the issue of the transmission of peasant culture by pointing out the following: it is difficult to understand this culture apart from its moral function (to produce social solidarity), it largely covers the moral-religious order (being an expression of a perfect reality for the peasants), it tends to become tradition (actualizing itself through customs), and its communitarian character is also observed in the way it is transmitted to new generations (through a diffuse communitarian mechanism in the sense that participation in village activities is essential).*

**Keywords:** *Romanian peasantry; culture; tradition; cultural transmission; Sociological School of Bucharest.*

The peasant was at the center of scientific and political concerns in inter-war Romania because (1) the peasantry represented the largest part of the Romanian society of that period and (2) the village was the space with the most pressing problems to solve (Rostás, 2023). Even shortly after the establishment of the communist regime in Romania (1944), more precisely in the 1948 census, the vast majority of Romanian citizens (76.6%) lived in the country's 13,400 villages (Golopenția, 1948: 11).

The extent of the changes brought about by the communist authorities in the life of peasants was significant, given that 77% of Romania's inhabitants lived in villages before the regime was established (Mănuilă, 1943: XXIV). The first stage in the transformation of villages and peasants was collectivization (1949-1962), followed by the mechanization and industrialization of agriculture (after 1962) (Stavarache, 2011: 76). Collectivization meant the confiscation of peasants' land, and peasants became part of the C.A.P.s—the Agricultural Production Households. The peasants became day laborers on their own land controlled by the C.A.P.s, having the right to buy products from them according to the number of norms (days of work) (Stavarache, 2011: 76). After 1962, the communist regime mechanized agriculture, thus reducing the need for manual labor and creating conditions for the exodus of peasants to cities. The indicator of this exodus was commuting (Stavarache, 2011: 76). After the fall of the communist regime in Romania (1989), agricultural cooperatives were disbanded, and peasants or their descendants took possession of the confiscated properties (Socol, 2003: 22).

This article deals at a theoretical level with the transmission of peasant culture, a phenomenon that occurred despite the transformations that the Romanian village underwent during the communist period. The topic is even more important because more than half of Romania's population is, to a greater or lesser extent, the descendants of the peasant population, which in 1948 accounted for 77% of Romania's population.

### 1. Conceptual clarifications

#### 1.1. Culture

##### 1.1.1. Definition and social function

We start our analysis from the following definitions of culture: “culture represents (...) the set of social definitions that structure society, more or less consciously” (Baltasiu, 2007: 190), “by culture we mean the set of patterns of thought, attitude and action that characterize a population or a society, including the materialization of these patterns in things” (Mihăilescu, 2000: 55), and “culture is the totality of learned and socially transmitted behaviors” (Schaefer and Lamm, 1986: 28).

From the above definitions, we can understand that a culture has an intellectual aspect (definitions, or patterns), a behavioral aspect (the orientation of actions according to them), it serves a moral society (it structures society, i.e. it produces social solidarity), and it is something passed from one generation to the next.

In the following section, we will discuss the ideational and moral aspects of culture, leaving the chapters “Cultural heritage – tradition” and “Means of passing on peasant culture” to develop its transferability.

Durkheim adopts a “functional” approach to culture in terms of its function in society: “it is moral (...) everything that is the source of solidarity” (Durkheim, 1992: 393-394). The function of culture is to organize a group through its structure and the patterns it accords to all members. Human creation is part of the culture of a community if it serves as a behavioral guide for that community.

In the Durkheimian paradigm, norms, which are constituent parts of culture, is responsible for morality. By being a pattern, by structuring society, culture has a normative =character on human groups. In other words, culture increases the dynamic density of a group: “the issue of morality becomes so important that Durkheim launches a special sociological concept for determining the internal cohesion of society, called dynamic density. Dynamic density is an expression of the intensity of social contacts in accordance with the social norm, the social norm being ‘inscribed in the collective consciousness’ and formally expressed in law” (Baltasiu, 2007: 56).

From an ethical and dogmatic perspective, for example, in Nichifor Crainic’s view, man creates culture to achieve ideal goals and civilization for his practical needs (Crainic, 1942: 27). The perspective offered by Nichifor Crainic is close to the sociological one. The ideal represents a disinterested value, “a supreme value” for the community, one in which there is an unshakeable belief in its superiority (Baltasiu, 2007: 197). Vasile Băncilă analyzes the problem from a Platonic and religious perspective. He defines the cultural act as an expression of a deep reality, recognized by the community as perfect. It is through culture that man gives form to this reality that he considers as being “higher than himself”.

Romanian philosophers and theologians observe three forms of “deep reality” in society”: philosophy, morality, and religion. Through morality, man expresses the “perfect world” in an intelligible form (using symbols, another sociological element of culture, which are the “values illustrated” by a community, i.e., the symbolism of that community (Baltasiu, 2007: 198). Religion represents the cult of the “perfect world”, and philosophy is the enactment of a proper understanding of this world (Băncilă, 1935: 371). Concretely, the deep reality takes the form of a moral and religious order in society (Băncilă, 1935: 375).

Returning to Emile Durkheim, we claim that culture is moral because it produces solidarity between the members of society by conferring a model, a benchmark of action considered by that community as the expression of an ideal and desirable reality.

The connection between culture and the moral-religious order of the group becomes even more clear if we introduce into the discussion Dimitrie Gusti’s typology of culture. The Romanian sociologist distinguished between an objective culture – “the system of cultural goods” (poems, songs, scientific discoveries etc.), an institutional one – rules governing a group, and a personal one – “the relation between the person to be cultivated and the value of culture” (Gusti, 1931: 474). Symbols, expressions of human understanding of a perfect reality (which he values and idealizes) are protected by social norms. A person begins to be part of the group culture if, governed by norms, he or she acts in accordance with those values and ideals.

The underlying reality is a mystery to humans. This is why Lucian Blaga argues that cultural creation is made in mystery and its revelation (Blaga, 1985: 402). Finally, Nichifor Crainic described the cultural act as the act of man’s nostalgia for paradise, i.e. the awareness that there is a perfect, ideal reality: “the nostalgia of paradise is the feeling that we are of this world and yet do not belong to it; that the world of our spirit is not identical with the world that surrounds us; that we are in its midst as outsiders of a high order of existence denied us; that, for this reason, we cannot entirely adhere to the condition of earthly desolation, in which we feel exiled; and that, finally, everything in our being which is in some secret way connected with eternity impels us to overcome the present mode of existence and to conquer a higher and perfect mode, conceived in antinomy with the present and here” (Crainic, 1994: 242).

In one group, the expression of longing for paradise is called values, the highest of which are ideals. Values refer to the ideational content of culture; they are “the mental elements that guide behavior” (Baltasiu, 2007: 196) toward something desirable. Therefore, sociologists have defined culture in terms of the concept of value. For them, culture is “the totality of spiritual, religious, moral, esthetic, political and economic values of ethnic, social, national communities and societies” (Verdinaș, 2004: 130). For Băncilă, culture is “a complex of supreme values” (Băncilă, 1936: 174).

Civilization is the opposite of culture, even though they have one element in common: both are transformations of natural elements (e.g. the popular doina is the harmonization of natural sounds) (Crainic, 1942: 27). Human transformations have a civilizational character if they are carried out for “vital

interests, security and comfort” (Blaga, 1985: 401 – 402). On the one hand, we have a culture concerned with disinterested aims (moral, producing social solidarity), on the other hand, civilization with material ones. The creation of culture or civilization bears a technical aspect in that it presupposes elements from nature. Thus, following in the footsteps of Nichifor Crainic, we can call culture the technique of the life of the soul, and civilization the technique of material life.

The characteristic of the peasant world is the predominance of culture (the moral-religious order) over civilization. Vasile Băncilă shows that the technique, the objects, the way houses were built and the clothing were “filled with a religious and moral atmosphere” (Băncilă, 1935: 382). In this respect, Richard Schaefer defines civilization as a material culture and culture itself as non-material culture, the latter being the models according to which material objects are managed (Schaefer and Lamm, 1986: 29).

#### 1.1.2. Components of the culture

Culture comprises a variety of elements that Ioan Mihăilescu and Radu Baltasiu have synthesized as: values, symbols, norms, rituals, rites, myths and stylistic space.

Values refer to the ideational content of culture, which are the “mental elements that guide behavior” (Baltasiu, 2007: 196). Because values are quite abstract, they become intelligible through symbols. Symbols are “illustrated values” (Baltasiu, 2007: 198). Several symbols structure a community through what we define as symbolism. They serve to group people around them (Baltasiu, 2007: 198).

People generally act within the value systems that structure their manifestations. Value systems are based on norms as they “contain prescribers of how social interaction is desirable” (Baltasiu, 2007: 199). They are rules of behavior that make social relations possible. Breaking the rules brings with it a sanction that, according to Emile Durkheim, takes a repressive form in archaic societies and a restitutive form in modern ones (Baltasiu, 2007: 200). Norms also have a formal side (when a political body upholds them) and an informal side (protected by custom and tradition) (Baltasiu, 2007: 200).

Elements of culture in which the main components of social aggregation are “encoded” (Baltasiu, 2007: 201) are called rituals. These are archaic norms whose original function was to control and channel human aggression in the sense of sociobiologist Konrad Lorenz (1966: 76). Human action can therefore be structured by a ritual framework, even if it seems non-rational (Baltasiu, 2007: 201).

Norms and values imply the existence of a desirable behavioral model for the community and the sanctioning of deviation from it. For peasants in particular, myths were the source of exemplary behavior because they originated in the sacred, which for the religious man is the only reality that matters (Baltasiu, 2007: 203).

### 1.2. The peasant

In this chapter we will clarify our perspective on the peasant and in the next one we will emphasize the associated cultural specificity. „From a social-economic point of view, the peasantry is a stratum of society characterized by family management of the means of production. The peasantry are landowners without being rentiers (although in some cases they may rent out their property) and without seeking to make a profit from their land, i.e. they are not a capitalist social group” (Baltasiu, 2004: 611-612).

We recognize in the definition that the proper term to describe the peasantry is “social stratum” rather than social class. Mircea Vulcănescu, a member of the Sociological School concerned with the economic life of the peasantry, draws this distinction very clearly. The peasantry is not a social class because it owns its own means of production (like the bourgeoisie), i.e., inventory and land, which it exploits through the labor of its own family (it does not “rent” its labor arms like the proletarian class). The class struggle is thus external to the peasant economy (Vulcănescu, 1996: 109).

The second aspect of the definition - the family management of the means of production - refers to the “place” where the peasant economy takes place, namely the household. The peasant household is therefore at the heart of the peasant economy, which is a unit of production and consumption “based on the labor of a group seeking to satisfy its consumption need” (Vulcănescu, 1996: 111). In other words, the means of production are managed by the peasant family (Baltasiu, 2004: 311). Regardless of the economic activity, peasant work is family work (Bernea, 2006: 154).

While the capitalist enterprise serves only a productive function, in the peasant household, production is consumed by family members (Vulcănescu, 2005: 635). The family group is the one that both works and consumes the fruits of labor (subsistence economy). In addition to the family group, the peasant household includes the land and the inventory used (Vulcănescu, 2005: 636-637). By inventory or household inventory we mean “1) household goods: cots, sheds, stables, stables; 2) tools: plows, sowing machine, reapers, carts, threshing machines, threshing harrows, etc., and 3) livestock: horses, oxen, donkeys, buffalo, and for cash: sheep, cows, goats, poultry, etc.” (Vulcănescu, 2005: 653).

Thus, on the economic level, the peasantry is characterized by family management of their own household inventory (means of production, i.e., their household goods, tools and work cattle) in order to provide for their own needs by working the land.

On a cultural level: “the peasantry is critical to the nation’s identity, being the keeper of traditions and customs, being the source of the natural and moral in society. More specifically, the peasantry preserves the fundamental meanings about time and space that guide the community and, above all, the set of meanings that describe the pattern of primal, natural communion in accord with God and the Virgin Mary. The countryside is the wellspring of the essences from which our social and national identity is drawn” (Baltasiu, 2004: 611-612).

We note from the above definition the following features of the peasantry from a cultural point of view: it is the keeper of traditions, of a Christian morality, thus preserving the stock of identity of a nation.

The peasant is called “homo religious” being the keeper of traditions with a deep moral-religious emphasis. The religious man expresses in his way of being “religious existence of an archaic and traditional type” (Eliade, 2005: 6).

Mircea Eliade’s distinction between the sacred and the profane clarifies the peasant’s religious way of life. Any peasant’s behavior can to some extent have a religious mark, since for pre-modern societies the sacred is the reality par excellence (Eliade, 2005: 14). It is no surprise that “the main distinction operating in the space of traditional thinking” (Șișeștean, 2003: 127) between the sacred and the profane.

The great historian of religions also synthesized the religiosity of the Romanian peasants through the concept of cosmic Christianity. They managed to assimilate the pre-Christian heritage into the Christian message. By “cosmic Christianity” we mean “the ‘universalization’ of the Christian message through mythological imagery and a continuous process of assimilation of the pre-Christian religious heritage” (Eliade, 2000: 463-464). We must emphasize that the approach was one of assimilation and not of erasure of the pre-Christian heritage, the peasants and not only, managing to “Christianize” pagan religious traditions, ensuring their survival within the Christian imagination (Eliade, 2000: 464).

### 1.3. Peasant culture - forms of peasant culture

In the light of the above, we will operate with the following definition of peasant culture, which considers both ideas, attitudes, behaviors and the peasant’s vision of life as part of his moral-religious order: “therefore, it is necessary to formulate the term peasant culture which implies, in addition to the folkloric genres: ballad, doina, hora, etc. and rural people’s conception of the heavens, the world of plants (ethnoastronomy and ethnobotany), the practice of rites of passage: baptism, wedding, burial, beliefs and faiths, from the archaic calendar, a philosophy in proverbs and sayings, finally a peasant Weltanschauung subsumed by oral culture – different from the written – culture that determines a behavior, a mentality and finally a way of existence, in a coherent spirituality, with archetypal structure in consciousness and inheritance” (Șișeștean, 2003: 127).

On an ideational level, we note that peasant values are contained in a multitude of symbols and myths: the ballad, the doina, the hora, a particular “view (...) of the sky, of the plant world”, “a philosophy in proverbs and sayings” and “a peasant Weltanschauung subsumed by oral culture”.

Also in the above definition, we find the rites, reduced by the author to baptism, wedding and burial. With the help of Ernest Bernea, we enlarged the typology of rites, which together make up a calendar of thresholds (part of the archaic calendar mentioned in the above definition). The stages in the peasant’s life that bring changes in his social position are marked by rites of passage, which the Romanian ethnographer summarizes as those related to pregnancy, birth, childhood, adolescence (initiation rites into adulthood), engagement and marriage, death and burial (Bernea, 2006: 44). The rites with their associated rites and customs make up the threshold calendar (Cucu-Oancea, 2003: 136).

In discussing datina and custom, we have turned our attention to the question of the traditional. According to Ernest Bernea, custom and datina are what we call tradition. Custom is the actualization of the datina, or cultural heritage (what is handed down from ancestors to descendants). Thus, the Romanian peasant’s tradition was not in a state of inertia; it changed within the framework established by the datina: “but while the datina is a social form, an image of the collective being continuously present in this being, the custom is a social act that somehow actualizes the datina and gives life to the community today” (Bernea, 2006: 34).

Ernest Bernea has reduced the variety of peasants’ customs and datinas to those concerning the calendar (or commemorative) cycle, the life (or family - pregnancy and birth, baptism, puberty and

initiation, engagement and marriage, burial) cycle and the work (or magic, related to the arts of life and the arts of matter, which concern crafts, construction and domestic industry) cycle (see Bernea, 2006).

#### **1.4. Cultural heritage – tradition**

The concept of cultural heritage is another expression for what is known as tradition, “this memory of the social group that preserves and transmits individual experiences advantageous to the collective, socializing them” (Vulcănescu, 1996: 152).

Tradition is, in short, the inherited culture of a social system. Any culture is also traditional because it tends to perpetuate itself (Pouillon, 1999: 674). Anthropologist Gheorghită Geană called tradition “the sine qua non-condition for the existence of a culture” (Geană, 2011: 649).

Yet there is a fine distinction between culture and tradition. The demarcation is given only by the character of tradition as something handed down from one generation to the next. Even the term tradition originally means ‘to pass on’, coming from the Latin *tradere*, *traditus*, *traditum*. Traian Herseni calls the tradition a “handing-down from one generation to the next” (Herseni, 1982: 528).

Tradition is something other than fashion. If a group does not transmit its culture to at least three generations, it cannot be called a tradition. Then that culture is reduced to something passing and we call it fashion (Gheorghe, 1998: 648). It should be noted that for the Romanian peasant and the Romanian village, traditions have an immemorial character in the sense that it is no longer known when they appeared (Baltasiu, 2007: 251).

There is no tradition without society and no society without tradition. The function of tradition is to perpetuate society, which is based on a social mechanism of “stability of material and spiritual social structures” (Stahl, 1983: 251). Max Weber has pointed out that tradition is the source of the legitimacy of authority, making the social order possible. Legitimacy is based on a belief in the sanctity of tradition (Filipescu, 2003: 117).

The reproduction of tradition is not faithful, and with each generation it undergoes changes. However, it is the “hard core” of the tradition that guarantees that the changes it undergoes do not substantially alter it. This consists of the “relatively constant, stable elements” of tradition (Gheorghe, 1998: 649).

Tradition is preserved in the collective memory (Baltasiu, 2007: 193), or in the “collective component of the individual psyche” (Baltasiu, 2007: 252), from where it becomes a latent part of the community, a potential that becomes a reality when it is realized by the members of that community.

#### **2. Means of passing on the peasant culture**

In this chapter, we deal with the question of how to actualize peasant culture and how to pass it on to new generations.

The problem of the transmission of culture will be approached through the point of view of the gustian theory of social circuit and actualization. By placing the social will of those who make it up at the basis of society, Dimitrie Gusti shows that social reality takes the form of a circuit: the social will is, in turn, a “ready-made deed” and a “doer power”: “the whole conception [of Dimitrie Gusti] is centered on the idea of will and on the bent way of its existence as a phenomenon and as a process, as a ready-made deed and as a doer power” (Vulcănescu, 1998: 46).

The process that occurs in the social circuit is that of actualization, whereby frames (potential) become reality in collective manifestations (Baltasiu, 2007). Ernest Bernea adapted the actualization model (frameworks - manifestations) to the problem of tradition when he decomposed the concept between dates (framework) and customs (actualization): “but while the *datina* is a social form, an image of the collective being continuously present in this being, the custom is a social act that somehow actualizes the *datina* and gives life to the community today” (Bernea, 2006: 34).

We are not talking about an update that changes the date so much that it is unrecognizable. The custom must retain something of the hard core of the datum to be called part of that tradition. Remember that by hard core we mean those “relatively constant, stable elements” of tradition (Gheorghe, 1998: 649).

#### **How is tradition passed on?**

Tradition does not exist outside the social structures that disseminate it. One generation picks up and updates the cultural content of tradition from another generation and passes it on. Henri H. Stahl described the social mechanism of transmission as “diffuse tradition-based community”: each member of society passes on to others what he or she has received when participating in the same common activities. Transmission happens by itself: “What is essential in all this cultural life (baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.), which grows and lasts through this social mechanism to which we have given the name of a diffuse tradition-based community, is that all the participants in it, each holding only a fragment of the global,

anomic, collective and permanent culture, are aware that it lives through them, so that they take their role seriously, truly believing in the effectiveness of their gestures and words" (Stahl, 1983: 271).

However, there are certain "places" where tradition is passed on more than in others. The first such place is the peasant's family as it is the nucleus of the village. This brings us to the question of socialization. By socialization we mean: "the process (...) by which the individual integrates into a society by appropriating its values and norms (habits, rules of life, conduct, ideals, etc.) and manifests his own measure of sociality, his sociability" (Ungureanu, 2002: 62). How does socialization occur within the peasant family? Mircea Vulcănescu pointed out that the process is realized through playing and helping with household tasks (Vulcănescu, 1997: 35).

Socialization does not stop within the family; the village has mechanisms outside its own core. This includes the hora, the claca, participation in religious services and the customs associated with the celebrations of the peasant's cosmic calendar.

### 3. Conclusion

This article posed the problem of a definition of culture appropriate to the phenomenon of the rural peasantry in Romania. We emphasized that the Romanian peasantry culture has an ideational and behavioral character, and it is not possible to understand it without its moral function through which it solidifies the community. This function is all the more important as in the archaic village civilization was subordinated to culture understood as a moral-religious order synthesized by Mircea Eliade through the concept of "cosmic Christianity".

If the concept of the great historian of religion synthesizes the cultural aspect of the peasantry, we have also highlighted the economic particularities of the Romanian peasants. Following in the footsteps of Mircea Vulcănescu, I pointed out that the idea of social class is external to the peasants, who own the means of production and work their own land with family members to meet their family needs.

In the other part of the article, we focused on the transmissible character of the peasant culture. Any culture tends to become a tradition, i.e., to perpetuate itself through a handing down from one generation to the next, as Traian Herseni emphasized. In the case of Romania's peasant population, handing down takes place through a diffuse, communitarian mechanism (Henri Stahl), with the emphasis on the primary socialization of the family (the village nucleus). By working in the household, playing with other children and then taking part in community life in various groups (youth clubs, the "șezătoarea", wedding, baptism, funeral, etc.), peasant tradition is passed on, updating its "hard core" continuously, as Ernest Bernea has pointed out.

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# THE EXODUS OF THE YOUNG GENERATION: THE REASONS, IMPACT AND FUTURE OF YOUTH EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *The exodus of the young generation from Romania is one of the most acute social and economic problems facing the country today. The phenomenon of massive emigration of young people, especially to the European Union states, is determined by a number of economic, social and political factors. Among the main reasons for leaving are the lack of job opportunities, low salaries, economic instability, but also the desire to access a higher standard of living and to benefit from better educational and medical systems. The impact of this migration is profound and has consequences on several levels. On the one hand, the departure of young people reduces the skilled workforce, affecting key sectors of the economy and limiting Romania's development prospects. On the other hand, youth migration affects the demographic structure, contributing to the ageing of the population and the pressure on the pension and health systems. In the future, the phenomenon of youth emigration could deepen the economic and social gaps between Romania and developed countries, if concrete measures are not implemented to provide more attractive conditions for the younger generations. The solutions include investments in education, the creation of well-paid jobs, policies to stimulate entrepreneurship and improve the quality of life. Stopping the exodus of young people is essential to ensure Romania's long-term social and economic sustainability.*

**Keywords:** *emigration, youth, economic impact, reasons, future, solutions.*

## 1. Introduction

The emigration of young people from Romania has become a persistent and worrying reality, with profound effects on society and the national economy. With limited opportunities on the labor market, salaries lower than the European average and a socio-political system often perceived as unstable, more and more young people are choosing to build a future abroad. The European Union, with its benefits and openness, annually attracts tens of thousands of Romanians who seek stability and professional fulfillment in more developed countries. This trend has significant implications in both the short and long term. Economically, the exodus of young people reduces the active and qualified workforce in the country, hindering the development of certain sectors and generating a shortage of specialists. On the social front, mass migration contributes to important demographic changes, with an increasingly ageing population and increasing pressure on social assistance systems.

This article looks at the main reasons why young people choose to leave Romania, the impact of emigration on society and the economy, as well as possible solutions to reverse this trend. Understanding the phenomenon and implementing appropriate measures are essential for the future of the young generation and for the sustainable development of the country. The exodus of young people from Romania has become a major challenge in recent years, amplifying in the context of easy access to the European market. Youth migration, defined as the movement of young people to leave their homeland in search of a better life, is driven by a number of economic, social and political factors. Romania loses thousands of talented and well-educated young people every year, a phenomenon that influences the country's socio-economic structure in the long term. This research aims to investigate the main reasons for the exodus of young people, the short- and long-term impact and measures that can help stop or mitigate this phenomenon.

One of the main factors is the lack of economic opportunities. Low wages, a lack of stable jobs and an unattractive working environment lead many young people to turn their attention to countries with a more developed economy. For example, average salaries in Western European countries, such as Germany or France, are several times higher than in Romania, while living costs can be similar for certain categories of products and services.

The quality and accessibility of the education system in Romania is another decisive factor. Many young people choose to study abroad because universities in Romania are not always compatible with international standards. Higher education in other states not only provides advanced knowledge but also better employment prospects. The compatibility between universities in Romania and abroad depends on several factors, such as the structure of study programs, accreditations and recognition of diplomas, as



well as the specifics of the educational system of each country. In Romania, universities are aligned with the Bologna Process, a European framework that facilitates the recognition of diplomas and the transfer of credits between member countries, including many outside the European Union.

Compatibility between universities can be influenced by aspects such as:

- *ECTS Credit System*: Universities in Romania use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which facilitates the recognition of studies between institutions in Europe. This system helps to equate courses and recognize credits for students who want to study abroad.

- *Accreditations of study programs*: Study programs in Romania are accredited by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). However, certain fields of study, such as medicine, may have specific rules and equivalence requirements to be recognized in other countries.

- *Mobility programs*: Students in Romania have access to programs such as Erasmus+, which allow students to study a semester or a year abroad without losing their years of study. This proves a form of compatibility between universities in Romania and those in Europe.

- *Recognition of diplomas*: In some cases, the recognition of Romanian diplomas abroad may require additional procedures, such as equivalence or obtaining specific accreditations, especially in countries outside Europe, where educational systems may be different.

There are challenges, of course, but compatibility is not impossible. Many Romanian graduates continue their studies or find jobs abroad, which shows that the Romanian system can be adapted to international requirements, even if it sometimes involves additional efforts.

Political instability, bureaucracy and the perception that the country does not offer a stable framework for personal and professional development are other common reasons. Many young people feel that the Romanian political system is inefficient and corrupt, and this decisively influences the desire to stay in the country. They feel a lack of trust in state institutions, and this dissatisfaction motivates them to want a better life in other countries. The problem is amplified by the economic and social reality in Romania, but also by the lack of personal and professional development prospects that they encounter at home. Corruption in Romania is not just a perception; It is a reality signaled by numerous national and international reports. Transparency International, a global organization that measures the perception of corruption worldwide, consistently places Romania among the most corrupt countries in the European Union. Corruption affects all levels of public institutions, from local administration to the highest political positions. This situation creates a sense of injustice and disappointment among young people, who lose confidence in the state's ability to act in their interest.

In addition, the inefficiency of the political system aggravates the situation. Frequent changes in governments, internal political struggles and politicians' priorities, which are often in opposition to the real needs of citizens, fuel this perception of instability and chaos. Young people notice how important decisions for the future of the country are postponed or treated superficially, while corruption and bureaucracy make their way into all areas of social life.

The lack of interest of young people in politics and the public system manifests itself in the desire to go abroad. This phenomenon, also known as the "brain drain", has grown in recent years, with thousands of young people choosing to seek their fortune in countries with a stable, transparent government oriented towards the good of citizens (Sandu, 1984). Many of these young people have high professional potential and are well prepared academically, but prefer to work abroad, where they feel there is a more secure future and where their efforts are better rewarded.

In addition to corruption, economic factors also play a significant role. Low wages, lack of career opportunities and economic uncertainty are all aspects that drive young people to leave. Romania's health and education system, which also suffers from inefficiency and corruption, contributes to young people's decision to leave the country. Many believe that in a better organized and transparent system, they would have more chances of success and a better quality of life.

The mass migration of young people from Romania not only affects families and communities at home, but also has major effects on the country's economy and demographic structure. Romania is facing a sharp demographic decline, and the exodus of young people contributes directly to this problem. The lack of a young active population decreases the country's potential for economic development, and the pension and social security systems are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain in the long term. Moreover, the lack of well-trained young people in key areas, such as IT, engineering, medicine and education, leads to a shortage of qualified personnel. This only accentuates Romania's dependence on foreign resources and imported labor. Instead of capitalizing on local talents, Romania is forced to look for

alternative solutions, while investments in education and training are wasted, because many of those trained choose to develop their careers elsewhere.

In order to stop this massive emigration of young people (Cibian, 2021), Romania needs serious structural reforms, aimed at eliminating corruption and improving the efficiency of the political system. It is essential that the governors take real responsibility towards the citizens and promote a transparent and accountable administration. Creating opportunities for young people, encouraging entrepreneurship and implementing sustainable economic policies could be a promising start.

Also, the active involvement of young people in the political process can contribute to changing the system from within. Civic education and stimulating young people's participation in political life are essential elements for the development of a healthy democracy. With the formation of a young generation that is involved and aware of its rights and responsibilities, Romania could change its course and become a place where young people want to live and contribute to building a better future.

In conclusion, the perception that the Romanian political system is inefficient and corrupt is a decisive factor in young people's desire to leave the country. As long as these problems persist, it is hard to believe that Romania will be able to keep its talents. But through real reform commitments and the active involvement of civil society and young people in public life, there is a chance for young people to regain confidence in their country and choose to contribute to its change for the better.

In addition to economic and social considerations, young Romanians aspire to a higher standard of living, which includes access to a quality health system, efficient public services and a more dynamic social life (Teșliuc, 2014). The emigration of skilled and educated young people is affecting Romania's economy, leading to a shortage of skilled labor in sectors such as health, IT, engineering, and education. According to recent data, the annual emigration of young Romanians produces significant economic losses. In addition, the exodus of young people limits long-term growth and contributes to slowing down innovation and technological development.

The migration of young people contributes to the aging of Romania's population, which puts pressure on the pension system and the allocation of health resources. The low working and fertile population reduces birth rates, accentuating the demographic crisis and accentuating disparities between generations. The phenomenon of "brain drain" deepens the lack of specialists and makes it difficult to prepare the new generations.

The massive exodus of young people influences the national identity and the perception of Romanians on their own country. The link between young people who have left and the national culture is weakening, and among younger generations there is a growing tendency to adopt the values and practices of their adopted countries. This can lead, in the long run, to a cultural loss and a more diluted national identity. For a better understanding of the phenomenon, the article may include case studies on the emigration of young people from different regions of Romania (e.g. emigration from Transylvanian counties versus emigration from Moldovan counties). Statistical data and reports from the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank provide a solid basis for comparisons. The creation of attractive jobs, the increase of salaries and the implementation of tax facilities for young people can encourage them to stay in Romania. The government could invest in start-ups and in promoting entrepreneurship, providing financial support and access to trainings for young entrepreneurs.

Adapting the university curriculum to the requirements of the labor market is essential to provide young people with the necessary training in competitive fields. The creation of partnerships between universities and companies, internship programs and international exchanges can contribute to the professional development of young people and their retention in the country. In order to reduce migration, a paradigm shift is needed in terms of transparency and efficiency of public institutions. Increasing government transparency and efficiency can regain the trust of young people and contribute to a positive perception of the future in Romania.

Investments in infrastructure, improved public services, health and affordable housing can help create a more attractive living environment for young people. Equally important is supporting cultural and sports initiatives that contribute to an active and healthy lifestyle. In the absence of concrete and effective measures, the phenomenon of youth exodus will continue and even increase, with devastating consequences for the country's sustainable development. In the conditions of globalization and international competition for talent, Romania must become more attractive for talented and educated young people. Also, reorienting the value system and encouraging constructive patriotism can help keep young people in the country.

The exodus of the younger generation is a complex phenomenon, caused by multiple economic, social and political aspects. The impact of this migration is profound, affecting Romania's economy, demography and culture. Although the challenges are major, there are solutions to attract young people to stay and contribute to national development. The implementation of coherent and long-term oriented policies is essential to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for Romania and for future generations.

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# EXPLORING THE EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION OF URBACT EUROPEAN PROGRAMME

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**Abstract:** *Over the past two decades, scholarly investigations have focused on the role that municipal partnerships play in carrying out urban policies, ranging from those concerning the environment, sustainable transportation, employment policies, and research to those concerning social inclusion, education, and lifelong learning. This paper summarizes the key findings of a study on how the Urbact III program's thematic objectives include (or do not include) education and training. The content analysis of data (2014-2020) supplied by Urbact served as the foundation for this analysis. Comparisons are made about the position that educational interventions hold within city networks, the relationship that exists between the education component and the size of cities, and the appeal of programs with an emphasis on education. The results of this study show that, in comparison to programs focused on social inclusion (29%), the educational component does not attract the attention of local actors more than 4% of the time. The indicator of the analysis that targeted the distribution of Thematic Objective: education, skills and lifelong learning by size of cities shows that the big cities were the ones that invested in educational partnerships. Furthermore, the findings of this research indicate that certain procedures for promoting educational initiatives are required at the European level. The study shows that initiatives from towns in Italy, Belgium, and Lithuania prioritized education, for organizations like NGOs, and that in Romania, local actors from the 18 program-participating cities responded to the primary requests, resulting in the implementation of 36 sustainable urban development initiatives.*

**Keywords:** *education; inclusion; URBACT; network of cities; sustainable policy.*

## 1. Introduction

During the last decade, the educational policies were addressed in academic debates, with an emphasis on research aimed at entrepreneurial education (Thomas, 2023), educational structures, functions, impact and effects.

From this point of view, the intervention mechanisms of the European Union (EU) represent a special dimension of analysis. Against this backdrop, the Urbact programme proved promising in terms of supporting cities by implementing strategies for sustainable development.

Nowadays, cities are at the crossroads of the greatest challenges and opportunities: urban shrinking cities (Țăruș and al., 2022), urban segregation (Musterd, 2020; Iosif, 2024), mobility (Miskolczi et. al., 2021), smart cities (Rothe and al., 2018; Van Twist and al., 2023) and urban resilience (natural, physical, social, economic and institutional) (Beilin & Wilkinson, 2015; Zhang & Li, 2018; Ribeiro & Gonçalves, 2019).

In this context, Urbact promotes a series of actions, aimed at developing vertical and horizontal integration policies. On the one hand, the vertical approach implies the collaboration between local authorities and national and international representatives, on the other hand, on the horizontal level, the analysed dimensions aim at the economic, social and environmental spheres, which are the basis of strategic partnership networks developed at local level, interconnecting.

## 2. Literature Review

In this section, we first present the Urbact programs, which in the last 20 years have promoted sustainable urban development.

The first Urbact program, Urbact I took place in the period 2002-2006 and targeted actions directed towards the European urban regeneration policy, implemented by 217 partner cities and 38 networks.

The Urbact II program from 2007-2013 (the period in which one of the most important European investment programs in the development of human resources POSDRU took place in Romania) focuses on the activities of 519 partner cities and 46 networks.

The primary focus of the research is the Urbact III program, which from 2014 to 2020 organized approximately 83 networks, comprising 679 partner cities. These networks, in turn, promoted ten

thematic objectives (TO) in areas including research, ICT, SMEs, low-carbon economies, climate change, environment (with a focus on protection and resources), sustainability in logistics and transportation, labor mobility, social inclusion, education, and lifelong learning (URBACT, 2021).

Urbact has been a pioneer for integrated urban development. To achieve this objective, Urbact encourages European cities to collaborate, to learn from their own experiences and to exchange good practices, to strengthen their capacity and know-how, to share lessons learned throughout Europe.

Urbact acts as a catalyst that develops processes and tools known as the “Urbact Method”, through which decision-makers, cities and citizens participate in the development of new models of local governance.

The Urbact method is based on 3 fundamental principles: integration, participation and learning through action (Stigendal, 2006).

The integration. For connecting, the integrated approach combines a number of different dimensions: vertical cooperation between all levels, from governance to local actors; horizontal cooperation between different political fields and departments of the municipality; territorial cooperation between neighborhoods, municipalities, rural areas and regions and the balance between hard and soft measures, hard meaning investments in infrastructure and soft representing the development of the human factor, such as administrative capacity and knowledge exchange.

The Participation: a participatory approach is one that recognizes the voice of all those who have a say in the city. This implies the involvement of citizens, co-creation and a multi-level dialogue. Public participation is a positive dynamic in which all members of the local community are involved in the change process, stakeholders collaborate with the authorities to enhance urban living. They try to find solutions by creating a genuine feeling of accountability and ownership.

Learning through action implies an increase in the level of knowledge and working skills with partners, solving tangible issues through the design and testing of personalized actions. This includes managing the policy cycle from planning, resource identification and action planning for policy implementation and monitoring, impact assessment and internalization of lessons learned.

In this study, we investigate the way in which education policy is present in Urbact III initiatives. We are specifically interested in exploring the place occupied by the educational dimension within local action networks. Thus, the purpose of the study is to see the city not only through the prism of an actor, but, moreover, the city becomes, through Urbact, a connector (Rozenblat & Melancon, 2013) that is the basis of the relationships between cities (networks).

At the European level, for a long time, educational policies were dominated by those of the Nordic countries, of continental Europe and by the UK, benefiting from the expertise of the leaders and relying on solid resources (experience, knowledge, promotion and, above all, financing) were the benchmark for analysis (Charret and Chankseliani, 2023).

According to Welsh and Swain (2020), the term “urban education” is commonly defined in terms of six factors: population/location/geography; enrollment; student demographic composition; school resources; inequities and educational inequality; and social and economic environment.

In this context, Urbact III directed its centre of action on the learning efforts at the local level, the interactions and tools generated by the timetable for the city (by cities and for cities), to the detriment of a top-down intervention, guided from the top, as in the case of many European programs that elaborate templates, methodological guides, evaluation norms and objectives to be achieved (Domorenok and al., 2023: p. 784). Moreover, in establishing the Urbact partner networks, the cities could choose from the 10 thematic objectives, depending on the local analyses and their own development policies/visions.

This “decisional autonomy” was correlated with that of “good practices” (component of the European idea of “good governance” (Vettoretto, 2009).

An important indicator in the analysis of the impact of this program is the fact that the partner cities were included in large cities, medium-sized and small from the 4 different sub-regions of the EU: South, East, North and West, their “mapping” being the subject of numerous studies (Briot et al., 2021).

Urbact III (2014-2020) analysed 3 partner networks focused on the educational dimension: CITIES4CSR

To promote inclusive, sustainable, and innovative urban transformations, the network will increase cooperation between enterprises, civic society and municipalities through the comprehensive capacity building of local players. In order to better address unmet and rising local requirements, the project intends to increase the added value and role of enterprises' CSR efforts at the local level, towards social innovation and urban regeneration, with a special emphasis on education.

ON BOARD

Local governments can be used as a tool for innovative education. The project's goal is to assist local actors and governments in forming new alliances and jointly developing policies that will equip young people with the hard and soft skills they need to become involved, active citizens who can meet the challenges of emerging societies.

Stay Tuned!

Stay Tuned! aims at lowering the alarmingly high rates of early departure from training or education. The project's key goals are to advance the field's urban know-how by using an integrated approach to delivery, preserving stakeholder engagement and coordinating delivery-related decision-making, establishing effective indicators and monitoring systems, and transitioning from plan to action.

Based on the reviewed research (data), the following two questions, guided this study:

RQ1: Is the choice of partner networks on the thematic education, skills and lifelong learning objective influenced by cities size?

RQ2: What are the major characteristics of TO 10 projects?

### 3. Methods

In this research we relied on the thematic content analysis of the data extracted from the website "https://urbact.eu/". Urbact.eu is an updated site of the European action Urbact, which lists all 3 completed programs and updated data of the 4th one (ongoing until 2027). For this research we collected Urbact III data.

Thematic analysis is defined as the method used to identify and analyse certain patterns in a series of data (Briot et al., 2021), highlighting the main dimensions that are present in the analysed corpus.

Following Braun & Clarke's model, we highlight the following stages of the thematic analysis:

1. Familiarization with the data present on "https://urbact.eu/";
2. Coding;
3. Identifying and explaining the educational dimension of Urbact III;
4. Presentation of the results.

### 4. Results

Regarding the thematic coverage of submitted proposal only 4% refer to education, skills and lifelong learning, the most proposal covering TOs 6 and 9.

The analysis of the partner networks on TO 9 shows that the topics addressed are: inclusive cultural policies (network of 8 cities); representative and participatory democracy (8 small and medium-sized cities); the creation of an NGO residence, which provides resources to improve NGOs' capacity, data sharing, experience and good practices (6 cities); policies dedicated to the integration and quality of life of migrants (arrival cities project); the transformation of social services (nine partner cities).

**Table 1. Thematic Objectives (TO) (1-10). Distribution of projects (2014-2020).**

<b>TO main sectors</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
9. Social inclusion	24	29%	1
6. Environment	17	20%	2
1. Research and innovation	10	12%	3
3. SMEs	10	12%	3
4. Low-carbon economy (LE)	5	6%	5
8. Work on labour mobility	5	6%	5
2. IC technology	4	5%	7
7. Sustainability in transport	3	4%	8
<b>10. Education and lifelong learning</b>	3	4%	8
5. Climate change	2	2	10

*Source: Author elaboration based on the data reported in the URBACT database*

At the same time, an important indicator is the size of the cities that were involved in the implementation of the Urbact III actions. Urbact program data shows that the program has focused on

decision-makers in small and medium cities: in this sense, 65% of all the cities involved have less than 250,000 residents.

**Table 2. Urbact III. Size of cities - Partner distribution.**

No. of residents	No.	%
Very small	154	23%
Small	129	19%
Medium	156	23%
Large	97	14%
Very large	142	21%
Grand total	678	

*Source: Author elaboration based on the data reported in the URBACT database*

The first factor we suggested explaining is the connection between the size of the partner city and the need for initiatives to implement actions aimed at the educational dimension.

To understand the connection between the two indicators, we cross correlated education, skills and lifelong learning by the size of the cities.

The analysis according to Table 3 shows that large and very large cities are involved in a proportion of 28% each, to the detriment of very small and small cities that have a percentage of 16%, respectively 20%, the latter being less proactive in the Urbact networks, with activities specific to the educational component.

**Table 3. Urbact III (2014-2020). Distribution of Thematic Objective: Education, skills, and lifelong learning by size of cities.**

TO/ size of cities	Very small	Small	Medium	Large	Very large
Education, skills and lifelong learning	4	5	2	7	7
	16%	20%	8%	28%	28%

*Source: Author elaboration based on the data reported in the URBACT database*

The analysis of the connection between the thematic objectives and the 7 calls from 2014-2020 shows that the educational dimension attracted the interest of the partner cities in 3 of them (4%).

TO/ URBACT III calls	APN	APN	IN	SDG	TN	TN 2	UTM	Grand total
1. Research, technological development and innovation	3	2			4	1		10
2. Access to and use of ICT	1	2			1			4
3. Competitiveness of SMEs	4	2	1		1	1	1	10
4. Low carbon economy in all sectors	1	2			1		1	5
5. Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management					1	1		2
6. Environmental protection and resource efficiency	2	7	1	1	4	2		17
7. Sustainable transport	1	2						3
8. Employment and labour mobility	2	1					2	5
9. Social inclusion	6	4	1		10	2	1	24
<b>10. Education, skills and lifelong learning</b> with Lead Partner from Italy, Belgium, Latvia		1	1		1			3

Grand total	20	23	4	1	23	7	5	83
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Source: Author elaboration based on the data reported in the URBACT database

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The distribution of Urbact III projects is analyzed, and the results indicate that, despite the extremely high needs, the education and lifelong learning dimension—which is mentioned in the speeches of European actors—remains a vulnerable sector. The focus is on social inclusion, which can be attained without a strong educational foundation.

This study can provide practical insights regarding the new dimensions of urban life in which we must invest, but especially the way in which this intervention must be carried out. Thus, the Urbact program, but especially Urbact III, has the merit of starting a bottom-up intervention.

The relevance of the program also lies in the fact that a new perspective of Europeanization is taking shape, in the sense that the vision of the local actors is the one that shapes the transnational structures, using all the resources in accordance with their own objectives. The study's conclusions cannot be broadly applied because it solely uses dates from the Urbact period. To gain deeper understanding of how to support educational initiatives, additional research on education and urban regions is consequently required.

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## SPACE DOSSIER. A BRIEF RADIOGRAPHY OF ROMANIANS LIVING IN ITALY

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**Abstract:** *This material presents some biological, cosmological, historical, psychological, cultural, and economic aspects related to the Romanian community in Italy, which numbered more than one million people at the beginning of 2024, according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics. The data were extracted from a larger space dossier that presents the state of the Romanian community in Italy and the state of the Italian community in Romania in a comparative manner. This article, however, is limited to presenting the method of data collection and analysis i.e., the space dossier and highlighting some of the most pressing issues facing Romanians in Italy. The spatial dossier is a research tool based on Dimitrie Gusti's law of sociological parallelism and is of national use: it helps researchers to collect, structure, analyze and present large masses of information in a comparative and synthetic manner, and it helps decision makers and interested actors to understand the specific problems faced by a community of interest.*

**Keywords:** *Romanians, Italy, Dimitrie Gusti, Dimitrie Gusti, space dossier, emigration*

### 1. Brief introduction

The Space Dossier is a new tool in the field of knowledge that was theorized by Radu Baltasiu, the director of the European Center for Ethnic Studies. Its applicability is particularly important, especially for Romanian communities outside Romania's borders, whether we are talking about the diaspora or historical communities. However, its usefulness for the country's ethnic minorities should not be neglected, as the inter-ethnic dynamics in Romania are constantly changing and are fundamentally influenced by the way in which the state negotiates the interests of its own citizens.

### 2. Method used–space dossier

#### 2.1. Space dossier as an applied sociological knowledge method

The space dossier is a scientific tool aimed at the relationship between the Romanian state and the country's ethnic minorities, historical communities, and diaspora. The space dossier consists of the radiography of a space on its significant axes in relation to the interest of knowing the truth and governance. It is not only the main tool for rigorous data collection and analysis, but also for the synthetic presentation of a large mass of information, which lies at the interface between academic research, intelligence, and public administration. This tool is intended to assist politicians in their functional government administration. The problem is the link between research and governance. Last but not least, it represents how the world is seen from Bucharest. It is also a scientific process that provides the basis for national policies, can successfully guide negotiations with other countries, and sets out directions for national intervention and development (Baltasiu, 2023: 1).

#### 2.2. Principles underlying the space dossier

The problem dossier proceeds on the basis of the three principles of systematic thinking, which is the starting point of any act of knowledge:

1. "Of fundamental, beginning, or doctrinal thought;
2. Of wholes, since at any moment of the analysis the integrity but also the individuality of the problem is respected;
3. Of continuity, which is part of the principle of identity, the link between today and yesterday, in the form of historical consciousness, which is the basic element of national consciousness.
4. These three principles 'spill over' into the fourth, the criterion of the civilized world, that of synthesis – which is the visible form of the problem dossier" (Baltasiu, 2023: 2).

#### 2.3. Specifically, what purposes does it serve?

The problem dossier has three main purposes: the first is to know the surrounding states in terms of typology and level of functioning. The second aim is to identify the Romanian diaspora, historical

communities, and minorities in the country. The third approach is to map the internal components that make a country's development possible (Baltasiu, 2023: 1).

#### **2.4. How useful is this knowledge tool?**

Representing the description of a space of interest through problematization (Baltasiu, 2023: 4), the space dossier serves the public interest. It is a component of national sovereignty, vital especially today, because at the moment, we cannot speak of a Romanian state but of a state in Romania, which does not need its own knowledge because it has given up national politics (Baltasiu, 2023: 1).

#### **2.5. Theoretical background**

The theory that founded this method because it makes it possible to understand social logic is Dimitrie Gusti's law of sociological parallelism. The most accurate theory for the Romanian space in any Dossier can be found in the Gustian theory of frames and manifestations. It is the only theory that can cover all reality in real time. For Dimitrie Gusti, reality comprises frames and manifestations, and the relation between them is called "the law of sociological parallelism" (Baltasiu, 2023: 1). The manifestations are economic, spiritual, political, and legal, and the frames are cosmological, biological, psychological, and historical. Between these there is a complete parallelism: between frames, between manifestations, and between frames and manifestations (Gusti, 1934: 45-46).

### **3. Let's come back as the radiography of the Romanian community in Italy**

#### **3.1. However, some general facts about emigrating from Romania**

Romania's emigration has become a major social and economic phenomenon with an upward trend. The remarkable size of the Romanian diaspora placed Romania fifth worldwide in 2019 (Pirtea, 2020). According to official data, 9.7 million people lived outside Romania's borders in 2019. Of these, 5.6 million were in the diaspora, i.e., about 58% (Radio Free Europe, 2019). Unofficially, the PMP MP Constantin Codreanu claimed as early as 2017 that the real number of Romanians living abroad exceeded 12 million (Codreanu, 2017). Italy, together with Spain, was one of the main countries to which Romanians emigrated. In 2019, 1,206,938 Romanians lived in Italy (Italian National Institute of Statistics, no year, a), indicating that out of the approximately 9.7 million people who left, 12.% were in Italy (Iriciuc, 2019).

#### **3.2. How should this phenomenon be observed?**

This phenomenon can be analyzed from multiple perspectives:

1. The size of the phenomenon (how many?): the number of Romanians who emigrated reached an unprecedented number in Romania's history: around 10 million people were living abroad in 2020.
2. The profile of those who emigrated (who?) corresponds to the following categories of people:
  - employability: the most affected segment being the 25-29 age group (Badea, 2018).
  - fertility: the people who emigrate the most are young and therefore most fertile. This led to the result that in 2016, more children were born in the diaspora than in Romania (Pastirnac, 2017). From the figures of children born to Romanian emigrants in countries such as Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it was estimated that at least 630,000 descendants were born abroad between 2000 and 2018. In short, in less than 20 years, more than half a million children were born abroad (Digi 24, 2019).
  - specialized: beyond the Romanians who emigrated in the first years after Romania's accession to the E.U. in 2007, working in services, industry, and construction in Italy, the last years have revealed a migration of specialized people, the so-called "brain-drain" phenomenon (Iacob-Bâra, 2018) (the main fields affected by this phenomenon are: IT, engineering, medicine). Romania has thus become a "machine" of specialized labor force, working for the economies of other countries. Between 1990 and 2017, Romania recorded the highest increase in the migrant population of all EU countries – 287% (The World Bank, 2018). The impulse of the migration phenomenon has been driven by significant changes, including in the profile of migrants, in terms of their level of education; therefore, the loss of human capital represented by highly skilled Romanians is already impacting key sectors of the Romanian economy (Iacob-Bâra, 2018: 53). Since the 2000s, Romania has been among the top 30 countries with the highest emigration of highly skilled individuals (Lăzărescu, Hamberger, Șerbănică and Prisacariu, 2017). This is also explained by/not only by the fact that the Romanian state does not benefit from the finality of the "investment" in Romanians' education, as they take all the added value of their labor to the destination country.

3. The soul dimension of the problem: when we talk about the phenomenon of emigration, a double fracture must be considered: on the one hand, the one felt by Romanians in the country, as a result of a poor quality of life: “After a certain age, you are no longer willing to wait. You want a qualitative change in your life as soon as possible. These changes involve good administrative services, equal opportunities before the law, i.e., less corruption, a cleaner business environment, free justice, efficient government, politicians who talk more about what they have done and less about the impotence of others. More action, less talking.” (Tapalaga, 2012); and, on the other hand, that of Romanians living abroad, which is caused by the phenomenon of labeling (individual or collective), which has direct implications on the decrease of self-esteem and implicitly on physical and/or mental health (“Italy syndrome”: statistics show that in Romania in 2018, 5% of admissions in psychiatric units in the country were women diagnosed with Italy syndrome. Psychiatrist Cozmin Mihai from the Institute of Psychiatry in Iași defined this syndrome as: “(...) a form of social depression that is primarily found in people who do not have a medical background, but who care for a long period of time for people with severe illness” (Tapalaga, 2012). We point out on this occasion that according to the data of the Italian National Institute for Social Protection, Romanians were the most numerous foreign caregivers (domestic workers) in Italy in 2024: approx. 123,000 Romanians (21.3% of all foreigners) worked in this field (Nuță-Stoica, 2024).

### **3.3. Radiography of a community using the Gustian theory of frames and manifestations**

#### **a. Biological framework**

The Romanian community in Italy counts 1,206,938 members, representing 2% of Italy’s population (Italian National Institute of Statistics, no year, b), but the figure becomes significant when we look at the percentage of Romanians in the immigrant population: 23% (out of 5,255,503 immigrants) (Italian National Institute of Statistics, no year, c), Romanians becoming since 2003 the largest immigrant community in Italy (Belea, 2011).

As far as nuptiality is concerned, we observe an active dynamic of ethnic Romanians in Italy, because out of the total number of marriages concluded in 2018 (195,778) (ISTAT, no year, d), 18.6% are between an Italian and a foreign citizen, and 12.7% are couples formed by an Italian and a Romanian spouse (ISTAT, 2018), which means that about 70% of mixed marriages are concluded between a Romanian and an Italian.

In terms of birth rate, 144,983 Romanian citizens were born in Italy between 2007 and 2018, the equivalent of a city the size of Pitești (Stănculescu, 2019). We note that these figures are official, which explains why we expect the real figures to be higher than those presented. In 2018, 78% of children born in Italy had both Italian parents; however, in that year, the number of Italian children born was the lowest in the last 10 years. While the birth rate of Italians was falling, the percentage of children born to Romanian parents was on the rise, reaching 3%, making them the most fertile foreign population in Italy; followed by Moroccans 2.09% (9,193), Albanians 1.57% (6,944) and Chinese 0.76% (3,362). These four communities account for half of all foreign births. In 2018, Romanian-born children were in first place among foreign children registered in the Italian register (Ansa, 2019), but in Romania in the same year, the fewest children were born in the last half century (since the decree issued by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1966) (Peticilă, 2019). These aspects are worth considering, especially because since 2016, more children have been born in the diaspora than in Romania (Gazeta Românească, 2017).

#### **b. Cosmic framework**

From a geographical perspective, in 2019, the top three regions in Italy most populated by Romanians were Lazzio, where Romanians represented 4% of the total population – 233,469 (Romanian Embassy in the Italian Republic, 2019), out of the total population of the region, which amounted to 5,879,082 people (Tuttitalia, 2019), Piemonte where Romanians represented 3.3%, namely 147,961 (Embassy of Romania in the Italian Republic, 2019) out of 4,356,406 (Tuttitalia, 2019) and Lombardy where Romanians amounted to 1.7%, namely 176,582 (Embassy of Romania in the Italian Republic, 2019) out of 10,060,574 (Tuttitalia, 2019).

#### **c. Historical framework**

From a historical viewpoint, in the Romanian migratory flow to Italy, although continuous, there are two stages determined by international political decisions: the 2002 moment, with the abolition of the residence visa for periods shorter than three months, and the 2007 moment, with Romania’s entry into the EU (Bratu-Elian, 2018).

#### **d. Psychological framework**

Sexual abuse by Romanian women working in Italy is a concern. According to the Italian migrant rights organization Proxyma Association, more than half of Romanian women working in greenhouses in the south of the peninsula are forced to have sexual relations with their employers, and almost all of them work in conditions of forced labor and severe exploitation (Ziare, 2017). The statistics are shocking: Two years after reporting extensively on the plight of Romanian women in Sicily, exploited and sexually abused by their employers, L'Espresso reporters returned to Vittoria in the province of Ragusa and found that the situation has only gotten worse. In Ragusa (Sicily) (Rizea, 2017), which is also the most affected area, approx. 7,500 (Ziare, 2017) women were abused, and the number of children aborted in just 2 years has reached 230 lives taken (2 years-2015/2016), representing 19% of the province's total. The data is underestimated, however, because some women are using empirical methods, or going to Romania to have abortions. These figures provide proof of an emergency that never ended (Rizea, 2017). Exacerbation of criminality: Romanians represent 2% of Italy's population, the crime rate is somewhere between 8-9% and the share in prisons is 0.4%, hence, although they are the largest foreign community in Italy, they have the lowest crime/prison rate: of the total crimes committed by immigrants it is shown that Romanians committed 16%, compared to 15.5% for Moroccans and 9% for Albanians, without any reference to the fact that Romanian immigrants are 2/3 more than other immigrants. Of real relevance, however, although much more difficult to estimate, would be the percentage in which the crimes highlighted above were committed by Romanian citizens of Roma/Gypsy ethnicity, inhabitants of the nomad camps that have horrified the inhabitants of the big Italian cities (Mocuța and Bica, no year).

#### **e. Cultural manifestations**

From a cultural viewpoint, the Romanians are well anchored, as the Romanian Orthodox Church has proven over time to be an institution that has played a central and fundamental role in preserving the Romanian identity in Italy. The number of places of worship has progressively increased, reaching 383 Orthodox Churches, of which 256 are parishes and 127 are filii, while the number of Orthodox churches hosted by the Catholic Church reached 306 (Ioniță, 2019). On the other hand, in about 140 Orthodox Churches worship in Romanian (Italy-Romania, no year). In other words, approximately 80% of Orthodox Christian places of worship are hosted by the Catholic Church. In almost 37% of Orthodox places of worship in Italy, the service is conducted in Romania. As for schooling, as early as 2017, the number of Romanian students enrolled reached 750,000, while the number of those taking Romanian language classes in the same year ranged between 8,000 and 12,000, which means that, at best, only 1.6% of Romanian students in Italy were taking Romanian language classes. Romanians in Italy had only two Romanian-language TV stations (Stoica, 2018), one news portal (Romanian Embassy in Italy, 2018), and two radio stations in their mother tongue (Gazeta Românească, 2011).

Last but not least, Romanians in Italy have set up more than 100 cultural associations over the years, distributed by region as follows: two in Calabria, two in Campania, two in Emilia Romagna, two in Friuli Venezia Giulia, 37 in Lazio, one in Liguria, 13 in Lombardy, one in Marche, 11 in Piemonte, two in Puglia, three in Sardinia, three in Sardinia, 11 in Sicily, four in Tuscany, one in Trentino-Alto Adige, two in Umbria and four in Tuscany (Romanian Embassy in the Italian Republic, 2020).

#### **f. Economic manifestations**

Romanians in the diaspora were the biggest "foreign investors" in Romania in 2023, having sent more than €6.5 billion to the country, a record amount, more than twice as much as a decade ago – in 2014. This money is equivalent to 2% of GDP, just 1.2% less than the amount of foreign direct investment Romania made last year, according to data from the National Bank of Romania. Over the past decade, the total value of remittances from Romanian workers abroad has totaled more than 46.5 billion euros (Ștefan, 2024). The amount of money sent back home by Romanians living abroad has long been recorded. For example, Romanians in the diaspora sent more than €8.2 billion in 2021, according to World Bank data, setting a remittance record for the last 30 years. At the time, total remittances from the diaspora were equivalent to 3.2% of the country's GDP, placing Romania in third place in the EU in terms of remittances as a percentage of GDP. It should also be noted that the amount of money sent home by Romanians abroad was also in line with the amount of foreign direct investment. Moreover, more than 60% of remittances came from Spain, Italy, and Germany – the countries with the largest Romanian communities (Panorama, no year). However, the contribution of Romanians in the diaspora exceeds the GDP of the destination countries. In a single year, 2018 to be more precise, Romanians contributed 10 times more to Italy's GDP than to Romania's GDP, while to Italy's GDP they contributed €30 billion (Hot News, 2019) and to

Romania's GDP they contributed €3 billion (Digi 24, 2019). These figures show that Romanians continue to work for other countries' economies.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have Romania outside our borders that we have a duty to take care of, and we cannot do this without getting to know about it first. An effective and applied tool for gaining knowledge of Romanian communities abroad is the space dossier. It has significant public utility as it presents large masses of data in a synthetic manner. Equally, the space dossier can, as long as it is given adequate attention, facilitate the act of governance because it keeps decision makers informed about the pressing problems facing Romanians, wherever they are. Romanians in Italy are one of the largest Romanian communities in the diaspora and face problems that require immediate state intervention. In this regard, both Romanians in Italy who face sexual exploitation, various phenomena of negative labeling or modern slavery, and Romanians who return home are overwhelmed by the burden of living in a foreign country and abandoned by the Romanian state (consider the case of Romanians who have been diagnosed by psychiatrists with Italy syndrome, an aspect that has not been sufficiently researched), should be taken into account. Last but not least, the families left behind, affected by the departure of one or both parents, must be supported in accordance with their needs, and particular attention must be given to children, who are the main victims of a family that has broken up as a result of emigration.

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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATION-REPORTED SELF-ESTEEM AND BURNOUT LEVELS FOR EMPLOYED WOMEN IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

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**Abstract.** *This research aimed to identify the existence of a correlation between self-esteem (reported to the organization) and the level of burnout of urban women employees. The two instruments used were: the Organization-Reported Self-Esteem Scale, with a number of 10 items, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory, with a number of 16 items. The two instruments were applied to a number of 33 urban women, employees of either the public or private system.*

**Keywords.** Self-esteem, burnout, employed women, job satisfaction, exhaustion, cynicism, professional inefficiency

### 1. Introduction

"Saying, following some successes, that we are good is also an irrational cognitive structure of global evaluation. The implications are huge! Self-esteem development programs are a psychological medicine (a "psychological pill") that does more harm than good. By developing self-esteem, we only teach the client to promote global evaluation. Just as, starting from successes, he will evaluate himself positively (and will have positive self-esteem), following a failure he will be trained to evaluate himself negatively. The alternative is for him to learn to unconditionally accept himself as a person, to evaluate his behaviors and performances, and when necessary, not to accept them, but to try to modify them. This approach is similar to the biblical text, which says that we should not punish the sinner, but the sin." (David, 2006: 81)

The results of Bleidorn et. all (2015) suggest that gender and age differences in self-esteem are not a Western idiosyncrasy, but can be observed in different cultures around the world. In general, men tend to have higher self-esteem than women, and both sexes show a gradual increase in self-esteem during aging from late adolescence to mid-adulthood. However, cultures differ in the level of self-esteem according to the sex and age of the individual, and these differences are systematically related to socio-economic, socio-demographic, gender equality and indicators of cultural value. The considerable degree of cross-culturality suggests that normative gender and age differences in self-esteem are partly determined by universal mechanisms. These could reflect both universal biological processes and socio-cultural influences. However, universal influences do not tell the whole story. Systematic cultural differences in the size and shape of gender and age differences in self-esteem provide evidence for contextual influences on the development of self-esteem in men and women. (after Bleidorn et al., 2016)

However, research by Erol et al. (2011) using converging evidence on gender similarity in self-esteem is important because false beliefs about gender differences in self-esteem can have substantial costs. For example, parents, teachers and counselors may overlook self-esteem issues in adolescents and young men due to the widespread belief that men have higher self-esteem than women. (after Erol et al, 2011)

Burnout syndrome most often originates in professional work, but anyone who feels overworked and undervalued is at risk of burnout - from the employee who does not receive vacation days, to the overworked mother who struggles to care for children, a marriage or an elderly parent. Professional burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical overwork caused by excessive stress to which the employee is exposed for a long period of time. This professional syndrome manifests itself when the employee feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained and unable to meet constant demands. While the stress is in a continuous form, the employee begins to become devoid of interest and motivation, which led him

to start his activity in the organization he is a part of. As a result, professional "burnout" leads to a decrease in work productivity and a gradual decrease in energy, the employee feeling increasingly helpless, hopeless, cynical and with a great deal of resentment. Finally, he loses his self-confidence, believes that he has nothing more to offer and that he is not able to cope with the demands of the position he occupies. (according to Lazariuc, 2017)

## **2. Organization-Related Self-Esteem**

Organization-Related Self-Esteem refers to an individual's perception of their own worth and competence in the context of their workplace and professional relationships. Positive self-esteem is associated with confidence in their personal abilities, a proactive attitude, and a more effective adaptation to the demands and pressures of work. Burnout, on the other hand, is a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by chronic stress at work. It is often the result of constant pressure, excessive workloads, and a lack of resources to cope with these demands.

Factors that influence the relationship between Self-Esteem and Burnout for urban female employees:

### **a. Organizational Culture:**

An organizational culture that promotes gender equality, support, and recognition of women's efforts can contribute to the development of healthy self-esteem and reduce the risk of burnout.

### **b. Family and Professional Responsibilities:**

Urban female employees may be exposed to additional pressure due to family and professional responsibilities. Managing the balance between these two dimensions can influence the level of stress and exhaustion.

### **c. Social support and interpersonal relationships:**

Social support from colleagues, family and friends can play an important role in maintaining healthy self-esteem and in managing stress and professional pressures.

Thus, the relationship between self-esteem reported to the organization and the level of burnout for urban women employees is influenced by a number of factors, including cultural context, multiple responsibilities and available social support. By promoting a healthy work environment, supporting the balance between personal and professional life and developing stress management and relationship skills, one can contribute to reducing the risk of burnout and improving self-esteem for urban women employees.

## **3. The employed woman**

A woman who is actively involved in the labor market, having a paid job or performing a remunerated activity in an organization or business (for more details see Otovescu, Otovescu, 2016). She contributes to the economy and society from a professional, social and economic point of view.

In recent decades, the role of women in the workplace has changed significantly, and many women now occupy leadership positions and develop successful careers in various fields. However, despite progress, there are still challenges and inequalities that employed women face, such as gender pay gaps, access to leadership positions and work-life balance.

Some of the issues regarding women in the working class relate to:

**Gender equality:** Gender equality means ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources for women and men in all aspects of life, including employment and career development. This includes eliminating gender pay gaps and discrimination in the recruitment process and in the workplace.

**Diversity and inclusion:** Promoting diversity and inclusion in organizations brings significant benefits, from increased creativity and innovation to improved performance and financial results. Creating a work environment that encourages gender diversity and promotes inclusion is essential for the success of the organization and the well-being of employees.

**Career development:** Women employees need support and professional development opportunities to reach their full potential in their careers. This can include access to mentoring and coaching programs, participation in training and specialization courses, as well as promotion into management and leadership positions.

**Work-life balance:** Work-life balance is crucial for the health and well-being of employees, including women employees who may have additional responsibilities in caring for children or other family members. Flexible work policies, such as remote work or paid parental leave programs, can help facilitate this balance.

**Representation in leadership positions:** Encouraging and promoting women in leadership and management positions is important for diversity and gender balance in organizations. Building an organizational culture that recognizes and values the contributions of women at all hierarchical levels is essential for the long-term progress and success of the organization.

**Mentoring and coaching:** Mentoring and coaching programs can be extremely beneficial for female employees, providing them with support and guidance in their career development. Organizations should encourage and support such programs to help develop women's skills and confidence in their own capabilities.

**Promoting a culture of recognition and appreciation:** It is important for organizations to recognize and appreciate women's contributions in the workplace in a fair and transparent manner. Recognizing and rewarding meritorious performance and efforts helps motivate and engage women within the organization.

**Anti-discrimination and anti-stereotyping training:** Organizations should provide training and awareness sessions to combat discrimination and gender stereotypes in the workplace. Promoting an organizational culture based on respect, equality and diversity can contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

**Work-life balance policies and programs:** Offering flexible policies and programs, such as flexible working hours, remote work, paid leave for childcare or family members, are important to support work-life balance for female employees.

**Building a support network:** Encouraging women to build and participate in professional support networks can be particularly helpful. These networks provide opportunities for networking, sharing experiences and mutual support in career development and managing specific challenges.

**Transparency and Equity in Recruitment and Promotion Processes:** Ensuring transparency and equity in recruitment, evaluation, and promotion processes is essential to providing equal opportunities to all employees, regardless of gender or other personal characteristics.

Implementing these strategies and practices can significantly contribute to creating a more inclusive, equitable, and motivating work environment for female employees and all employees in general. Promoting gender diversity and equality brings significant benefits not only to organizations but also to society as a whole.

Harber's (1991) goal was to examine the relationships between gender role preference, self-esteem, and employment category (full-time, part-time, homemaker), while controlling for the effects of income and religion. Data were collected from 79 married white women using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and a gender role preference scale developed by the author. The results indicated that (a) there were significant differences in gender role preference across job categories, with full-time workers having more modern views, (b) employment category did not influence self-esteem, and (c) women with mixed gender role preferences had lower self-esteem than those with modern gender role preferences. The strength of the relationship between self-esteem and gender role preference varied by employment category. Gender role preference was a significant predictor of self-esteem (above and beyond the effects of income and religion) only for full-time workers. (after Haber, 1991)

The study by Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, and Vogel (1970, 1972) and using scales from the Bern Sex Role Inventory, examined attitudes toward men, women, and "people" in the current workforce. Characteristics perceived as important for masculine and feminine jobs (i.e., computer programmer and nurse) and for jobs in general were also examined. In contrast to the results of Broverman et al., characteristics were not rated differentially for men, women, or "people." Both masculine and feminine jobs were considered to require stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics, i.e., "appropriate." However, masculine characteristics were generally perceived more positively in terms of overall importance. (after Page, S., Meretsky, S, 1998)

"The main factors influencing access to the labor market and which were identified as a result of field research are:

- training, studies;
- experience;
- work in management/sales;
- integration into a new team;
- working in a team predominantly of women;
- work schedule;
- physical appearance;
- access to a job based on relationships.

However, they should be viewed with caution since men may also face similar difficulties when looking for a job. However, the vast majority of respondents believe that currently, women find it more difficult than men to find a job. The economic opportunities open to women like those included in the study are generally limited (e.g. bartender, saleswoman, pastry chef, dressmaker, etc.) and unattractive: salaries are low, working conditions are precarious, and failure to respect employee rights is a frequent practice of those who offer these positions.” (Marinescu and Pricopie, 2003, pp. 59-60)  
In conclusion, supporting women employees in terms of gender equality, professional development, work-life balance and access to leadership positions are essential aspects to create fair, inclusive and prosperous work environments for all employees.

#### **4. About organizational self-esteem and burnout**

Self-esteem is a fundamental component of an individual's mental health and psychological well-being. It represents the perception and assessment that a person has of their own value, skills and ability to cope with the demands and challenges of life. When we talk about organizational self-esteem, we refer to how individuals perceive and evaluate their own value and skills in the context of the work environment and professional relationships.

Burnout is a term used to describe a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion that is caused by chronic stress or overload in daily activities. It can affect anyone, regardless of age or occupation, and it is important to be aware of its signs and symptoms in order to manage the situation as effectively as possible.

##### **4.1. Organization-related self-esteem**

The relationship between organization-related self-esteem and burnout levels for urban female employees is a complex topic that involves multiple psychological, social, and professional aspects.

“Nathaniel Branden described self-esteem as having two separate but interconnected components (1995). The first is self-efficacy, which refers to the confidence you have when facing life's challenges. The second is self-respect, which is the feeling of being worthy of happiness. In other words, self-esteem is a combination of your opinion about your competence to face life's basic challenges and your self-view that you are worthy of experiencing happiness and joy.” (Salazar, M. R., 2006: 30)

A high level of work involvement is considered central to the burnout process. However, research investigating how high work engagement and psychosocial stressors relate to burnout is scarce. High performance-based self-esteem (PBSE) refers to individuals' efforts to validate their self-worth through accomplishments, a disposition linked to poor health. The aim of this study was to longitudinally examine PBSE in relation to burnout, also accounting for work and personal stressors. Results showed that performance-based self-esteem partially mediated the relationship between stressors and burnout. Performance-based self-esteem was the strongest predictor of burnout over time, followed by personal stressors. Women experienced more work stress than men. Men had stronger associations between work stressors and burnout, while women had stronger associations between performance-based self-esteem and burnout. Thus, individual characteristics, together with private life and professional stressors, are important predictors of burnout. The factors associated with burnout differ somewhat between women and men. (after Blom, 2021)

Organizational self-esteem refers to an individual's assessment of their own competence, worth, and capabilities within the work environment and professional relationships. It involves the individual's perception of their abilities to perform work tasks, interact with colleagues and superiors, and cope with demands and changes within the organization. Self-esteem at work can influence the level of satisfaction, commitment, and performance of employees.

##### *4.1.1. Factors that can influence organizational self-esteem are:*

**Feedback and recognition.** The way employees receive feedback and recognition for their work can significantly influence self-esteem at work. Positive feedback and recognition of efforts contribute to the development of healthy self-esteem and increase motivation and commitment.

**Organizational culture.** Organizational culture, values, and work norms can influence employees' perceptions of their own value and contribution to the organization. A culture that encourages collaboration, trust, and personal growth can support positive self-esteem.

Responsibilities and opportunities. The level of responsibility and the level of opportunities for development and career advancement can affect employees' self-esteem. Opportunities for learning and professional growth help build healthy self-esteem and long-term commitment to the organization.

#### *4.1.2. The impact of self-esteem on performance and well-being*

High self-esteem is associated with better performance at work and increased motivation to accomplish professional tasks and goals. Employees with positive self-esteem are more likely to take responsibility and express their ideas and solutions within the organization.

Self-esteem also influences the quality of interpersonal relationships at work. Employees with high self-esteem tend to be more open in communication, less defensive, and collaborate more effectively with colleagues and work teams.

Positive self-esteem contributes to better psychological well-being and greater job satisfaction. Employees who feel valued and confident in their abilities are less prone to stress and burnout and have a more optimistic perspective on their professional future.

#### *4.1.3. Strategies for building self-esteem at work*

Constructive feedback and recognition. Providing constructive and regular feedback and recognizing employees' efforts and achievements are important for developing healthy self-esteem.

Continuous development and learning. Providing opportunities for professional development, training and continuous learning supports the growth of skills and the strengthening of self-esteem in the workplace.

Empathetic and supportive organizational culture. Creating an organizational culture that promotes empathy, support and collaboration can help increase employee confidence and self-esteem.

Inspirational leadership and coaching. Inspiring and engaged leadership that provides support, guidance and coaching to employees can be a determining factor in developing positive self-esteem and a healthy organizational culture.

Self-esteem in relation to the organization is a crucial aspect of well-being and performance in the workplace. By promoting an organizational culture that encourages trust, recognition of efforts, and personal and professional development of employees, organizations can significantly contribute to the development of healthy self-esteem and to increasing individual and organizational commitment and performance.

#### *4.1.4. Self-esteem of employed women*

The study conducted by Rehman, et al. shows that occupation has a great impact on the self-esteem of young women. The result shows that factory workers have a low level of self-esteem compared to doctors and teachers because factory workers have more work tasks, thus they are less satisfied with their work. They worked to secure their income and to fulfill the needs of the family. Another factor that decreased self-esteem is that they did not have a respectful occupation. It was hypothesized that young working women have high self-esteem compared to women who were not employed. The results support the hypothesis that there is a significant difference between the self-esteem of working and non-working women. Work and self-esteem have a strong reciprocal relationship. Being employed has a major impact on young employed and unemployed women. This study indicates that employment has a significant impact on self-esteem, but not all occupations play a significant role in this regard. Appreciation from society and cooperation from the family are necessary to increase women's self-esteem. (after Rehman, et al., 2021)

## **4. 2. Burnout**

Psychologists accept the following definition of occupational stress: "occupational stress is a negatively perceived quality that is the result of inadequate coping mechanisms with sources of stress with negative consequences on mental and physical health".

Baum defines stress as "a process in which environmental events or external forces, called stressors, threaten the existence of the organism and the well-being of a person" when a person is unable to cope with a situation, he may experience a decrease in well-being.

More recently, the phenomenon has been attributed different definitions: emotional exhaustion reaction to job tasks perceived as excessive; decreased interest by the person with whom one works in response to occupational stress; psychological withdrawal from occupational tasks in response to excessive stress or dissatisfaction, with loss of enthusiasm, interest and personal motivation; dissatisfaction with the occupation characterized by disillusionment, impatience, a feeling of failure.

In recent years, many researchers have attributed different meanings to the syndrome, which can nevertheless be summarized in a single definition: occupational stress syndrome/burnout is a set of symptoms that demonstrate the possibility of a behavioral pathology and is typical of all professions with a strong relational involvement. Nurses, psychologists, social workers, home care assistants, doctors, but also teachers, police officers, judges (hereinafter referred to as service providers/medical assistants) can fall victim to this emotional unrest that inevitably leads to a decrease in professional capacity (Candura SM, 1997).

The syndrome is caused, in conclusion, mainly by continuous contact with people in suffering, whether physical or social. Stress derives precisely from the social interaction between the provider of help and the recipient.

#### Specialists who have addressed the topic of burnout

Christina Maslach: She is a psychologist and researcher at the University of California, Berkeley. She is known for developing the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and has made significant contributions to the understanding and study of burnout.

Herbert Freudenberger: The German-American psychologist is known for his research on burnout and for introducing the term into the literature with his book "Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement", published in 1980.

Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter: These two authors collaborated to develop the concept of the "Burnout Structural Model", adding dimensions such as "Lack of Resources" and "Personal Values" to the Maslach Model.

Gary Cooper and Susan Cartwright: Their research and writings have made significant contributions to the field of workplace stress and burnout, highlighting the organizational impact on the mental and emotional health of employees.

Michael Leiter and Christina Maslach: Through their work "The Truth About Burnout: How Organizations Cause Personal Stress and What to Do About It", these authors highlight the close relationship between organizational characteristics and the risk of employee burnout.

Cary Cherniss: The organizational psychologist has contributed to research and writing on the management of workplace stress and burnout, being the author or co-author of several relevant books and articles in the field.

These authors and researchers have significantly influenced the understanding and approach to the phenomenon of burnout in different contexts, from the work environment to individual and organizational aspects. Their works can be a valuable resource for those interested in the study and management of burnout.

#### *4.2.1. Symptoms of Burnout*

Symptoms of burnout can include constant exhaustion or extreme tiredness, lack of motivation or interest in activities that are normally enjoyed, increased irritability, concentration problems, and decreased performance at work or in other areas of your life.

To prevent or manage burnout, it is important to make time for rest and relaxation, set clear priorities, and set healthy boundaries regarding work and other responsibilities. Also, open discussions with those around you about the stress and pressures you are facing and asking for help are important for reducing burnout.

Healthy relationships and connecting with others can be very helpful in managing daily stress and pressures.

#### *4.2.2. Characteristics of burnout*

Among the characteristics of burnout we mention:

Emotional exhaustion: This component involves feelings of exhaustion and depletion of emotional resources. Emotional exhaustion is a phenomenon that affects health professionals, and not

only, with negative consequences on job satisfaction, and the specialized literature has highlighted that job demands could be a cause of this chronic stress. However, the relationship between job demands, job engagement and exhaustion has produced results that do not always converge. (after Panari et al., 2019)

Depersonalization/Cynicism: The manifestation of negative, cynical attitudes towards the work performed, clients or colleagues. Cynicism, as a personality trait, has adverse effects on health. The question has been raised whether cynical attitudes that develop due to work-related stress correlate with stress levels and whether this has a negative influence on health. Cynicism, as reflected by the Maslach Burnout Inventory, increases with increasing stress levels and could contribute to the decline in health reported for burnout. (after Viljoen & Claassen, 2017)

O a doua dimensiune a burnout-ului este depersonalizarea ca „dezvoltarea unor atitudini negative, cinice față de destinatarii serviciilor sau față de muncă în general”. Se observă că individul începe să manifeste un astfel de comportament neobișnuit atunci când nu este capabil să gestioneze cealaltă problemă într-o manieră amiabilă. În cele din urmă, oamenii depersonalizați păstrează o distanță cu ei și îi consideră ca pe un obiect și în cele din urmă dezvoltă caracteristici rigide. Persoana care suferă de neglijență în depersonalizare manifestă o atitudine apatică, lipsă de dorință de a ajuta, lipsă de interes, neprietenie și sentiment de oboseală față de ceilalți. Dintre cele trei dimensiuni ale burnout-ului, depersonalizarea este considerată cea mai problematică. (după Allam et al., 2021)

Decreased personal achievement: It involves a feeling of ineffectiveness and lack of achievement in terms of work or other areas of life.

Reduced personal achievement is seen as a negative self-evaluation and a feeling of failed performance at work. Several studies have indicated that burnout affects physical and mental health and has a negative impact on employee performance and job satisfaction.

Recent studies have shown that individual factors are closely related to burnout and that these should be examined in future studies. Several authors consider that the dimension of personal achievement has a separate role from both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and, therefore, represents a perceived professional efficacy. That is, personal achievement would reflect the personal characteristics of workers and not their reactions to stressful situations, so it can be considered not a dimension of burnout, but an individual resource that develops largely independently of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, few studies have considered personal achievements to cope with burnout and improve the conceptual framework regarding workplace stress and behavioral/health outcomes. (after López-Núñez et al., 2020)

#### *4.2.3. Factors contributing to burnout*

Chronic stress: Constant, unresolved pressures at work or in personal life can lead to exhaustion and burnout.

Lack of control: Lack of autonomy and control over tasks or the work environment can contribute to the development of burnout.

Imbalance between demands and resources: When work demands exceed available resources (such as time, skills), burnout can occur.

Lack of social and organizational support: The absence of support from colleagues or management can worsen burnout.

#### *4.2.4. Physical and emotional manifestations*

Physical exhaustion: Chronic fatigue, sleep disorders, physical pain.

Concentration and memory problems: Difficulty focusing attention and maintaining information in memory.

It has been hypothesized that the two main stress response systems, the autonomic nervous system and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, are involved in the pathogenesis of burnout. A common hypothesis is that in the early stages of chronic stress, the HPA axis and sympathetic ANS activity tend to be higher, while this will decrease with a longer duration of chronic stress to eventually reach a state of hypoactivity in clinical burnout. Current research in this area shows many contradictory results. Thus, there is no clear evidence of ANS or HPA dysfunction in burnout. However, there is partial support for the hypothesis of HPA and sympathetic hyperactivity in the early stages and HPA hyporeactivity and

low vagal activity in cases of more severe burnout, but high-quality studies investigating causal links are still lacking. (after Dahlam, et al., 2021)

Immune system and inflammation: Chronic stress associated with burnout can affect the immune system, creating an inflammatory environment in the body that can contribute to various conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders.

Emotional exhaustion: Intense feelings of sadness, anxiety, or depression.

Reduced performance: Decreased efficiency and productivity at work or in other areas of life.

#### 4.2.5. Management and prevention strategies

Self-care: Paying attention to rest, nutrition, exercise, and relaxation activities.

Stress management: Relaxation techniques, mindfulness, meditation.

Time and priority management: Setting realistic goals, delegating tasks, managing time effectively.

Social and professional support: Seeking support and counseling from colleagues, supervisors, or a mental health professional.

By understanding these aspects and applying effective strategies, it is possible to prevent and manage burnout to keep us healthy and productive in our professional and personal activities.

#### 4.2.6. Standardized Burnout Assessment Tools

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI): A widely recognized measure that assesses the three main dimensions of burnout (emotional exhaustion, cynicism, diminished personal accomplishment).

Other questionnaires and scales, such as the OLB (Oldenburg Burnout Inventory) and the CBI (Copenhagen Burnout Inventory), are used to assess different aspects of burnout.

#### 3.2.7. Therapeutic Approaches and Interventions

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): CBT can be effective in addressing dysfunctional thoughts and behaviors associated with burnout, improving coping and adaptability to stress.

Stress management and relaxation interventions: Techniques such as biofeedback, mindfulness meditation, breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation can reduce stress levels and promote well-being.

Organizational interventions: Improving organizational culture, promoting work-life balance, providing social support, and training in stress management can contribute to preventing and managing burnout at the organizational level.

These are just a few relevant scientific aspects and approaches related to the burnout phenomenon, and research continues to bring new understanding and strategies for managing this complex aspect of mental health in the workplace and in other contexts.

## 4. Methodology

### Objectives and hypotheses

This research aims to explore the complexity of the relationship between self-esteem in relation to the organizational environment and the level of burnout in urban women. Given the professional and personal challenges these women face, the study aims to understand how the perception of one's own value in the professional context influences the state of exhaustion and resilience to constant pressures.

Among the main directions of analysis is the impact of education on professional burnout, as a high level of education can imply both increased expectations and more complex and demanding professional roles. At the same time, the paper examines the role of seniority in the workplace and the type of employer on the dimensions of burnout, seeking to identify whether these contextual variables contribute to the feeling of professional inefficiency or whether it is more influenced by individual characteristics. Thus, through these objectives, the study provides a comprehensive perspective on the psychological and contextual factors that can shape the level of burnout in female employees, providing a solid basis for developing effective strategies to support and prevent professional burnout.

*Hypothesis 1*: Job tenure has a weak relationship with perceived professional inefficiency, so that experience accumulated at work does not significantly affect the feeling of inefficiency at work.



*Hypothesis 2:* The type of employer (public vs. private) does not have a significant influence on the level of professional inefficiency, suggesting that this perception is more related to individual factors than to the organizational environment.

*Hypothesis 3:* The level of education is positively correlated with the level of burnout, indicating that women with higher education are more prone to professional burnout, probably due to higher professional expectations and more demanding roles.

*Hypothesis 4:* The existence of a significant relationship between length of service and the level of self-esteem reported to the organization for employees in the analyzed sample.

Sample

**Table 1. Sample repartition according to the Age Category criterion**

Age category					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25 years	2	6,1	6,1	6,1
	26-35 years	11	33,3	33,3	39,4
	36-45 years	9	27,3	27,3	66,7
	46-55 years	11	33,3	33,3	100,0
	Total	33	100,0	100,0	

From the age category analysis (Table 1) of the 33 respondents, it is observed that people in the 26-35 age group and those in the 46-55 age range have the same representation, each category having 11 respondents, representing 33.3% of the total. The 36-45 age category is the second largest, with 9 people, representing 27.3% of the sample, while the 18-25 age category is the least represented, with only 2 people, i.e. 6.1% of the total.

**Table 2. Repartition of the sample according to the criterion Last school graduated**

Last school graduated			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	High School	2	6,1
	Vocational School	4	12,1
	Short-Term Higher Education	3	9,1
	Long-Term Higher Education	15	45,5
	Master's Degree	9	27,3
	Total	33	100,0

In the analyzed group (table 2), consisting of 33 people, the majority have a high level of education, with long-term higher education graduates predominating, representing 45.5% of the total, followed by those with master's degrees, representing 27.3%. Those with short-term higher education constitute 9.1%, while vocational school graduates represent 12.1%, and those who have completed only high school are in the proportion of 6.1%.

**Table 3. Sample repartition according to the criterion Employer type**

Employer type			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Private environment	12	36,4
	Public environment	21	63,6
	Total	33	100,0

Interpreting the distribution by employer type (Table 3) shows that of the 33 respondents, the majority work in the public sector, representing 63.6% of the total (21 people), while 36.4% (12 people) are employed in the private sector. This indicates a pronounced orientation towards employment in the public sector within this group.

**Table 4. Sample repartition according to the criterion Seniority at current job**

	Frequency	Percent
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Valid	less than 1 year	7	21,2
	1-5 years	11	33,3
	6-10 years	6	18,2
	11-20 years	6	18,2
	21-30 years	3	9,1
	Total	33	100,0

The interpretation of seniority at the current job (table 4) shows a diversified distribution of experience among the 33 respondents. The largest category, with 33.3% of the total (11 people), is represented by those who have between 1 and 5 years of seniority at the current job. This is followed by the categories of seniority of less than 1 year, with 21.2% (7 people), and of 6-10 years, respectively 11-20 years, each with 18.2% (6 people each). Finally, only 9.1% of the respondents (3 people) have seniority between 21 and 30 years. This suggests that most respondents have relatively recent experience, up to 5 years, at the current job.

**Instruments**

The instruments used are the Organization-Reported Self-Esteem with a number of 10 items, which is part of the Work and Organizational Psychology Domain, Self-Esteem Subdomain. The second instrument is the Maslach Burnout Inventory, from the Work and Organizational Psychology, Burnout Subdomain, with a number of 16 items. The Maslach Inventory consists of three subscales: Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Inefficiency (<https://researchcentral.ro/>).

**Results**

**Hypothesis 1:** Job seniority has a weak relationship with perceived professional inefficiency, so that experience gained at work does not significantly affect the feeling of inefficiency at work.

**Table 5. Correlation table between Current Job Seniority and the Professional Inefficiency Subscale**

		Length of service at current job	Level of the Professional Inefficiency subscale
Length of service at current job	Pearson Correlation	1	-,166
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,356
	N	33	33
Level of the Professional Inefficiency subscale	Pearson Correlation	-,166	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,356	
	N	33	33

The Pearson correlation (Table 5) between “seniority in current job” and “level of professional inefficiency subscale” is -0.166, indicating a weak and negative relationship between the two variables. This suggests that as seniority in the job increases, the perceived level of professional inefficiency tends to decrease slightly, but this effect is quite small. The associated p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.356, which exceeds the common significance threshold (0.05), indicating that this correlation is not statistically significant. In other words, we cannot conclude that there is a real link between seniority in the job and professional inefficiency in this sample.

This weak negative correlation may suggest that, for some employees, the accumulated experience could be associated with a slightly reduced feeling of professional inefficiency. However, due to the lack of statistical significance, it cannot be stated with certainty that longer tenure has a significant impact on perceived inefficiency. This result may indicate either a large variability in the perception of inefficiency or that other factors (e.g., workplace support, leadership style, or individual characteristics) have a stronger influence on feelings of professional inefficiency than tenure.

**Hypothesis 2:** Employer type (public vs. private) does not have a significant influence on the level of professional inefficiency, suggesting that this perception is more related to individual factors than to the organizational environment.

**Table 6. Correlation table between Employer Type and the Professional Inefficiency Subscale**

	Level of the Professional Inefficiency subscale	Employer Type

Level of the Professional Inefficiency subscale	Pearson Correlation	1	-,088
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,627
	N	33	33
Employer Type	Pearson Correlation	-,088	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,627	
	N	33	33

The Pearson correlation between the two variables (table 6) is -0.088, which indicates an extremely weak and negative relationship between the type of employer and the perceived level of professional inefficiency. Basically, this coefficient suggests that the type of employer does not have a significant influence on professional inefficiency. The p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.627, well above the significance threshold of 0.05, confirming that this relationship is not statistically significant. Thus, the result shows that there is no demonstrable relationship between the type of employer (public or private) and the level of perceived professional inefficiency. This result indicates that the perception of professional inefficiency is not influenced by the sector in which the employee works (public or private). This may suggest that perceived professional inefficiency is probably more dependent on individual factors (such as personal motivation, skills) or the specifics of the job, than on the type of employer. At the same time, the perception of workplace efficiency can be influenced by other contextual or psychological factors, not by the employer's sector of activity.

**Hypothesis 3:** Education level is positively correlated with burnout level, indicating that women with higher education are more prone to burnout, probably due to higher professional expectations and more demanding roles.

**Table 7. Correlation table between Last school graduated and Burnout Subscale**

		Last school graduated	Exhaustion subscale level
Last school graduated	Pearson Correlation	1	,361*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,039
	N	33	33
Exhaustion subscale level	Pearson Correlation	,361*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,039	
	N	33	33

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation is 0.361, (table 7) which indicates a moderate positive relationship between the level of education (last school graduated) and the level of perceived burnout. This means that as the level of education increases, there is a tendency for the level of burnout to be higher. The p-value associated with this correlation is 0.039, which is below the significance threshold of 0.05, making the relationship statistically significant

This positive relationship between education and burnout suggests that people with a higher level of education tend to experience the feeling of professional burnout more frequently. This can be interpreted as the fact that those with higher education may have higher expectations, are employed in more demanding roles, or may feel greater pressure in the professional environment, which may contribute to an increase in burnout. However, it is important to note that this correlation is moderate and does not explain all the variation, so it should be explored alongside other contextual factors that influence burnout, such as the work environment or the type of tasks assigned.

**Hypothesis 4:** The existence of a significant relationship between length of service at work and the level of self-esteem reported to the organization for employees in the analyzed sample.

**Table 8.** Correlation table between length of service at work and the level of self-esteem reported to the organization

	Level of Self-Esteem in relation to the organization	Length of service at current job

Level of Self-Esteem in relation to the organization	Pearson Correlation	1	-,132
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,462
	N	33	33
Length of service at current job	Pearson Correlation	-,132	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,462	
	N	33	33

Interpretation of this table of correlations between “seniority in current job” and “level of self-esteem reported to the organization” indicates a very weak and negative relationship between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.132. This result suggests that as seniority in the job increases, there is a non-significant trend of decreasing self-esteem reported to the organization, but this relationship is extremely weak.

The p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.462 exceeds the common significance threshold (0.05), indicating that this correlation is not statistically significant. In other words, there is not enough evidence to support a real relationship between seniority in the job and the level of self-esteem reported to the organization in this sample. Experience gained at work does not seem to significantly influence the perception of self-worth in an organizational context, and other factors, perhaps of a personal nature or related to the organizational environment, could have a greater impact on self-esteem in relation to the organization.

### Conclusions

The study's findings suggest that the relationship between length of service and organizational self-esteem is extremely weak and statistically insignificant, indicating that experience at work does not directly influence employees' perception of their own worth in an organizational context, and that other factors, such as individual characteristics or specific organizational cultures, may have a greater impact on this perception.

Regarding the type of employer, the analysis also reveals an insignificant link between it and perceived professional inefficiency, suggesting that employment in the public or private sector does not have a direct influence on the perception of professional inefficiency, this feeling being probably more dependent on other contextual variables or individual factors.

Furthermore, the study highlights a moderate and significant positive correlation between education level and burnout, suggesting that people with higher education tend to experience higher levels of burnout, possibly due to higher demands and more demanding roles. These findings highlight the importance of strategies to support and manage burnout among employees with higher levels of education, as well as the need to consider psychological and contextual factors that may influence perceptions of inefficiency and self-esteem at work.

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# THE STARTUP "THE EMERGING INSTITUTION": FROM THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPT TO THE IDEA OF SELF-EMPLOYMENT

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**Abstract:** *This research paper aims to explore the development of entrepreneurship, tracing its roots to the emergence of the concept of the Startup "the emerging institution" in ancient philosophical thought. We analyze this progression through a survey of ideas from early Greek philosophers. Plato's concepts form the foundation of this study, suggesting that the notion of "the emerging institution" has deep ties to Greek civilization and philosophy, particularly with the idea of utopia. Aristotle's thoughts on ownership and household management further supported this notion. Following this, we examine the contributions of Ibn Khaldun in Islamic economic thought, as well as those of Adam Smith and David Ricardo in classical economic theory. Together, these ideas demonstrate that the concept of "the emerging institution" originated within Greek civilization. Initially, it was seen as the individual within their household, a purely philosophical concept. Over time, this idea has evolved into its modern form, linking academia to broader society, particularly through Decree 1275, which pertains to "the emerging institution". This reinforces the Greek notion by introducing the concept of the entrepreneur, which also returns to the individual's personal activity and ownership.*

**Keywords:** Greek Philosophy, Emerging Institution, Decree 1275, Self-Employed Entrepreneur, Utopia

## 1. Introduction

Early economic thought, before the emergence of classical economic theory, focused on various aspects of economic life. The primary concern was the observation of economic phenomena and their repetition. One of the earliest examples is the explanation of supply and demand in specific markets. However, while economic logic at the time acknowledged these phenomena, it lacked a structured analytical approach to explain them. Economic reasoning was largely based on a set of principles and axioms. Over time, the economy progressed from rigid principles to one guided by business ethics, thanks to contributions from medieval thinkers, philosophers, religious figures, and Arab scholars during the Islamic State era.

Economic thought advanced during this period, moving to a more refined understanding of economic phenomena. This shift was influenced by religious thought in Europe and the contributions of Arab social scientists during the Islamic State's renaissance. These developments marked a transition to viewing economic phenomena from a legal perspective, incorporating ethical business principles. The history of economic thought, as part of the broader science of economics, is concerned with studying these changes, particularly in economic theory, both in its micro and macro aspects (<http://www.historyhaven.com>, 2024). In addition to tracking these developments, the history of economic thought also examines the ideas proposed by influential economists and philosophers throughout history, such as Ibn Khaldun, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, and David Ricardo, among others (nybooks, 2024).

## 2. Problem of the study

This research seeks to address the following main question: How has the concept of institutions evolved within economic thought, transitioning from philosophical ideas to the concept of the self-employed entrepreneur?

To answer this overarching question, we pose the following sub-questions:

- How did past philosophers approach economic ideas?
- What were the origins of institutions in ancient philosophical thought, and how has their concept developed to encompass startups and self-employment in modern times?

### Economics in Greek Philosophical Thought

The Greeks were the first to use the term "economicus," which is derived from two words. It refers to the art of managing household affairs, or more precisely, the skill of household management. This term reflects the importance of managing and controlling ideas that lead to value creation within

the household. Their exploration of value theory, prices, and the division of labor became widely known. Notably, the Greeks often addressed economic issues within the context of state administration and societal affairs, rather than examining these topics independently. Their contributions to economics were relatively minor compared to their significant achievements in other fields, such as science and literature. This is because they integrated economic ideas into broader philosophical discussions and did not treat economics as a distinct subject requiring detailed study.

Nevertheless, their understanding of economics reveals their awareness that the family or household functions as a small nucleus, managed similarly to a small institution. This early notion of household management is akin to what modern economists describe as the "household economy."

### **Characteristics of Philosophical Economic Thought**

Greek philosophers' economic ideas had several key characteristics:

- **Affiliated studies:** They did not consider economics an independent branch of knowledge. Instead, they linked economic issues to their research in philosophy, politics, and ethics. As a result, their economic studies were intertwined with other fields and influenced by customs, traditions, and moral principles.

- **Limited scope:** Ancient Greek society, like other early civilizations, relied on slave labor for production. Consequently, the Greeks associated labor and production with slavery, leading to a general disdain for economic activities (Dweidar, 1993, p. 86). This perspective created a sense that Greek citizens should focus on higher pursuits, such as philosophy, reflection, and politics. This attitude also influenced Greek thinkers, resulting in minimal attention to economic problems compared to their work in other natural and human sciences. There were no philosophers solely dedicated to studying economic issues.

- **Household management:** Greek philosophical thought recognized the concept of managing household affairs, which laid the foundation for ideas about management. These early ideas foreshadow the modern concept of an institution as an economic agent, involved in both organization and distribution.

- **Theories of value, labor, freedom, and activity:** These concepts all originated in ancient philosophical thought and played a significant role in shaping early economic ideas.

### **The Foundation in Philosophical Thought**

Greek philosophers viewed institutions as a part of their philosophical reflections and expressed this idea in different ways. Some referred to it as society, others as the household, while some called it a virtuous city, emphasizing justice, value, and the freedom to work. The Greek economy, primarily based on the family unit, did not encounter major theoretical economic challenges during this period (Al-Qurashi, 2008, p. 39). Economy, at this time, was understood as the management of household resources, reflecting the dominance of family-based economics in Greek civilization. Several key ideas emerged from this period, as outlined below:

#### **2.1 Plato's Economic Ideas and Their Relationship to Institutions**

Plato, one of the most well-known Greek philosophers, studied under Socrates for over five years. He learned from Socrates that "virtue is knowledge." After Socrates' death, Plato traveled to Egypt in search of further knowledge and later to Sicily. When he returned to Athens, his family wanted him to take over its leadership, but he refused, influenced by Socrates' asceticism, and maintained beliefs that conflicted with theirs (Al-Beblawy, 2000: 17).

Plato addressed some economic issues in his philosophical works, especially in *Republic* and *Laws*. He attributed the creation of the state (Al-Sabhani, 2001: 59) and its institutions to economic factors. According to Plato, human needs are varied, and individuals must come together in a political group to meet these needs (Al-Beblawy, 2001: 21). In *The Republic*, Plato called for the establishment of an ideal city based on the division of labor and specialization among society's classes. He also stressed the importance of equal wealth distribution and the shared burden of scarcity, which reflects the crystallization of institutional thought in Plato's philosophy.

Plato divided society into three classes, each performing a specific role based on his concept of labor division. The ruling class, in Plato's view, should consist of philosophers and wise individuals. This class also included nobles and warriors, forming the second tier. The third class comprised manual laborers, agricultural workers, and industrialists.

The ideal society envisioned by Plato consisted of a small group of people, no more than 1,540 individuals, living in a city where no one was rich or poor; all citizens were considered equal. Plato believed that wealth leads to luxury and idleness, while the pursuit of wealth creates deadly competition. Additionally, he warned that owning productive land could lead to enmity and animosity within the same community. However, Plato also acknowledged that achieving complete equality among citizens was impossible. Despite this, he strongly argued against both extreme poverty and excessive wealth in his ideal society, which led him to classify the population into three distinct classes.

The first class consists of those who create homes, produce clothing, and prepare food. This reflects the division of labor, a concept that Adam Smith later emphasized. Plato views the division of labor as essential for the economic structure of his ideal state. For the utopia to function properly, each individual must engage in the work best suited to their abilities.

The second class is made up of warriors who defend the state from attackers. These individuals require special education to cultivate traits such as courage and patriotism. Thus, subjects like sports, music, and history are vital for their upbringing.

The third class includes the rulers, or philosophers, who receive advanced education. Their studies focus on philosophy, logic, music, and management. However, rulers must also possess personal qualities that serve the state. They must be honest, disciplined, and serious. These rulers, like the warriors, are expected to live communally and are prohibited from owning private property, including gold and silver.

Each class in Plato's society has specific duties. Occasionally, members of the second class (warriors) may advance to the third class (rulers), or vice versa, depending on the needs of the state. The critical point is that every individual is dedicated to their assigned role. Plato's view of labor division is based on two factors. The first is the natural variation in talents, which increases productivity and quality when individuals specialize. The second is his broader vision of the society's overall structure (Namiq, 1978: 10).

Plato was also one of the first to argue that the value of money should be independent of its material worth. He stressed the need to distinguish between local currency, used within the state, and foreign currency, used for trade and travel. Plato believed that individuals returning from abroad should exchange foreign money with the state for local currency. Furthermore, Plato advocated for the abolition of private property, inheritance, and family ties within the ruling class to prevent personal interests from interfering with public duties, as the desire for individual wealth and inheritance leads to corruption (Rateb, 2014: 14).

He also believes that all the factors mentioned contribute positively to generating returns for both the individual and society. This is achieved through building institutional activities in manufacturing, agriculture, and trade, especially with other nations. He emphasized the importance of private property for the class of makers, craftsmen, and farmers, as they aim to achieve their own interests. However, the freedom of private property for producers is not without limits. It is essential for the state to intervene to prevent extreme wealth and poverty alike.

Regarding slavery, Plato views it as a permanent element of human civilization that cannot be dispensed with. According to him, the best slaves are foreigners captured during wars. Plato was also known for supporting the concept of communism, particularly in the economic structure for the ruling class of his ideal city.

The term "communism" comes from the idea of common ownership, where property is shared by all, and individuals work according to their ability and receive according to their needs. Plato embraced this theory to prevent rivalry among the lower classes over property ownership. This idea laid the foundation for modern communist movements led by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Lenin in more recent history.

## **2.2 Aristotle's Economic Ideas and Their Relationship to the Institution**

Aristotle expressed his economic views in his influential works, *Ethics* and *Politics*. In these texts, he provided analytical perspectives on various economic problems and phenomena. As a result, he is considered one of the first ancient thinkers to develop "the seeds of an economic theory" based on analysis. Aristotle pushed economics forward, establishing it as a unique science distinct from the philosophical and logical sciences that dominated during his time (Al-Nabhan, 1998: 142-145).

Aristotle criticized the idea of abolishing private property and replacing it with a collective system. He believed that a collective system would lead to disputes, ultimately undermining the system itself. Thus, he favored private property, as individuals are motivated to improve and develop their



property, leading to increased production. However, he also argued that moral considerations must be part of economic practices.

Aristotle's economic analysis centers on human needs and their satisfaction, which is achieved by acquiring resources through agriculture, industry, livestock breeding, fishing, and trade. He viewed the family as the basic productive unit responsible for achieving self-sufficiency. The family, as a small-scale institution, produces goods, provides services, generates income, and meets the needs and desires of its members. This highlights Aristotle's recognition of private property and family-based economic activity, in contrast to Plato's views.

Aristotle is, therefore, regarded as one of the first proponents of capitalism. He defended private property using three main arguments (Namiq, 1978: 13). In doing so, Aristotle established the foundational principles of capitalism, underscoring his belief in the importance of private property and family-based economic structures.

Ownership is considered a key to human happiness. It contributes to the growth and development of the human soul. Private property is closely tied to freedom, which Aristotle identifies as the highest need of the human psyche.

Aristotle argues that private and public interests can be harmonized, and that personal motives are among the strongest driving forces behind achieving the common good. He also opposed the abolition of the family.

Aristotle distinguishes between two types of value for every commodity: use value, which refers to the benefit a consumer gains from the item, and exchange value, which relates to the rate of trade between goods. He defined monopoly in a way that remains relevant today, as the situation where a single seller controls the market for a product. He deemed monopolies unjust because they rely on exploitation. This suggests that Aristotle supported the idea of a competitive market.

In his critique of economic systems, Aristotle is more pragmatic than Plato. He examines how and why exchanges occur, explaining that initially, trade could be done through bartering. However, as human society evolved and trade between distant regions became common, the need for a uniform and easily transportable medium of exchange became urgent. Thus, money emerged to ease transactions. Aristotle saw the role of money in facilitating exchange as its true purpose, leading him to reject interest-bearing loans. He argued that money itself cannot create more money and that trading money through lending at interest distorts its original function, which is to simplify exchanges.

Regarding the value of money, Aristotle noted that it follows the same principles that govern the value of goods, though it is less prone to the fluctuations that affect ordinary commodities. He is also credited with laying the foundation for the labor theory of value, asserting that labor helps determine the value of goods, even though he considered money the standard measure of value in exchanges (Rahim, 2000: 33).

Aristotle explored the concept of fair exchange, focusing on the idea of a fair price from a moral perspective. He condemned monopoly pricing as both immoral and unjust. Regarding usury, Aristotle offered strong criticism, arguing that "money does not generate money" and labeled usury as the most unnatural and harmful way to earn. This aligns with the principles of Islamic economics, which also opposes usury and interest-based lending. Additionally, Aristotle discussed slavery and its justifications. Although his views on slavery were grounded in his broader philosophy of life, they also touched on key aspects of social life at the time. He did not call for the abolition of slavery, considering it an essential part of ancient Greek society and a form of private property. Aristotle believed that some people were naturally destined to rule, while others were meant to be ruled, due to their inherent nature. Although this perspective was rigid, it can be understood in the context of the Greek society in which he lived, where wars increased the number of slaves.

### **2.3 Ibn Khaldun's economic ideas can be summarized as follows**

- **Interconnection of Economic, Social, and Political Phenomena:** Ibn Khaldun viewed society as a natural phenomenon that led to economic interdependence. He believed that the economic foundation shapes societal status and is part of a larger social entity. This entity, in turn, affects political governance, which further influences social and economic relations.

- **The Importance of Work and the Division of Labor:** Ibn Khaldun emphasized that the wealth of nations comes from industries, crafts, and various forms of economic activities, including fishing, animal husbandry, agriculture, and industry. He placed great significance on industry and its contribution to economic growth. Ibn Khaldun highlighted the idea of the division of labor, stating, "The individual human being is not independent in gathering the necessities of his livelihood, but

humans cooperate with one another for that purpose." This cooperation and division of labor, especially in urbanized societies, greatly increase productivity (Wal'alu, 1974: 19). He also stressed that the division of labor results in higher output.

Ibn Khaldun also discussed the concept of international division of labor, noting how certain countries specialize in specific products. He argued that the foundation of industry lies in specialization and division of labor. He even dedicated a chapter in his work to the subject, titled "On the Specialization of Certain Countries in Specific Industries." In explaining the reasons behind this, he pointed to differences in production conditions between countries, which give them a comparative advantage. This allows them to produce specific goods more abundantly and at lower costs than others, touching upon what is now known as the theory of international trade or specialization.

Ibn Khaldun discussed the concept of labor division and examined the importance of industry, family activity, and private property. He argued that both individual and family efforts were essential to addressing the crises of scarcity and famine that were prevalent during his time. He viewed these ideas as an institutional precursor, marking the early stages of the productive institution.

#### **2.4 Adam Smith's Economic Ideas and Their Connection to Institutions**

Adam Smith is widely regarded as the founder of the classical school of economics and the principle of economic freedom. He is credited with establishing economics as a scientific discipline. Smith's most influential work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, commonly referred to as *The Wealth of Nations*, was first published in March 1776 in London. Smith spent many years writing this groundbreaking book, which achieved great success. It was republished multiple times and translated into several languages shortly after its release. Smith's work significantly influenced England's economic policies. For instance, the trade agreement with France was based on the principles outlined in the book, and its ideas were incorporated into the formulation of state budgets and tax system reforms.

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith laid down the first scientific foundations of political economy, utilizing a scientific approach to his research. This approach allowed him to establish economics as a distinct field of study. Smith formulated key hypotheses that became central to classical economic analysis, including:

- The price mechanism guides markets toward equilibrium.
- Self-interest motivates people and drives economic activity.
- The division of labor and specialization increase productive efficiency.
- Competition serves as an effective form of regulation.
- Markets can transform individuals' selfish interests into collective benefits.

Smith also developed his famous "invisible hand" theory, which posits that the market naturally aligns individuals' self-interested actions with the greater good of society. In this way, personal interests are reconciled, ultimately promoting order rather than chaos.

Smith's economic ideas represented a significant departure from earlier mercantilist views, which held that wealth was derived from accumulating precious metals like gold and silver by boosting exports and reducing imports. His work also challenged the physiocratic belief that land was the primary source of wealth.

Smith, unlike his predecessors, believed that productive labor for goods and services was the true measure of a nation's wealth. He proposed that each country should specialize in producing goods at the lowest possible cost relative to other nations and import the rest. This idea is known as the theory of absolute advantage. According to Smith, such specialization would increase the global production of goods and enhance the well-being of all. He advocated for free trade, opposing the protectionism encouraged by mercantilist policies.

Smith's ideas laid the groundwork for the classical school of economics, which emphasizes that labor is the source of value and wealth. His influence extended to prominent economists such as David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Malthus, and Jean-Baptiste Say, who further developed the concepts he introduced.

#### **2.5 David Ricardo's Economic Ideas and Their Relevance to Institutions**

In 1817, Ricardo applied the ideas of the classical school, drawing extensively from Adam Smith's theories. Most of Ricardo's significant contributions are contained in his *Principles of Political Economy*. His work gained attention in 1815 when he published articles on the effects of low prices on profits. Later, in 1818, he published his second book, *Political Economy and Taxation*.

Ricardo's ideas remain relevant today, particularly for those interested in the theories of value and capital. He argued that agricultural landowners often enrich themselves at the expense of other consumers. Ricardo also believed that wages for workers, as well as profits for industrialists and capitalists, could only increase if the overall spending of society increased. However, he also observed that profits tend to decline over time, eventually leading to stagnation and reduced industrial growth.

## 2.6 Economic Ideas of the Classical School

The classical view of economics can be summarized through several key points, highlighting the contributions of classical economists (Al-Qamsan, 2001, pp. 52-55):

- **Self-Interest and the Public Good:** The classical economists, particularly Adam Smith, argued that pursuing one's personal interest ultimately serves the public interest. Smith introduced the concept of the "invisible hand," which suggests that while individuals act out of self-interest, this behavior benefits society. For instance, a butcher sells meat not out of a desire to provide fresh food to the community, but to maximize his profit. In doing so, he ensures that the meat is fresh and well-cared for, thereby benefiting the public. The classical school believed that, as individuals and businesses pursue their self-interest, they inadvertently direct resources toward their most efficient use, benefiting the overall economy.

- **Perfect Competition:** The classical economists asserted that all markets, whether for goods, services, or labor, are governed by the principle of perfect competition. In such markets, businesses aim to maximize profits by minimizing costs. This state of perfect competition, as discussed in relation to the free competitive market, is achieved when the conditions for economic well-being are met. Under these conditions, markets operate at maximum efficiency, ensuring the optimal allocation of resources (Al-Qamsan, 2001, pp. 52-55).

- **Free Markets and Global Trade:** The principle of free and efficient markets is not limited to domestic markets but extends to the global economy. Classical economists, such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo, through Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage, argued that if the conditions of a competitive market are met, international trade can lead to mutual benefit. When countries specialize in producing goods for which they have a comparative advantage and engage in unrestricted free trade, global competition results. This competition, fueled by the availability of technology and resources, allows all participating countries to benefit from trade exchanges, maximizing global welfare.

- **The Role of the State:** The classical economists maintained a straightforward principle: if free markets operate efficiently to benefit everyone, then we should allow them to function naturally. Consequently, the state should minimize its interference in economic activities. Its limited role includes organizing property rights, providing educational services, maintaining law and order, and defending the state against external threats. According to classical economists, any state intervention in the markets disrupts their normal and effective functioning, potentially undermining the full competition that they believe is essential for economic success. Therefore, the best contribution the state can make to the economy is to support businesses, remove obstacles, ensure domestic security, and protect its borders, creating a conducive environment for market activities.

- **The Nature of Money:** For classical economists, money is merely a "cart to transfer the values of products" from one party to another. Its primary function is to facilitate exchanges. Thus, money serves as a means, not an end. The ultimate goal is to acquire goods and services for consumption or to invest in order to generate wealth. In this context, the demand for money arises solely to complete commercial transactions, making it directly tied to the demand for goods and services. When the demand for goods and services increases, so too does the demand for money, as its sole purpose is to facilitate exchanges.

- **The Classical View of Wealth:** Classical economists valued all economic resources of the state, including labor, capital, land, and self-employment, as well as various economic activities such as agriculture, trade, and production. They particularly emphasized the importance of international trade, believing that these elements contribute to the nation's wealth. In their view, true wealth is represented by consumer and investment goods rather than the sheer amount of money an individual possesses (Omar, 1994, p. 214).

## 2.7. Decree 1275 for the Startup at the University of Algeria

In recent years, particularly since 2022, the Algerian University has undergone a significant transformation with the adoption of Decree 1275. This decree empowers universities to establish "startup" incubators and emerging institutions aimed at creating added value and wealth for students. This marks a departure from the traditional academic framework, where a student's university

education typically concluded with an academic evaluation focused on a specific topic within their chosen field of study.

The university has moved away from this conventional approach, seeking to forge stronger links between academic institutions and their economic and social environments. This is achieved by fostering innovative ideas that lead to the establishment of real wealth-generating institutions. These institutions aim to create new funding opportunities that are independent of the public treasury. They leverage modern technologies and align with trends in the digital government sector, facilitating the efficient production of intellectual property, services, and goods.

This contemporary approach to institution-building reflects a continuation of the ideas regarding wealth creation advocated by classical economists, pre-modern philosophers, and modern thinkers. Recently, the concept has evolved further through a government initiative that introduces the idea of self-employed entrepreneurs. This initiative supports the notion of emerging institutions by allowing individuals to establish and license their own institutions, thereby creating wealth and adding value to the economy.

### Conclusion

In summary, the concept of “the emerging institution” has evolved into the modern-day startup through the perspectives of economic philosophers throughout history. Each thinker contributed their unique insights, which collectively inform the management of economic affairs. For instance, Plato, in his exploration of utopia, envisioned a society where inhabitants share all resources and responsibilities. This idea resonates with Aristotle's thoughts on individual ownership and freedom, emphasizing family enterprises as a means to generate wealth and create advantages.

Similarly, Ibn Khaldun addressed issues of famine and societal prosperity, while economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo laid foundational ideas about economic activity and wealth generation. The culmination of these historical insights is reflected in the University of Algeria's recent efforts to foster entrepreneurial initiatives through Decree 1275, the establishment of “startup” incubators, and the promotion of self-employment. This evolution signifies a progressive approach toward linking academic endeavors with practical economic contributions, reinforcing the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in contemporary society.

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## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS AT THE FAMILY LEVEL

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**Abstract:** *Migration is an important topic worldwide, representing an important part of a broad transformation that the world economy and society are currently experiencing. It must be understood as part of a process of social transformation that concerns economic, social, political, legislative, demographic conditions, but also actions designed to facilitate the correct understanding of what a migrant represents. A contemporary challenge is generated by the misperception of the natives regarding migrants and their families. In Romania, the phenomenon of immigration has started to be more and more known with the entry into our society of a considerable number of immigrants. The aim of this study is to analyse specific aspects of migrant status and to highlight the implications of migration on the family. We used quantitative methods, especially secondary data analysis. We found that immigrants are misperceived for reasons such as: fear, misinformation, cultural differences, language spoken, and the family undergoes major changes being directly involved in international migration.*

**Keywords:** migration, international, immigrant, emigrant, family

### 1. Introduction

Migration is a contemporary reality that continues to be a topic of interest due to the challenges it poses at national, European or global level. It should be a common social phenomenon that people perceive as part of their daily lives. Globalization processes, technological progress, diversification of communication technologies, and the evolution of the economy influence the increase in migration, which worldwide reaches more than 3% of the world's population (IOM, 2022). Seen as a phenomenon, we see that "Migration is a phenomenon in the same sense in which the events of death and birth, for example, by aggregation define the phenomena of mortality and fertility, respectively" (Otovescu, 2016; Sandu, 1984).

The term migrant brings to the fore an angry reality because it is not fully understood and continues to arouse great controversy. So, most often people see the migrant as a person who leaves the country where he or she was born, a refugee, a person looking for a job, a poor person, a person who comes from a developing country or a person who crosses the Mediterranean in a boat. The international media today promotes the idea that migration is always at high levels and is increasing at a rapid pace. Often, the metaphors used by them "a tsunami of people, waves of people" have the role of creating a threatening image of migration, perceived as such by the population around the world. The migrant is not just that, but much more. In general, people see the term migrant as designating a bad person, without qualities and who wants something that is not due to him. In the context of migration involving the crossing of a border, we speak of international migration. In this case, migration involves both the term "migrant" and "immigrant".

The European Commission (2023) establishes that "international migration" means "the event by which a person establishes his habitual residence in the territory of a Member State or a third country, after having previously had his habitual residence in another Member State or in a third country; 'immigrant' means a person who has been subject to international migration during the reference period in order to establish his or her new habitual residence in the reporting country; 'emigrant' means a person who has been subject to international migration during the reference period in order to establish his or her new habitual residence outside the reporting country, who previously had his or her habitual residence in the reporting country. The disappearance of the individual for a certain period of time generates effects that allow a certain type of approach, "In approaching the effects of international migration, the greatest difficulty starts from the current complexity of the phenomenon, given by the multitude of forms and characteristics that are associated with them and by their accentuated dynamics" (Constantinescu, 2003a). The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019) defines a migrant as "any person who moves or has moved across an international border or within a state, outside the place

of habitual residence regardless of the person's legal status, whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary, what are the causes of the displacement, what is the duration of stay".

## **2. Problem statement**

Migration must be seen as a normal phenomenon through which migrants from all corners of the world exercise a human right (for more details see Otovescu-Frăsie, Motoi, Păsătoiu, Otovescu, 2010). Each of us knows at least one story of a migrant either among close friends or between acquaintances or distant relatives. To see the migrant as a normal person, his voice must be heard. In support of this, IOM has launched a campaign called "I am a migrant" that shows the stories of several migrants from all over the world. The University of Maastricht has joined this initiative by creating the blog "Stories about migrants".

The challenges felt by the natives in relation to immigrants start from a negative vision, either from certain personal frustrations, or from the lack of adequate information or from 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, 2006). This study aims to demonstrate that immigrants need to be perceived correctly in order to allow them to use their potential in a positive way, beneficial to both themselves and their families, and to the prosperity of the host society.

## **3. Research Questions**

A significant question related to people's misconception of immigrants, is whether poverty is the main cause of migration, or there are many more important causes for people's migration. It must be taken into account in discussions about immigrants that they are first and foremost people and depending on the desire of each of them, we can talk about voluntary migration (family, education, retirement, job change or environmental causes, maybe lifestyle) and forced migration (conflict, violence, war, persecution). Taking into account the way the International Organization for Migration defines it, the migration phenomenon – "the movement of a person or a group of people, either crossing an international border or within a state. It is a movement of the population, regardless of size, composition or causes; includes the migration of refugees, displaced populations, people migrating for economic reasons or for other purposes, including family reunification" - the question arises whether the voice of immigrants is sufficiently heard or the channels that transmit it are sufficiently promoted.

## **4. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to highlight the fact that the people involved in the immigration process must be assimilated as a contemporary reality, and the impact generated by their immigration is manifested, especially at the family level. Whether we are talking about the families in the immigrants' country of origin or about the families that assimilate them in the host country (employers or newly formed families), economic, social, cultural, demographic changes are noticeable at their level.

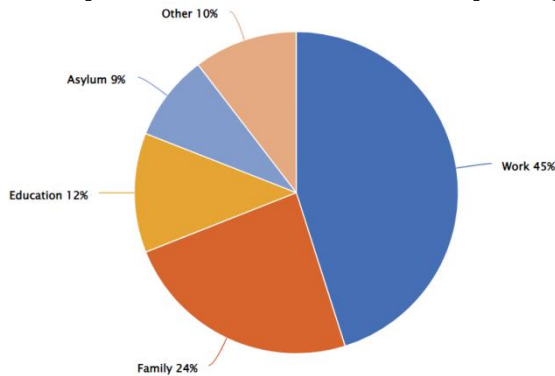
## **5. Research methods**

The research undertaken in this project is largely quantitative in nature and highlights the main reasons for immigrants and the implications of this immigration approach on the family. The research was based on secondary analysis, which "applies directly to the quantified data that are already collected" (Constantinescu, 2003a) and made available to researchers by the European Commission, the Ministry of National Education, the Index of Immigrant Integration in Romania, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, articles, newspapers and specialized magazines. The relations between immigrants and the family in the modern era have a complex structure due to the change in relations between generations, the reorganization of the dimensions and structures of the family. The European Commission (2023) defines the term "family" as "a group of two or more people living in the same household and who are related by filiation or by marriage, registered partnership or non-marital union". The family is also involved in international travel for work purposes referred to in the definition of international migration - "movements of individuals or groups, families outside national borders, in the hope of better living conditions" (Albu, Roșu-Hamzescu, 1987).

## **5. Immigrants and the family**

Although it may seem surprising, family is one of the main motivations of immigrants, whether it is to follow a family member who works abroad, or we are talking about the immigration of young people to form a family (migration for love), family being the second big reason why people migrate nowadays

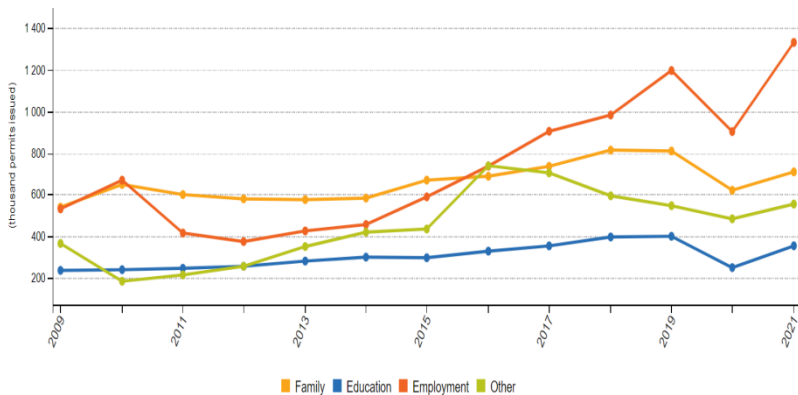
**Figure 1. All residence permits valid at the end of 2021, depending on the reason**



Source: Eurostat

Immigrants' tendency to consider work as their primary purpose has fluctuated over time, but since 2009, it has seen a continuous increase, as can be seen in Figure 2, compared to immigration for family reunification, education or other reasons.

**Figure 2. Number of first residence permits issued by reason, EU, 2009- 2021**



Source: Eurostat

A residence permit is „an authorisation issued by the competent national authority allowing a national of a non-member (non-EU) country (also known as a third country national) to stay for at least three months on its territory. Data on residence permits are collected together with information on the reasons for issuing such permits. The main reasons include: employment, family reunification and education, with a residual category for other 'reasons'”.

A hundred years after the mention among the first migration laws (E.G. Ravenstein 1889) that distance departure is made by married men, there is a change in this law in the sense that there is more and more talk about an international movement of women (migration after 1989). The westward movement of women to care for the elderly is a current example of international migration of women for work. Another example is the migration of caregivers, i.e. those women who migrate to take care of other women's children (especially from the Philippines). This has a worrying effect on their families. In this context, it is interesting what happens to children whose mothers migrate. Here we can think of a negative effect on the family and on the dynamics of relationships. An eloquent example of international migration of women is also provided by Professor Stephen Castles (1998), the founder of the International Institute for Migration. In his research, he brings to the fore North Korea where the government has implemented

a program to help farmers through which they are offered subsidies for organizing trips for marriage purposes. Farmers use these subsidies within agencies that offer them trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, Kazakhstan to find a wife. Women who want a better life, for themselves and their families, agree to marry Korean farmers.

Family, the main reason for immigrants to the UK, has led to immigration of half a million people. "In 2022, approximately 136,000 visas were issued to people in the care of foreign students, up from 16,000 in 2019, according to government figures" (Bratu, 2023). This created discontent, and the government limited visas for students. After the beginning of the recession of 1973, an attempt was made in Germany to stop the immigration phenomenon, but only the migratory flow was changed, with migrants for work attracting migrants for family reunification, thus increasing the number of the migrant population.

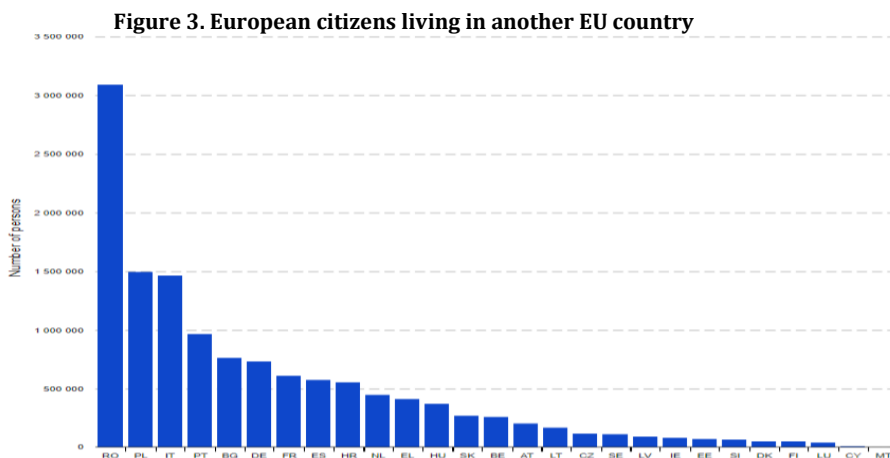
A research conducted in Romania on the influence that the family's departure to work abroad has on children's school performance shows that most subjects understand the need for parents to leave to work abroad and consider that they have a duty to maintain the level of school performance. This is proven by 60% of research participants who say they perform as well as they did before their parents left. 30% of respondents say they have better results after their parents leave abroad, but there is also a percentage of 10% who have registered a regression in school results, the departure of parents destabilizing them emotionally ( Constantinescu & Constantinescu, 2008).

### 7. Findings

The family is, in the theories of the new migration economy (NEM), the group that designs the risk management strategy, because leaving involves providing resources for the home.

"As a connexion between individual and society, between public space and private space, family is the place where different tensions are tendencies of society, met"(Constantinescu & Constantinescu, 2008).

A phenomenon similar to the one in Germany is currently happening in Romania, with immigrants who initially came for work attracting members of their families, either for family reunification or for studies. Although this country is the first in the top of EU countries with a predominantly emigrant population (Eurostat, 2023), it tends to change its status, proving a great capacity to attract especially citizens from outside the European Union, but also for those from the EU.



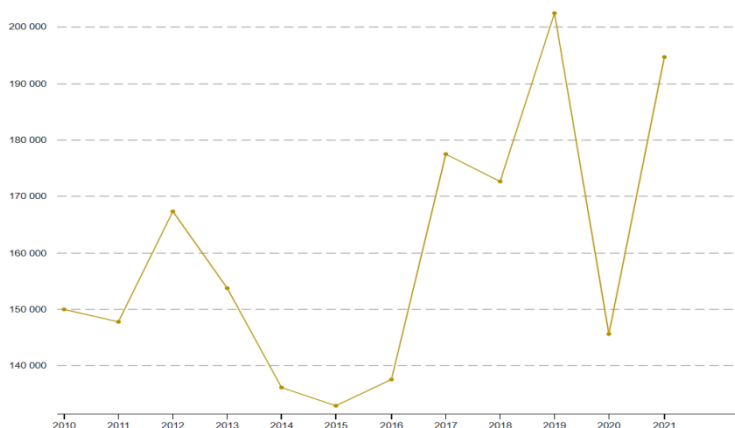
Source: Eurostat

A number of immigrant workers have entered the Romanian labor market, most of them from outside the EU borders (Nigeria, India, Syria Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal, Bangladesh). This phenomenon will increase the number of immigrants because most of these international workers will attract people from families left in their country of origin. This is based on economic growth (4.7% in 2022), but also on the need for labor generated by the emigration of Romanians abroad for better-paid jobs. Based on predictions made by construction specialists, this sector alone will need 100,000 workers by the end of 2024. So, to cover this need "foreign workers are the solution when there is no other solution" (The Economist, 2023).



According to the General Inspectorate for Immigration, in 2021, over 148,000 immigrants arrived in Romania, of which over 96,000 are from third countries (Moldova, Turkey, Syria, Nepal) and over 52,000 are citizens of the European Union (mostly from Italy, Germany, France). Three years ago, the number of immigrants in Romania reached the threshold of 2% of the total population. In 2018, 4% of immigrants came to Romania with the aim of studying (IIR, 2019). It is understood that "the motivation of young people to emigrate to a country aiming for studies is born for various reasons" (Cîrstea, Constantinescu, 2022: 584- 594) 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).

**Figure 3 Total number of immigrants in Romania**



Source: Eurostat

## 8. Conclusions

Immigration is still a sensitive topic worldwide, representing an important source of the dissension that anti-migration bodies are creating at the moment. The immigrant is the person who must be understood as part of a process of transformation that leaves its mark on his life experience, affects his family and has an impact on the societies of origin and host. The challenge of anti-migration actions generates the erroneous perception of the natives regarding immigrants and their families because it perpetuates ideas according to which immigrants are responsible for the loss of jobs, the decrease in wages, the decrease in social comfort. In Romania, immigrants are increasingly visible in all social environments, especially on the labor market or in academic environments. They are assimilated quite well at the moment, but tensions continue to arise as long as there is interest from some anti-immigration organizations to put them in a negative light.

The interest in attracting immigrants has increased in Romania because they, in addition to bringing profit to the labor market, are true ambassadors of our country abroad. The challenges related to migration with its two sides, emigration and immigration will continue to arise, but the opening of society to global civilization will manage them effectively. The fact that they are increasingly interested in reuniting their families can be a considerable gain for Romania both from a demographic point of view and from a social and economic point of view.

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## MATERNITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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**Abstract:** *Human trafficking is not a recent phenomenon but remains one of the most severe forms of crime with which modern society is confronted. Its true dimensions are still unknown due to the obscurity surrounding this phenomenon, which is often hidden behind seemingly legal activities. The primary factors have largely remained the same; however, new causes have emerged in light of recent social and geopolitical trends. New recruitment forms have also appeared, as traffickers quickly adapted their methods to the online environment with the rise of cyber activities following the Covid-19 pandemic. The domination practices and strategies are diverse and aim at destroying the victim's identity and asserting the trafficker's authority, creating a social network of dominance and servitude. From a social values perspective, trafficked girls are reduced to the status of goods, gradually dehumanized, and profoundly traumatized, which impacts their entire life path. This article aims to explore the complex issues faced by trafficked women who have become mothers, highlighting situations where traffickers use strategies involving children to manipulate these mothers and keep them in exploitative situations for as long as possible.*

**Keywords:** human trafficking, maternity, traffick strategies, exploitive situations.

### 1. Introduction

Arms, drugs, and human trafficking represent some of the most complex and well-organized criminal activities, violating fundamental human rights, including the right to life, security, and freedom (Stan, 2019). Human trafficking is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or holding of persons through force, fraud, or deception, for the purpose of exploitation for profit" (Law 678 of 2001 on preventing and combating human trafficking). According to Eurostat, over 7,000 victims of human trafficking are registered in the European Union each year, but the actual figure is likely much higher, as many victims go unreported. In Europe, most victims are women and girls, though the number of men is increasing, particularly in cases of forced labor (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>). The United Nations identifies inequalities within and between countries, increasingly restrictive migration policies, and a rising demand for cheap labor as key underlying causes. Poverty, violence, and discrimination make victims more vulnerable to trafficking (<https://www.un.org>).

### 2. The Vulnerability of Girls to Human Trafficking

Human trafficking remains the most recognized form of modern slavery (Quirk, 2011; Palaghia, 2013, 2015) and constitutes a crime against humanity (Savona & Stefanizzi, 2007). From a social perspective, human trafficking is both a national and transnational phenomenon, facilitated by globalization and the use of modern technologies. It involves various forms of exploitation, including the violation of human rights through forced labor (Palaghia, 2013 a&b). Human trafficking refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, or "holding" of persons through threats, use of force, or other forms of coercion, deception, or abuse of power to exert control over others for the purpose of exploitation. From a social values perspective, trafficked girls are reduced to commodities, gradually dehumanized, and subjected to profound emotional trauma that shapes their entire future (Palaghia, 2017).

Vulnerability itself "characterizes not only certain populations but also each individual in specific relations with external reality, in certain social contexts of individual action, and can be a result of individual interpretations of these contexts" (Cojocaru, 2005). Vulnerability represents "individuals' lack of inclination to act" or "the inability to adapt actions to the structural requirements of the social system caused by inadequate individual interpretations in relation to some common and socially accepted interpretations" (Cojocaru, 2002: 131). "Vulnerability signifies a state of potentiality, a present non-manifestation of certain factors that may, however, lead to marginalization, disadvantage, or related phenomena in the future, a mental map of inadequate interpretations in relation to reality or the person's potential" (Cojocaru, 2005: 30).

Victims are portrayed in the literature as individuals repeatedly subjected to aggression from others, in the form of physical and/or verbal attacks or psychological abuse. Each individual exhibits a

certain level of tolerance and resilience when faced with victimization, depending on three categories of factors:

1. Pre-victimization factors;
2. Contextual factors;
3. Post-victimization factors.

Minors are in the category of individuals with heightened vulnerability due to specific age and psychobehavioral characteristics, which include having almost no physical or psychological defenses; limited capacity to anticipate both their own behaviors and those of adults; a reduced ability to understand the consequences of their own or others' actions; low empathy levels; difficulty discerning good intentions from bad; and a high degree of gullibility (Palaghia, 2019). In some cases, trafficked girls come from families where they were abused or abandoned, and they may become involved in prostitution out of a need to support themselves financially or to obtain items they believe they need or desire.

Young girls are sold to traffickers, locked in rooms or brothels for extended periods (weeks or months), drugged, terrorized, repeatedly raped, beaten, threatened with weapons, and display signs of torture, such as cigarette burns, malnutrition, and sometimes branding, indicating their "ownership." This continual abuse enables traffickers to exert easier control over their victims. Captive girls are so intimidated and fearful that they rarely disclose anything that could incriminate the traffickers, even when they have a chance to escape, aware of how well-organized and hierarchically structured these groups are, resembling other criminal organizations. Traffickers with multiple victims often have a "top girl," who was once a victim but has been with the trafficker long enough to gain their trust. This "top girl" collects money from the other girls, disciplines them, and manages the traffickers' day-to-day affairs. Various methods are used to control the victims, including force, drugs, emotional manipulation, and financial tactics (<http://www.anitp.mai.gov.ro>).

Traffickers find it easy to establish a strong bond with young girls, promising them marriage and a lifestyle they have not previously experienced within their families, pretending to be in love and suggesting that this lifestyle is for the future they will build together. "The victim differentiates from the aggressor through their capacity to feel guilt, sometimes feeling guilty for actions carried out by the aggressor, independent of themselves, or for not doing enough to remedy the situation" (Rădoi & Irimescu, 2021: 91).

In cases where the girl has had few male role models in her life, or those she had were negative, traffickers exploit this, often asking the victims to treat them as a father figure. In many cases, they use violence, such as group rape and other forms of abuse, to force young women to work for them and, more importantly, to keep them under their control. Often, victims are simply beaten into submission, become addicted to drugs, and traffickers can control them solely by controlling their access to the drug supply. Traffickers also confiscate important documents, such as birth certificates, passports, or driver's licenses, so that even if the victims escape, they cannot support themselves and often return to the traffickers. These abusive control methods have significant psychological and mental impacts on the victims, who suffer from severe traumas, such as Stockholm Syndrome, a paradoxical psychological phenomenon in which victims become attached to their abusers over time, complicating their ability to escape the aggressor's control. In human trafficking, the practices and strategies of domination are diverse and aim to destroy the victim's identity and establish the trafficker's authority, creating a mechanism of domination and servitude that enables to form a true social network (Gavriliuță & Gavriliuță, 2013: 17).

The proportion of minors as human trafficking victims remains high, highlighting the need for institutions and responsible organizations to work toward reducing these numbers, punishing those responsible, and supporting and assisting the victims. Disturbingly, according to specialists from the National Agency Against Human Trafficking minors are at risk of being re-trafficked, with some experiencing repeated exploitation, a situation that underscores the weaknesses in the system for preventing and protecting vulnerable individuals (<http://www.anitp.mai.gov.ro>). In 2021, a total of 282 children under the age of 18 were identified within the Romanian anti-trafficking system as victims of child trafficking. Most of these minors were exploited within Romania, particularly through various forms of sexual exploitation, including being forced to produce explicit sexual images and content. Of these, 230 minors were sexually exploited in 2021, and at least 105 were forced into pornographic representations (<http://www.anitp.mai.gov.ro>). "The high proportion of minors among the total population of victims can also be explained by the increasing criminal interest in online exploitation and the coercion of minors to produce (photo-video) content and distribute it online" (Tamaș et al., 2022: 13).

The majority of identified minors are between 12 and 17 years old (89%), with most victims being *girls*, making up 90% of minors registered as victims of human trafficking. Additionally, 63% of the

minors exploited in 2021 came from rural areas, especially from counties such as Bacău (24 victims), Mureș (22 victims), Dolj (18 victims), Brașov (18 victims), Bucharest (17 victims), Constanța (15 victims), Caraș-Severin (14 victims), Sibiu (13 victims), Galați (11 victims), and Alba (10 victims). Domestic trafficking was the primary destination for child trafficking in 2021, with children being transferred from one city to another by traffickers, especially in cases of forced begging or labor exploitation, or the exploitation occurring within the same city of origin. In some cases, minors were manipulated, blackmailed, and exploited through technological means without leaving their residence, and the proportion of female victims among the total victim population in 2021 reached 88% (444 victims). This statistic is particularly concerning, given that *more than half of these victims are under 18, with female victims predominantly forced into prostitution (82%) or coerced into producing and/or distributing explicit sexual content* (Tamaș et al., 2022).

It is noted that, while the operational mechanisms seem to be consistent, regardless of the power dynamics involving the body, there is a shift towards a personalized form of authority and power when considering the trafficker's figure exerting control over the victim. "Analyzing the phenomenon of human trafficking reveals a certain continuity between the ritualistic practices of body control from the past and the controlling practices exercised by the heads of trafficking networks" (Gavriliuță, 2017: 216). Traffickers employ subtle and effective strategies through which victims are subjected to a "regime imposed by the trafficking network," developing their own means of domination and control. The trafficker pursues personal interests and asserts power by setting rules and punishments. "The victim becomes obligated to obey the trafficker master, who becomes the sole authority, harshly punishing any potential defiance" (Gavriliuță, 2017: 221).

### 3. The Experience of Maternity in the Context of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a severe, complex, and well-organized criminal activity that violates the rights to freedom, security, and life of human beings (Lobasz, 2019). For Romania, it remains a major social issue that is constantly worsening, with serious social and economic implications. The true extent of this criminal phenomenon remains concealed, as it is obscured and disguised under seemingly legal activities. This extremely serious social problem has, over time, transformed into a global phenomenon, resulting in millions of human tragedies and growing alarmingly in recent years. Romania is both a source and a destination country for major trafficking networks, providing both victims and recruiters.

Corruption within authorities, unreliable national statistics, and legislative gaps are only part of the factors that enable the expansion of this phenomenon. Human trafficking is a complex process involving socio-political and economic factors (external), as well as personal factors (internal). The actors involved vary from those who facilitate the recruitment of victims, to the traffickers themselves, and especially the clients, the purchasers and those demanding such "services", without whom this phenomenon would not exist.

Research in the field shows that victims identified in human trafficking are often traumatized individuals who prefer not to speak about their experiences as a defense mechanism. Frequently, sexually exploited victims do not consider themselves victims, as exploitation is masked by an emotional bond with the trafficker, through which they may even become mothers (Pascoal, 2020).

Motherhood within the context of human trafficking may be transnational, as victims may be exploited in other countries while having children in their country of origin. Indicators that distinguish prostitution from human trafficking include:

1. clothing that is inappropriate for the season, with girls often on the streets dressed very scantily even in winter;
2. working excessively long hours, even when they are ill;
3. unfamiliarity with the city or area, with minimal social interaction;
4. being on the street in adverse weather conditions;
5. extended absences from their home country, even if they have children there;
6. changes in behavior in the presence of certain group members. The presence of a single indicator may suggest low self-esteem or lack of determination, but a combination of two or more indicators over a longer period strongly suggests a potential situation of exploitation (Pascoal, 2020).

UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) has defined APON (Abuse of Position of Vulnerability) as "any situation in which the person involved has no real or acceptable alternative other than to submit to the abuse." Gallagher (2012) notes that the term "real and acceptable alternative" remains unclear. In Romania, human trafficking has become difficult to detect because traffickers are well-versed in the laws or have acquaintances who are, allowing them to skillfully avoid situations that could

lead to their arrest. Nearly two decades ago, girls were kidnapped, transported across borders, and sold to others. However, today, human trafficking is increasingly difficult to prove, particularly since Romania joined the European Union. Small groups or even individual traffickers have emerged, reducing physical aggression against victims and employing subtler coercive strategies to avoid rebellion and extend the exploitation period (OHCHR, 2010).

Human trafficking is increasingly difficult to prove, as victims often do not file complaints or choose to withdraw them. Experts believe the number of reported cases is decreasing because *the phenomenon is becoming more invisible*. One method of recruitment that has gained prominence is the *loverboy* technique, which eliminates physical violence, replacing it with more subtle methods, often within an emotional and familial context (Aninoșanu et al., 2016). This method is based on the victim's blind trust in the trafficker. In some cases, traffickers use it only during the recruitment phase, establishing a relationship with a woman and later selling her, thus ending the relationship between the recruiter and the victim. This type of relationship is primarily based on romantic illusions, and the woman realizes she has been deceived when she is passed on to another exploiter. There are also cases where the recruiter continues his role as *loverboy* during the exploitation phase, even going as far as marriage. This method is far more effective than the previous one, as the victim is almost unable to perceive the deception. *She may appear as a victim of domestic violence but does not identify herself as a victim of human trafficking*. The act of marriage further supports the trafficker, as it allows them to manipulate the victim more easily (Pascoal, 2020).

The paradigm of the abuser playing the role of the savior suggests that the victim justifies the abuser's actions in her mind. In cases of violence where the abuser exploits his partner, girls often prefer this form of attachment (traumatic bonding) over returning to their families of origin, thus continuing to be exploited for years. A typical *loverboy* profile may include the following characteristics: a low level of education, but boasting about having the "school of life" (referring to street experience), and being charismatic. Research shows that 75% of traffickers are narcissistic, maintain "relationships," and often receive support from female relatives who help control the victim and ensure she does not make connections outside the network. This creates an environment where the victim remains isolated and dependent on the trafficker. In the initial stage, traffickers typically target vulnerable girls who have no friends, have poor relationships with their families, or who may have been abused at home, such as children from abusive or authoritarian families. Traffickers provide the attention these girls crave, gaining their trust. They act as if the victims can rely on them in any circumstance, openly communicating even about the illegal activities they are involved in. Traffickers often target young victims who lack love, face familial difficulties, or have grown up in foster care systems (Pascoal, 2020).

It is important to note that not all poor families are vulnerable to human trafficking, as traffickers primarily seek girls who do not get along with their parents or who are abused in their families, not necessarily from impoverished backgrounds (Fedor, 2013). In cases of sexual exploitation, girls are coerced into earning money, but not through physical force; instead, traffickers create a fabricated marital plan, such as saving money for a house or a car, which they can enjoy together. In the end, however, the money earned remains under the trafficker's control.

Trafficker's plans are long-term, never materializing, and are designed to ensure continuous exploitation. The children of trafficking victims are often neglected or abused by relatives who care for them or are placed under social services care. There have been cases where traffickers controlled the children of their victims, using them as coercive tools. In such situations, traffickers condition a mother's access to her children on paying increasingly large "debts," which are always justified as "expenses for the child." These debts grow due to situational factors created by the traffickers and lead to prolonged exploitation. Particularly, the children of Nigerian women exploited in Spain and Italy are used as coercive tools by exploiters (Pascoal, 2020).

Traffickers who hold the children of their victims are able to directly harm them while emotionally abusing the mothers. They often use terrifying threats, including threats of death or actions such as "throwing [the victim] from the balcony." The verbal and psychological abuse, combined with the knowledge that their children are in danger, generates post-traumatic stress for the mothers, which impacts their decision-making abilities. Living in constant fear and anxiety, the only goal these women have is to protect their children. Pascoal (2020) describes how a woman in such a situation was forced to pay an additional 400 euros to a trafficker, beyond the other "debts" she owed, just to be able to visit her child. Traffickers reported to authorities that the mother had abandoned her child, continued exploiting her, and even charged her another 200 euros, purportedly for "child expenses." As a result, the child was placed into child protection services and eventually became eligible for adoption.

In Romania, there are cases where children have been born during sexual exploitation, as traffickers are so cunning and unscrupulous that they marry their victims and have children with them. Exploitation, therefore, becomes a "family business," with the child often used for begging, especially in countries where a high profit can be made.

#### **4. Social Work Interventions for Human Trafficking Victims**

Nationally, Decision No. 49 from January 19, 2011, for the approval of the Framework Methodology on Prevention and Intervention in Multidisciplinary Teams and Networks in Cases of Violence Against Children, Domestic Violence, and Exploitation of Children, highlights the importance of initial and ongoing professional training for all professionals involved in this issue. This methodology emphasizes the role of multidisciplinary and interinstitutional teams in assisting victims of trafficking, especially children, and other vulnerable groups, including Romanian migrant children who fall victim to other forms of violence in foreign countries.

Based on this methodology, each County Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) initiates partnership agreements with accredited private organizations (OPA) and adopts the multidisciplinary and interinstitutional intervention methodology for children who are victims of human trafficking. The trafficking of minors is defined by national law (Law 678/2001 on the Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking) and includes exploitation as the primary motive. This methodology emphasizes the term "child trafficking" within child protection and social assistance, recognizing that abuse, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking of children may be perpetrated by parents, acquaintances, strangers who coerce or gain the trust of the child, or even other children. These crimes may occur in families or public or private institutions dedicated to children and families. Often, these forms of violence are intertwined, for example, physical abuse being accompanied by emotional abuse, or sexual abuse involving both physical and emotional harm.

For trafficking survivors, particularly women and children, Stockholm Syndrome is commonly observed. This phenomenon refers to the victim's expression of admiration, gratitude, and other positive feelings toward their abuser, which may seem irrational in light of the danger and risks the victim faces (Peters, 2015). Stockholm Syndrome, as defined by H.G. No. 49 from January 19, 2011, is the phenomenon in which a victim expresses adulation, gratitude, and other positive feelings toward their abuser, seemingly irrationally, considering the danger and risks faced by the victim. This psychological response can complicate the recovery and reintegration of victims, as they may develop strong emotional bonds with their traffickers, which impede their ability to seek help or recognize their victimization.

The Center for Assistance and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking operates with the mission of ensuring the protection of adults at risk, for a specific period of time when they are in imminent danger, in line with the provisions of Ordinance No. 29/2019. This emergency reception center provides a range of essential services to the beneficiaries, including decent living conditions, primary medical care, social counseling, and support for their social and professional reintegration. The services offered include:

1. Accommodation: Providing a safe place to stay.
2. Meals: Preparation and serving of food.
3. Professional Integration Counseling: Guidance for re-entering the workforce.
4. Assistance with Documentation: Helping victims obtain identity documents or civil status certificates.
5. Access to Other Social Services: Facilitating access to various social benefits.
6. Job Placement and Vocational Training: Supporting the search for a job, participation in qualification or requalification courses.
7. Housing Assistance: Helping secure housing, including social housing and collaboration with local communities for reintegration.

Case Management is a crucial process in supporting victims, where the goal is to connect the victim with the necessary services to help them overcome their status as a victim and reintegrate into society. This process involves offering social, medical, psychological, and legal services, tailored to the individual needs of the victim. Given the varied severity of each case, effective intervention requires a multidisciplinary team including a social worker, psychologist, lawyer, medical professional, and police officer, who work together to address the complexity of the victim's needs (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, 2005).

In Romania, victims of human trafficking can access a wide range of services, including:

1. Social Work: Support for basic needs and community integration.
2. Psychological Assistance: Therapy and counseling to address trauma.
3. Medical Assistance: Health care and treatment for any physical or mental health issues.

4. Legal Assistance: Legal support for cases involving exploitation or seeking justice.
5. Educational Assistance: Access to education and training opportunities to rebuild life skills.
6. Outreach Services: Support to reach victims who may be isolated or unwilling to seek help on their own (Alexandru, 2010). These services are essential to helping victims reclaim their lives and escape the cycle of exploitation and trauma caused by human trafficking.

After a victim of human trafficking has been identified, they are directed to an assistance and protection center to benefit from specialized help. Victims can be assisted in three types of centers, each offering a different level of protection and confidentiality:

1. Closed residential center: Offers a high level of protection, with restricted access and constant supervision.

2. Semi-open residential center: Allows more freedom, but with appropriate protection and supervision measures.

3. Apartment-type center with protected address: Provides victims with a more private environment and enhanced identity protection.

Within the social intervention process, the Social Worker Case Manager (the coordinator of the multidisciplinary team) plays a crucial role, having essential responsibilities to ensure the protection and appropriate support for the victim. Their responsibilities can be summarized in the following 10 points:

1. Ensures the victim's access to services established in the service plan: Facilitates the victim's connection with various types of help (medical, psychological, legal, etc.).

2. Encourages communication between specialists: Ensures coordination between members of the multidisciplinary team for a holistic approach to the case.

3. Is the contact person with any specialist who intervenes in the case: Maintains contact and communication with the professionals involved in the victim's support.

4. Has permanent and direct contact with the victim: Ensures that the victim receives continuous support and monitors their condition.

5. Mediates the connection between the victim and reference persons from their life environment: Ensures the victim's integration into the social and family environment, when possible.

6. Makes quick and immediate decisions in crisis situations: Is ready to intervene rapidly to protect the victim in emergencies.

7. Calls and organizes case conferences: Organizes meetings to evaluate and revise the support plan for the victim.

8. Checks the permanent updating of the victim's needs: Constantly monitors the victim's evolution and adjusts interventions as new needs arise.

9. Monitors the victim's situation continuously: Tracks progress and changes in the victim's life to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention.

10. Can also provide psychological counseling services in urgent situations and in the absence of a psychotherapist colleague: In emergencies, can offer basic psychological counseling, both individually, in groups, or family-based, until the intervention of a specialist.

These responsibilities are essential to ensuring effective protection and comprehensive support for the victim, helping them overcome trauma and reintegrate into society in a safe and sustainable manner.

The stages of case management involving victims of human trafficking (Buzducea, 2010) are as follows:

1. Reporting and registering the case;
2. Assessing the victims' situation;
3. Planning the intervention;
4. Implementing the Service/Intervention Plan or providing the services;
5. Monitoring and periodic evaluation;
6. Final evaluation and case closure/Post-intervention monitoring.

In summary, the case manager's objectives in human trafficking cases are (Mihai, 2008):

1. To develop the trafficking history and the victim's needs;
2. To assess the victim's resources to overcome the current situation;
3. To connect the victim with the network of service providers;
4. To develop the victim's coping capacities to face difficulties in the process of psycho-social reintegration;
5. To plan the provision of services and interventions for the victim through the Individualized Service Plan (PIS).



Trafficking of women has extremely severe consequences on victims from a physical, psychological, and social perspective (Anghel, 2011). In the long term, they become suspicious, lose trust in people, and face physical illnesses and psycho-emotional disorders. These consequences are directly proportional to the duration and severity of the "treatments applied," but the most important factor remains the victims' ability to cope with stress and difficult situations (Obokata, 2006).

### **5. Human Trafficking and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Physical abuse has extremely serious consequences on health: from injuries, strokes, which can even lead to the victim's death. Also, the inability to protect oneself during sexual abuse can lead to contamination with various sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and the occurrence of unwanted pregnancies. Psychological abuse leads to anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and attempts. The victim loses trust in others and in herself, feels shame, guilt, and self-blame, and may become dependent on alcohol and drugs. Social abuse, where the trafficker manipulates and imposes social restrictions, exacerbates feelings such as loneliness, isolation, and social exclusion; the victim becomes suspicious and feels a constant insecurity, which leads to social withdrawal. The acute stress experienced can evolve into post-traumatic stress disorder (Burke, 2022), a situation where the victim remains marked by the horrors of the past and finds it extremely difficult to focus on the present. The trauma experienced by female victims originates from the physical and psychological abuse they have endured, which makes the process of recovery and reintegration difficult and long-lasting.

For an effective intervention, the social worker must understand the suffering caused to the victims by the traumatic experience of trafficking, which can be devastating and is characterized by the fact that the victim continuously lives under intense stress, caused by the fear of death threats or severe harm to herself or her family. Victims may not speak about their experience, and the physical and psychological consequences they face are difficult to overcome. Among the most common symptoms seen in human trafficking victims, we mention feelings of fear, panic attacks generated by the expectation that the trauma will repeat itself at any moment, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress, depression, which can lead to suicidal thoughts or attempts, behavioral disorders such as aggressiveness, irritability, anger, substance abuse (alcohol and/or drugs) considered a way to cope with the trauma (Dumitrașcu, 2012).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is present among girls with major trauma of this type (Burke, 2022, Palaghia, 2024), and support must be provided on a psychological, social, and economic level in the initial stage. However, in the long term, the focus is on the healing process through counseling for victims who survive traumatic events (Weaver, Flannelly, Preston, 2003).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has three main components:

1. Re-experiencing, through involuntary thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks;
2. Avoidance, which occurs in an attempt to forget, avoiding thoughts, feelings, or situations that remind the victim of the traumatic event;
3. Hyperarousal, which is characterized by agitation, exaggerated startle response, excessive vigilance, and concentration difficulties, generated by the fear that the traumatic experience could repeat itself.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is usually diagnosed in victims of trafficking for a long period. "Overcoming trauma is a long process, but even when the traumatic experience is successfully treated, the trafficking victim remains marked for life. When events arise that remind the victim of the trauma, however vaguely, they can provoke a new state of unease, especially when the links to the traumatic experiences remain unconscious" (Dumitrașcu, 2012, p. 237). There is a "high incidence of trauma and consequently PTSD among children and adolescents" (Muntean, Munteanu, 2011, p. 165).

Social workers must be familiar with the 6 diagnostic criteria for PTSD, as outlined in the DSM V, as follows:

1. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event experienced by themselves, witnessed, or confronted with a situation that threatened their or others' integrity, causing injuries or even death, to which they responded with terrifying fear;
2. The traumatic event is periodically relived through distressing and recurrent memories, thoughts, and feelings, which give the impression that the episode will repeat itself;
3. There is a tendency to avoid stimuli that may be associated with the trauma, including avoidance of thoughts, feelings, or conversations related to the trauma, activities, places, or people that may remind them of the experience. There may be a reduction in interest in certain activities, amnesia related to a crucial part of the traumatic episode, diminished attachment to others, restricted emotional range, and a bleak outlook for the future, in personal, professional, and social aspects;

4. A constant state of agitation sets in, with insomnia, irritability and anger outbursts, hypervigilance, difficulty concentrating, and exaggerated startle responses;
5. Symptoms from points 2, 3, and 4 last for more than one month;
6. Deterioration in social and professional skills occurs.

In children with PTSD, instead of fear and insecurity, there is agitated and chaotic behavior, and "emotional paralysis" results from exhaustion. Adolescents show high vulnerability to trauma. For school-aged children and preschoolers, trauma is expressed and relived repetitively, especially through play, drawings, and various forms of non-verbal expression (Muntean, Munteanu, 2011).

Traumatic experiences affect and destroy a person's ideas about safety, their positive self-image, and the meaning of life. Most often, victims refuse to talk about traumatic experiences, but specialists must know that the most common symptoms of trafficking may include: the victim may experience a strong sense of guilt, believing they are to blame for causing the abuse, may feel unworthy or dirty, may experience feelings of fear, panic attacks, as they expect the trauma to repeat at any moment, a profound sense of insecurity, generalized anxiety, social phobia, specific phobias (e.g., open or enclosed spaces, insects, etc.), stress, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, psychotic phenomena characterized by hallucinations and paranoid ideas, thoughts of or attempts at suicide, nightmares, sleep disorders, communication difficulties (inability to express desires or needs), anger and aggression, feelings of being judged by everyone, distrust, and shame in relationships with others, a negative self-opinion, substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, food), sexual disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Palaghia, 2024).

There are several types of reactions to psychological crisis situations, such as: suicide, depression, anxiety disorders, anger, and aggression. Suicidal attempts can also occur in the context of psychoactive substance use, alongside anger and explosive aggression. Working with clients exhibiting suicidal and parasuicidal behaviors is quite stressful, as, while always wishing the best for the people they work with, their self-destructive behaviors can affect the specialists, especially when a child manages to commit suicide. Children and adolescents who use drugs become depressed, and some exhibit active suicidal tendencies. We can reduce the likelihood of suicide primarily by helping the person stop using drugs, as many suicides occur when the person is under the influence of drugs (Blume, 2011).

In working with survivors of human trafficking (Winterdyk, Perrin, Reichel, 2012), who are angry or aggressive, we must be careful not to expose ourselves to risks, and if threatened, we should remove ourselves from the situation and request support if necessary. We should not encourage the expression of anger, to avoid escalation. We must calm the angry person with rational, calm, disarming responses, demonstrating tranquility and balance. Under no circumstances should we touch the beneficiary who is in a state of anger; we teach them strategies to avoid escalating anger before it reaches that stage, and we ask them to practice the skills they've learned in controlled conditions (Leahy, 2022).

Suicidal behaviors include suicidal ideation, which can be fleeting thoughts, quickly abandoned, or it can transform into obsessive, all-consuming preoccupation with suicide and death (Wodarski & Feit, 2009). Later, these thoughts may include a plan or multiple plans for committing the act, which may involve ideas about methods of carrying out the act; these can vary in terms of lethality or the potential to have lethal consequences. Often, plans can include chronological aspects that may be carried out immediately, or others that may be in the distant future. Eventually, suicidal behaviors may include self-injury, which can range from superficial self-harm to self-injurious behaviors that could lead to death. In the case of suicidal behavior, the lethality of the self-harm act is important; in many cases, especially in less lethal suicide attempts, death occurs because the person is alone and not discovered in time.

Self-harm can be non-suicidal; self-mutilation that is not necessarily a conscious attempt to end one's life is called parasuicidal behavior and is differentiated from behaviors in which there is an intent to die. There are situations where a parasuicidal behavior can result in the victim's death, even though there was no intention to die. Extremely lethal attempts present a clear intention to die, especially if carried out in secret. In cases of non-suicidal self-harm, some beneficiaries have reported that actions such as burning or cutting themselves were associated with shame, sadness, not knowing how to solve a problem, boredom, or revenge on close people they have been hurt by. Parasuicidal behaviors are also common among individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, who may abuse alcohol and drugs (Linehan, 2022). All these aspects must be known by the specialist supporting the beneficiary with chronic suicidal tendencies in order to reduce them; it is a difficult job that requires much time and preparation (Blume, 2011).

The meetings with the counselor must aim to eliminate the victim's feelings of fear and insecurity and to regain a sense of safety, which is an important process for their rehabilitation. The counseling activity must focus on building trustful relationships with those around them and developing coping skills

for new situations, as well as creating a safe environment, so that the individuals assisted do not become victims again (Alexandru, 2012).

The stages of intervention in crisis situations are (Holdevici, 2011): a. Focus on the problem; b. Assessment; c. Contract; d. Actual intervention; e. Closing the counseling process; f. Final evaluation.

Ewing (1990) outlines the principles of crisis intervention as follows:

1. Crisis intervention is short-term and needs to be applied quickly;
2. Crisis intervention targets not only the beneficiary but also their family and social support networks;
3. Crisis counseling addresses a "wide variety of human problems," not just a single type of crisis;
4. Crisis counseling focuses on current issues, especially those that lead the beneficiary to seek specialized support, with an emphasis on the triggering factor of the crisis;
5. Working with a beneficiary in crisis aims to resolve problematic situations and develop new adaptive coping mechanisms;
6. Crisis counseling is reality-oriented;
7. Crisis counseling is characterized by the fact that the specialist (psychologist or social worker) takes an active role;
8. Crisis counseling may prepare the beneficiary for subsequent interventions.

The cognitive-behavioral therapeutic model can be used as a foundation for short-term intervention in crisis situations and includes the following steps:

1. Establishing the therapeutic rapport;
2. Assessing the physical danger or risk of harm the person is in;
3. Assessing and mobilizing personal strengths and cognitive-behavioral resources;
4. Developing a positive action plan;
5. Strengthening personal commitment to the development plan of adaptive (coping) strategies;
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of the plan.

In working with victims of human trafficking, as well as with other categories of beneficiaries, individual counseling, group counseling, and family support remain effective (Șoitu 2011, 2012).

### **Conclusions**

Female victims of human trafficking are traumatized individuals who remain extremely vulnerable to traffickers. The trauma experienced by these women originates from the physical and psychological abuse they have endured, which makes the process of recovery and reintegration difficult and lengthy. When sexual exploitation is the objective, the trafficking process involves various offenders acting on multiple levels: from spontaneous actions carried out by individual and unorganized criminals to international trafficking networks. Methods that have proven effective in maintaining submission are often brutally violent, and women are seen as commodities used for trade, serving as lucrative sources of profit for traffickers.

In combating this alarming phenomenon, which seriously violates human rights, social policy solutions consist of: repatriation, reintegration, the development of social assistance services, and the punishment of criminals. Doru Buzducea points out that, both nationally and internationally, the system for repatriation and social reintegration "does not operate at a level that guarantees the elimination of the possibilities of re-trafficking former victims," and specialized psychosocial assistance services remain underdeveloped and require special attention. Social workers are exposed to many risky situations in their practical work and must be prepared to manage them effectively.

Victims of human trafficking constitute social groups that are highly vulnerable to risks. Work with at-risk groups is extremely important in the field of Social Work, and the practicing social worker must focus on aspects such as security and resilience, alongside working with individuals and groups in risky situations, in order to help address some of the problems and to outline future security-focused actions in the social work of at-risk groups. The intervention of the professional social worker must be prompt and effective. As the main agent of social intervention, they must coordinate the multidisciplinary team swiftly and efficiently, initially ensuring a minimum level of security, comfort, and well-being for the affected individuals, understand the special protection needs of victims, and intervene both *in crisis situations* whenever necessary and in the long term, supporting the beneficiaries to overcome trauma and achieve psychosocial reintegration. Prevention of the phenomenon, through information and awareness campaigns, remains crucial, but the effective solution remains the criminalization of demand.

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## EXPLORING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH READINESS AND MENTORSHIP: A CASE STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA

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**Abstract:** *This study explores the perspectives of students at the University of Craiova regarding their readiness to choose a specific research direction and the role of mentorship in their academic journey. Findings reveal that 66.1% of respondents feel unprepared to select a research trajectory, highlighting the need for additional guidance and resources. Despite this, 73.1% of students expressed confidence in defining their research direction without further assistance, indicating that current support mechanisms may be effective for a majority. However, 78.5% of students reported lacking access to mentors or academic advisors, while 80.3% expressed a strong desire for mentoring in the near future, underlining its perceived value in navigating academic and professional development. Students also identified key areas of support needed, including guidance in research direction (73.9%), project management skills (47.2%), navigating funding processes (42.4%), and publishing strategies (46.4%). These findings underscore the importance of strengthening mentoring programs and academic support initiatives to address diverse student needs, ultimately enhancing research preparedness and career outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *Student perspectives, research readiness, mentorship, academic guidance, research career, academic support,*

### 1. Introduction

The transition from undergraduate education to a research-oriented career marks a critical phase in a student's academic journey. Universities play a pivotal role in equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to navigate the complexities of academic research and professional development (for more details see Otovescu, 2015). However, despite the growing emphasis on research as a cornerstone of higher education, many students encounter significant challenges in identifying their research interests, selecting a specific direction, and accessing adequate mentorship. These challenges are particularly pronounced in emerging academic environments, such as the University of Craiova, where institutional support systems for research development are still evolving.

Research readiness, defined as the ability to identify and pursue a coherent research direction, is a multifaceted construct influenced by factors such as prior academic experiences, access to mentoring, and institutional resources. According to Terenzini et al. (1994), students' transition to higher levels of academic engagement is shaped by their exposure to structured guidance and their ability to participate in experiential learning opportunities. This is particularly critical in the context of academic research, where the breadth of potential topics and the complexity of methodologies can overwhelm students lacking adequate support.

Mentorship has been widely recognized as a key enabler of research readiness and academic success. Effective mentoring not only provides students with technical knowledge but also fosters critical thinking, enhances problem-solving abilities, and helps students navigate the professional landscape (Nora & Crisp, 2007). However, disparities in access to mentorship remain a persistent issue in higher education, with many students, especially first-generation and underrepresented groups, lacking access to mentors who can provide personalized guidance and support (Gershenfeld, 2014).

This study aims to explore the perspectives of students at the University of Craiova regarding their readiness to choose a specific research direction and the perceived role of mentorship in facilitating this process. By examining the experiences and expectations of students, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for enhancing academic support systems and fostering a research-oriented culture within the university. The findings are expected to inform the development of targeted interventions, such

as mentoring programs, workshops, and career counseling initiatives, aimed at improving students' research readiness and overall academic outcomes.

## **2. A brief literature review**

The existing literature provides valuable insights into the factors influencing students' research readiness and the role of mentorship in academic success. Several key themes emerge from the body of research, including the importance of early exposure to research opportunities, the impact of institutional support systems, and the role of mentorship in fostering academic and professional growth. Exposure to research activities during undergraduate education has been shown to significantly enhance students' research readiness and career aspirations. Lopatto (2007) found that undergraduate research experiences help students develop critical thinking skills, increase self-confidence, and clarify their career goals. These experiences are particularly beneficial for students in STEM fields, where hands-on engagement with research projects can provide a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts and methodologies.

Institutional support plays a crucial role in shaping students' research experiences. According to Kuh (2008), universities that provide comprehensive support systems, including access to research facilities, funding opportunities, and academic advising, create an environment conducive to student success. However, disparities in resource allocation and administrative inefficiencies can hinder the effectiveness of these support systems, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Altbach et al., 2009). Mentorship is widely regarded as a cornerstone of academic success. Nora and Crisp (2007) conceptualize mentorship as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological support, career guidance, role modeling, and knowledge sharing. Effective mentors not only help students navigate the academic landscape but also inspire them to pursue ambitious goals and overcome challenges. Research has consistently shown that mentored students are more likely to persist in their academic pursuits, publish research findings, and transition to advanced studies (Schlosser et al., 2011).

Despite its importance, access to mentorship remains uneven across institutions and disciplines. Gershenfeld (2014) highlights the systemic barriers that limit mentorship opportunities for underrepresented students, including implicit biases, limited availability of qualified mentors, and a lack of institutional commitment to mentoring programs. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to create inclusive and accessible mentoring initiatives that cater to diverse student needs.

## **3. Methods.**

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to capture a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and perspectives. The mixed-methods design is particularly suited for exploring complex phenomena, as it allows for the integration of numerical data with rich, contextual insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

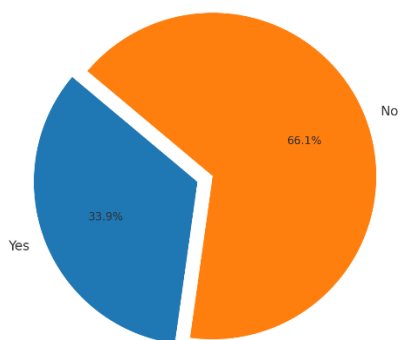
The study involved a total of 502 undergraduate and graduate students from various disciplines at the University of Craiova. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure representation from diverse academic backgrounds and year groups. This approach was chosen to capture the heterogeneity of experiences and perspectives within the student population.

## **4. Results**

From the total number of respondents, 66.1% indicated that they do not feel ready to choose a specific research direction, while 33.9% responded affirmatively. This high percentage suggests that students feel they have not received sufficient information or guidance regarding the available research opportunities. It may also reflect the breadth and complexity of academic research fields, making it difficult for students to decide on a single trajectory.

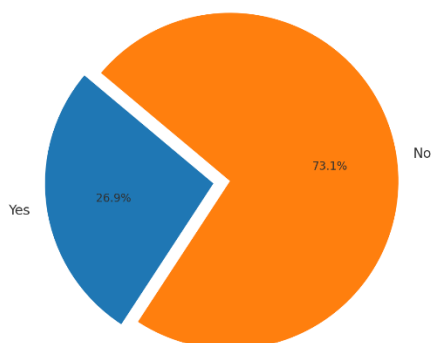
The minority of students who feel ready to choose a specific research direction suggests that there is a segment of the student body with a clear vision for their research career. This group may have benefited from prior experiences or resources that helped them make this decision. These students might already have experience in research projects or be more advanced in their studies, thus having a better understanding of their areas of interest.

Do you feel prepared to choose a specific research direction for your career?  
502 responses



The graph above indicates a clear need for additional support and resources to help the majority of students choose their research directions. Universities could use this information to develop initiatives that improve access to research information and strengthen mentoring programs, especially for first-year students who might feel overwhelmed by the diversity of academic options. This approach could significantly enhance the educational experience and better prepare students for successful research careers.

Do you need help defining a clear research direction?  
502 responses

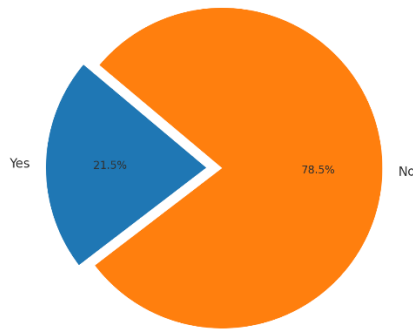


From a total of 502 responses, 73.1% of students indicated that they do not need additional help defining a research direction, while 26.9% believe they do need assistance in this regard. The majority of students at the University of Craiova appear confident in their ability to identify and define a specific research direction. This confidence may be attributed to factors such as the quality of education provided by the university, access to good information resources, or experience gained through participation in various research projects during their studies. It also suggests that current guidance and academic support programs may be effective in preparing students to make independent decisions about their academic careers.

The proportion of 26.9% who feel the need for help in defining a research direction highlights the existence of a significant minority of students still facing uncertainties about their academic choices. This segment of the student body could benefit from improved academic and career counseling programs, workshops dedicated to exploring career options in research, and initiatives that facilitate access to mentoring.



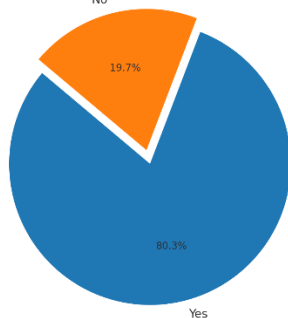
Have you had a mentor or academic advisor in research so far?  
502 responses



Of the total responses, 21.5% of students indicated that they have had a mentor or academic advisor in research, while the majority, 78.5%, have not received this type of support. The high percentage of students who have not had a mentor or academic advisor in research suggests a significant gap in access to individualized support within the university. For the 21.5% who have had a mentor or advisor, this indicates a positive experience and access to valuable resources that helped them navigate research. These students' experiences could be used to shape and improve mentoring programs for other students.

Of the 502 students at the University of Craiova, 80.3% indicated that they would like to have a mentor in the near future, while only 19.7% said they would not want a mentor. The overwhelming majority of students who want mentoring reflects a strong recognition of its benefits. This high interest may indicate a desire for additional guidance and support in navigating academic and professional careers, suggesting that students are aware of the challenges posed by research and professional development.

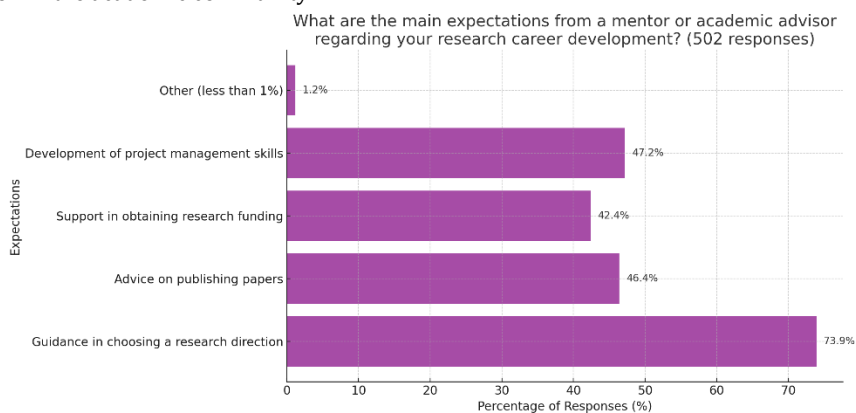
If you haven't had a mentor yet, would you like to have one in the near future?  
502 responses



This high demand for mentoring should prompt the university to strengthen and expand existing mentoring programs, ensuring they are accessible and meet students' diverse needs. By acknowledging and addressing the high demand for mentoring, the University of Craiova can significantly improve students' experiences and contribute to their academic and professional success. This indicates an active and engaged student community seeking to maximize the learning and development opportunities provided by the university environment.

Guidance in choosing a research direction is the most requested aspect, with 73.9% of students indicating it as a priority. This reflects an acute need for strategic and decision-making support in establishing and pursuing a coherent and effective research direction. 47.2% of students want support in developing project management skills, suggesting they are aware of the complexity of managing research projects and wish to improve their abilities in this area. With 42.4%, there is a need for assistance in navigating the often complex processes of obtaining funding,

including grant proposal writing strategies and identifying suitable funding sources. Almost half of the respondents (46.4%) consider support in the publishing process important, which is crucial for building a reputation in the academic community.



These expectations reflect an understanding of the complexities and challenges of a research career, where not only technical knowledge but also the ability to navigate the academic and professional landscape is vital. By directly addressing these needs and providing appropriate resources for developing the necessary skills for a successful research career, the University of Craiova can significantly enhance its students' educational experience and academic outcomes.

## 5. Conclusions

Globally, higher education institutions have recognized the importance of creating supportive environments that promote research engagement and career development. Studies have shown that students who receive structured guidance and mentoring are more likely to develop a clear research focus, achieve academic success, and pursue advanced degrees (Shanahan et al., 2015). By examining the perspectives of students at the University of Craiova, this study sheds light on the challenges and opportunities associated with research readiness and mentorship in higher education. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance academic support systems and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for student success. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance academic support systems and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for student success. Developing structured mentoring programs and providing students with accessible resources tailored to their research needs can bridge gaps in guidance. Such efforts will empower students to make informed decisions about their academic trajectories, ultimately fostering a research-oriented culture. Furthermore, this study highlights the necessity for institutions to address systemic barriers, such as resource disparities and administrative inefficiencies, that hinder the effectiveness of support systems. By leveraging best practices from global academic settings, the University of Craiova can establish robust frameworks that promote equity and inclusion in research opportunities.

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# TOMORROW'S ENTREPRENEURS: HOW YOUNG PEOPLE FROM WESTERN ROMANIA ARE CHANGING COMMUNITIES THROUGH CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

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**Abstract:** *Entrepreneurship has demonstrated significant economic importance by contributing to job creation, economic development and increased social welfare. In this context, young entrepreneurs play a crucial role, having the potential to bring innovation, generate positive social change and revitalize local communities. Starting from the research question regarding the degree of civic involvement of future Romanian entrepreneurs, this paper aims to investigate the degree of civic involvement of young Romanians who want to become entrepreneurs, with the main objective of evaluating this aspect. The research was based on a quantitative methodology, more precisely the sociological survey method, using a questionnaire distributed by operators, and is part of a larger study. Following the analysis of the data collected from 881 respondents from western Romania, the results emphasize the need for concrete support measures to increase the civic involvement of young entrepreneurs. At the same time, these conclusions reflect similar trends observed at the European level.*

**Keywords:** entrepreneur, civic involvement, volunteering, young people

## 1. Introduction

Economic growth remains a central topic in both economic policy and academic research. In Europe, attention to this aspect has increased in the context of the high unemployment rate. After the Second World War, OECD member countries experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth, but in the 1960s and 1970s the focus shifted to demand management and a more equitable distribution of income. In the 1980s, stagflation and unemployment redirected attention to the supply-side economy and the factors influencing it, coinciding with two major phenomena: the growth of small firms and the return of entrepreneurship.

This transition from large corporations to small firms was facilitated by the relaxation of market entry regulations, along with an economic context characterized by creative destruction, changes in consumer preferences and increased labor supply, which led to falling real wages and a steady increase in educational attainment (Brock & Evans, 1989). Entrepreneurship thus becomes a key area of interest for economists for several reasons.

First, entrepreneurship contributes significantly to wealth generation. According to the OECD (2003, 2005), between 20 and 40% of labor productivity growth in the main industrialized economies can be attributed to the redistribution of resources through the emergence of new firms and the exit of less efficient ones. Second, entrepreneurship has a major impact on positive economic externalities, such as the creation of new jobs and the introduction of innovative products to the market, which benefit both employees and consumers (Berglann et al., 2011).

These aspects are also recognized by the European Commission, which considers the promotion of self-employment and entrepreneurship as an important means of stimulating job creation and improving employment prospects for the unemployed and disadvantaged groups. For example, the employment package of 2012 emphasizes the potential of entrepreneurship to contribute to an economic recovery rich in employment opportunities (EU, 2016). Young entrepreneurs are considered essential for this process, as they bring innovation, adaptability and a new perspective to the market (Čočkaló et al., 2019), having the ability to stimulate the evolution of society (Shastri et al., 2009).

## 2. The concept of entrepreneurship

Studies in the field of entrepreneurship have revealed a significant problem at the academic level: the lack of a clear consensus on the definition and structuring of this field. A series of works (Brockhaus, 1987; Carsrud et al., 1985) highlighted the fact that researchers have not reached a common understanding of what constitutes entrepreneurship as an economic and social phenomenon. This lack of

uniformity poses challenges not only in defining terms, but also in establishing clear objectives and standardized research methodologies. In later studies, such as those carried out by Low and MacMillan (1988), respectively Sexton and Smilor (1985), the need for better structured approaches that provide a holistic understanding of entrepreneurship is emphasized. These authors suggest that the diversity of interpretations is a consequence of the complexity of the entrepreneurial phenomenon, which involves economic, social, psychological and cultural factors.

Because of this, entrepreneurship can be approached from multiple perspectives. Naude (2008) suggests three main defining frameworks: occupational, behavioral and outcome focused. The occupational definition, proposed by the OECD (2016), describes the entrepreneur as a self-employed person who manages his own business, assuming financial and operational risks. Szaban (2018) adds that independent entrepreneurs have greater flexibility and can react quickly to market changes, offering customized solutions that are often inaccessible to large companies.

In addition to the economic aspects, many definitions of entrepreneurship focus on the behavioral dimension. Brown and Uljin (2004) point out that social and behavioral aspects play an essential role in this context. Carton et al. (1998) defines the entrepreneur as a person or team capable of developing a new business, having the ability to identify opportunities and mobilize resources. McClelland (1961) supplements this definition by emphasizing specific behaviors such as risk taking and opportunity identification.

In terms of outcome-focused definitions, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) argue that entrepreneurs not only identify and evaluate business opportunities, but also act on them, generating tangible impacts on markets, economies and society. Entrepreneurs capitalize on inventions, creating new products or processes, discovering alternative sources of supply, and establishing new forms of organization (Carrasco & Perez, 2008). This perspective highlights the transformative role of entrepreneurship, capable of producing significant changes in the economic and social environment.

### **3. Civic involvement of the entrepreneur**

Bénabou and Tirole (2006) propose a theory of prosocial behavior, according to which behavior that does not always prioritize individual utility, but aligns with social welfare and community interests, plays an important role in economic processes. In this sense, entrepreneurship can become a tool for promoting civic competences and a stronger sense of self-governance (Mitra et al., 2020). By developing innovative products, exploring new markets and implementing innovative solutions, entrepreneurs contribute not only to local economic growth, but also to the creation of jobs and the improvement of social well-being.

This contribution becomes particularly relevant in the context of the transition to more sustainable business practices. Entrepreneurship can stimulate ecological initiatives that protect the environment and support sustainable development, an aspect also emphasized by Méndez-Picazo et al. (2021). Replacing unsustainable traditional practices with ecologically sustainable solutions contributes both to protecting the environment and to the economic and social progress of communities.

Youth entrepreneurship brings significant social and economic benefits. Chigunta (2002) states that young entrepreneurs develop positive attitudes towards business and actively contribute to economic and social life. They not only stimulate the development of their communities, but also assume a greater role in generating positive changes in society. Through access to appropriate resources and opportunities, young entrepreneurs acquire essential traits such as business vision, discipline, resilience and the ability to exploit new opportunities. These qualities make them responsible and active members of communities, contributing to economic and social progress.

Palanivelu and Manikandan (2016) emphasize the importance of young entrepreneurs in revitalizing local communities and promoting innovation and resilience. By creating jobs not only for themselves but also for others, these entrepreneurs facilitate the integration of marginalized groups into the local economy. In addition, developing skills and experiences through entrepreneurship helps young people to face life's challenges and avoid socio-psychological problems such as delinquency associated with unemployment. Thus, young entrepreneurs become more receptive to emerging economic opportunities, having a significant positive impact on society.

### **4. Research methodology**

In order to obtain a solid database and be able to draw relevant conclusions, we chose to use a quantitative research method, based on a questionnaire. This approach allowed us to collect a large volume of information from a considerable number of respondents, ensuring significant diversity in their

profiles. The choice of the questionnaire as the main research tool was due to its advantages, such as the possibility of asking standardized questions to a large sample of people and obtaining quantifiable data, essential for a rigorous and comparative analysis.

Regarding the sampling method, we opted for quota sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, which allowed us to create a balanced distribution of respondents according to age and gender.

The questionnaire was distributed online with the support of the operators, ensuring that we reached as many respondents as possible from different geographical regions and socio-economic backgrounds. The data collection period spanned approximately one month, during which we managed to obtain a total of 881 responses from young people with varied interests in entrepreneurship: from those who intend to become entrepreneurs, to those who have already started a business and even those who do not plan to take on this role. This diversity of responses gives us a solid basis for better understanding the motivations, behaviors and civic engagement of these young people.

The present study focuses on the partial analysis of the obtained data, being part of a larger and more complex research. Specifically, we will examine the data related to the civic involvement of future Romanian entrepreneurs; to assess to what extent these young people are involved in activities that contribute to the development of their communities and the well-being of society.

The general objective of the research has in mind identifying the degree of civic involvement of future Romanian entrepreneurs. Regarding the research question, it sought to identify: how involved are future Romanian entrepreneurs from a civic point of view?

Following the operationalization of the general objective, we formulated the following objectives and hypotheses:

Ob1. Identifying the degree of involvement of future Romanian entrepreneurs in organizations that pursue social change

Ip1.1. There is a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in social organizations

Ip1.2. There are statistically significant differences between would-be entrepreneurs, depending on their gender, in terms of involvement in organizations that pursue social change

Ob2. Identifying the degree of involvement of future Romanian entrepreneurs in actions aimed at social change

Ip2.1. There is a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in actions aimed at social change

Ip2.2. There are statistically significant differences between future entrepreneurs, depending on their gender, in terms of involvement in actions that aim for social change

## 5. Result

Following the data collection stage, we noticed some trends regarding young people's interest in entrepreneurship. Of the 881 respondents, only 39 stated that they had already established their own business ( $M = 4.4$ ). However, a considerable number of 286 respondents stated that they intend to open a business in the future ( $M = 32.5$ ), suggesting significant potential for youth entrepreneurship.

In contrast, the majority of study participants ( $N = 366$ ;  $M = 41.6$ ) do not want to start a business. Among the reasons chosen by the respondents is the lack of interest, respectively the necessary desire to become entrepreneurs ( $N = 108$ ;  $M = 12.3$ ), while others believe that the process would be too complicated ( $N = 81$ ;  $M = 9.2$ ) or feel that they do not have the appropriate entrepreneurial skills ( $N = 77$ ;  $M = 8.7$ ). Also, risks associated with starting a business ( $N = 50$ ;  $M = 5.7$ ) and lack of access to finance ( $N = 50$ ;  $M = 5.7$ ) were important inhibiting factors (Table 1).

Conversely, some respondents still remain undecided about the possibility of opening a business, which highlights the uncertainty or lack of clarity regarding their entrepreneurial future. These data suggest that although there is a moderate interest in entrepreneurship among young people, multiple barriers influence their decisions and perceptions about this career.

Also, these results coincide with a study carried out by the European Union, according to which 46% of young people want to become entrepreneurs, while only 9% of respondents are already self-employed, while the lack of capital or resources, financial risks and insufficient knowledge and entrepreneurial skills were considered the main barriers to young people becoming entrepreneurs (European Union, 2023).

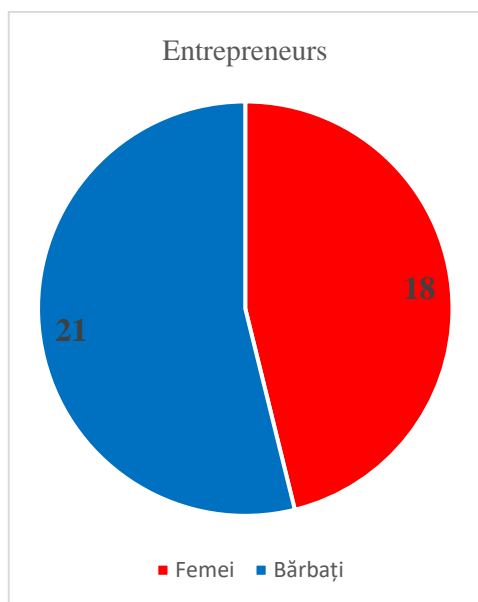
**Table 1**  
**Frequency table regarding the intention to open one's own business in the future**

	N	Mean
Yes, I want to open my future	286	32.5
I have already opened my own business	39	4.4
No, I don't want to become an entrepreneur	108	12.3
No, it's too complicated	81	9.2
No, I don't have the skills	77	8.7
No, it's too risky	50	5.7
No, I don't have the necessary financial resources	50	5.7
I don't know	190	21.5

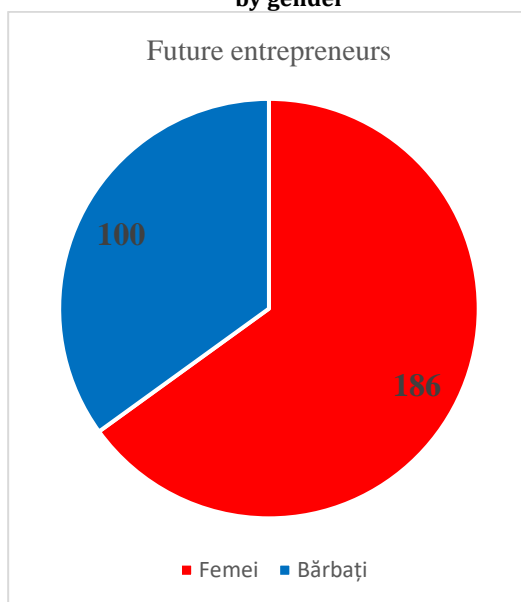
From the data collected, a relatively balanced distribution between men and women can be observed among those who have already set up a business. Of these, 21 are men (N = 21; M = 53.8%), and 18 are women (N = 18; M = 46.2%) (Fig. 1). Most entrepreneurs who started a business have higher education (N = 19; M = 48.7%), which indicates a correlation between the level of education and the ability or desire to start a business.

Analyzing the profile of potential future young entrepreneurs from the western region of Romania, the data indicate that most of them are women (N = 186; M = 65%) (Fig. 2). Also, most young people who would like to start a business in the future have higher education (N = 186; M = 65%). This trend reflects an increase in the involvement of women in the field of entrepreneurship and a strong orientation towards higher education as an important factor in the development of entrepreneurship.

**Figure 1. Distribution of entrepreneurs by gender**



**Figure 2. Distribution of future entrepreneurs by gender**



Following a frequency analysis regarding involvement in volunteering activities, it is noted that a significant part of those who opened their own business had no previous volunteering experience (N = 18; M = 46.2%). However, among those who performed volunteer activities, the majority did so for the

benefit of the local community (N = 11; M = 28.2%), indicating an awareness of the importance of supporting the community in which they operate.

When it comes to participating in political elections, most entrepreneurs voted at local, regional, national or European level (N = 27; M = 69.2%). Those who did not vote had either age-related reasons (N = 6; M = 15.4%) or did not want to vote (N = 6; M = 15.4%).

For young people who want to open a business, involvement in volunteer activities is also low, most of them having no experience in this field (N = 150; M = 52.4%). However, among those who were volunteers, the majority chose to get involved in activities aimed at supporting the local community (N = 67; M = 23.4%), followed by initiatives for the development of Romania (N = 64; M = 19, 7%).

Regarding voting participation, the majority of future Romanian entrepreneurs were active in political elections held at the local, national, regional or European level (N = 142; M = 49.7%). Those who did not vote generally cited a lack of age requirement (N = 83; M = 29%), which emphasizes that young people are interested in civic engagement but are often limited by external factors such as age.

As part of the research, I performed a Chi-Square test after which I noticed a statistically significant connection between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in local organizations aimed at improving the local community (Chi-Square = 4.466; df = 1; p = 0.035). However, according to the results obtained, the magnitude of this link is very weak (Cramer's V/Phi = 0.080) (table 2). A possible explanation could be that involvement in such organizations can only be a first step in developing an entrepreneurial mindset, but not a major catalyst.

We went on to conduct a Chi-Square test that revealed a statistically significant correlation between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in organizations dedicated to promoting human rights or global development. The results of the test (Chi-Square = 5.223; df = 1; p = 0.022) indicate that there is an association between these two variables. However, according to the obtained results, the magnitude of this link is very weak (Cramer's V/Phi = 0.087) (table 2). This weak association could indicate that although human rights activism may stimulate social awareness and initiative, other factors play a much more important role in determining the willingness to become an entrepreneur, such as economic or personal motivations.

As part of the research, we performed a Chi-Square test, which revealed a statistically significant link between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in organizations active in the field of climate change (Chi-Square = 8.484; df = 1; p = 0.004). However, according to the obtained results, the magnitude of this link is weak (Cramer's V/Phi = 0.111) (table 2). This may reflect the fact that concern for climate issues can stimulate a social sensitivity but is not a major determinant in the development of entrepreneurial ambition.

**Table 2: Chi-square test between willingness to become an entrepreneur and involvement in social organizations**

	Chi-Square	Mr	p
Local organizations aimed at improving the local community	4,466	1	0.035
Organizations that promote human rights or global development	5,223	1	0.022
Organizations working in the field of climate change	8,484	1	0.004

Continuing the analyses, we verified, through a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the distribution of the variables related to involvement in the last two years in activities within organizations with social missions. Thus, we noticed that the variables related to participation in sports clubs (D (286) = 0.505; p < 0.005), in youth organizations (D (286) = 0.486; p < 0.005), in cultural organizations (D (286) = 0.527; p < 0.005), in organizations aimed at improving the local community (D (286) = 0.524; p < 0.005), in other NGOs (D (286) = 0.518; p < 0.005), in organizations promoting human rights (D (286) = 0.539; p < 0.005), in organizations targeting climate change (D (286) = 0.529; p < 0.005) are abnormally distributed.

Considering the abnormal distribution of the variables, to test the second hypothesis, we performed a testnonparametric Mann-Whitney. Following the results obtained, we identified statistically significant differences between men and women only in terms of involvement in sports clubs (U = 9819.5; z = -4.743; p < 0.005).

Following a Chi-Square test, we did not notice a statistically significant relationship between wanting to become an entrepreneur and signing a petition (Chi-Square = 0.041; df = 1; p = 0.839) (Table 3). Since the relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and signing a petition is not



statistically significant, this may suggest that involvement in petition actions, which are forms of civic participation, is not directly associated with entrepreneurial orientation. This may indicate that those who aspire to entrepreneurship do not necessarily show an increased interest in participating in protest actions or petitioning, activities that may involve more civic activism than economic activities.

Following a Chi-Square test, we did not notice a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and participation in volunteer activities (Chi-Square = 0.081;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.777$ ) (table 3). Volunteering, although an altruistic and collaborative activity, may not be directly related to entrepreneurial motivations, which may be more focused on individual initiative, risk-taking, and economic independence, versus collaborating for charitable or social purposes.

Following a Chi-Square test, we noticed a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and participation in projects that involved young people from other cities (Chi-Square = 4.994;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.025$ ) (table 3). However, according to the obtained results, the magnitude of this link is very weak (Cramer's  $V/\Phi = 0.085$ ). A possible explanation for the obtained results could be that participation in such projects may expose individuals to extensive social networks and learning opportunities, aspects that are essential for the development of an entrepreneurial mindset, but this influence is not strong enough to suggest a strong causal relationship.

Following a Chi-Square test, we did not notice a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and participation in protest actions (Chi-Square = 3.049;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.081$ ) (Table 3). Protests are often oriented towards political or social change and may involve a different dynamic than that required for entrepreneurship, which involves focusing on economic initiatives and innovation. Although both involve a degree of mobilization, they appear to be motivated by different values and goals.

Following a Chi-Square test, we noticed a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and civic activities organized by NGOs (Chi-Square = 5.082;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.024$ ). However, according to the obtained results, the magnitude of this link is very weak (Cramer's  $V/\Phi = 0.086$ ) (table 3). This result may reflect that participation in such activities provides opportunities for leadership, social networks and organizational practices, which may stimulate interest in entrepreneurship, but not in a decisive way.

Following a Chi-Square test, we did not notice a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and participation in projects involving young people from other countries (Chi-Square = 2.959;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.085$ ) (table 3). International projects, while exposing individuals to diverse perspectives and practices, do not seem to provide a strong enough stimulus to influence entrepreneurial aspirations. The motivations for participating in such projects may be more related to cultural development and global collaboration than to entrepreneurship.

Following a Chi-Square test, we did not notice a statistically significant relationship between the desire to become an entrepreneur and participation in public debates or consultations (Chi-Square = 0.281;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = 0.596$ ) (table 3). These activities are usually oriented towards democratic participation and influencing public policies, which do not necessarily align with the entrepreneurial spirit, which is more focused on private initiative and economic innovation than on collective decision-making processes.

**Table 3: Chi-square test between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in activities that seek social change**

	Chi-Square	Mr	p
Signing a petition	0.041	1	0.839
Participation in volunteer activities	0.081	1	0.777
Participation in projects involving young people from other cities	4,994	1	0.025
Participation in protest actions	3,049	1	0.081
Participation in civic activities organized by NGOs	5,082	1	0.024
Participation in projects involving young people from other countries	2,959	1	0.085
Participation in public debates or consultations	0.281	1	0.596

Next, we checked, through a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the distribution of the variables related to the involvement in the last two years in civic activities. Thus, we noticed that the variables related to signing a petition ( $D(286) = 0.358$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ), participation in volunteer activities ( $D(286) = 0.359$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ), participation in projects involving young people from other cities ( $D(286) = 0.407$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ),

participation in protest actions ( $D(286) = 0.495$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ), participation in civic activities organized by NGOs ( $D(286) = 0.486$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ), participation in projects involving young people from other countries ( $D(286) = 0.443$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ), participation in public debates or consultations ( $D(286) = 0.484$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ).

Considering the abnormal distribution of the variables, to test the second hypothesis, we performed a nonparametric Mann-Whitney test. Following the obtained results, we identified differences between men and women only in terms of involvement in volunteer activities ( $U = 10915$ ;  $z = -2.017$ ;  $p < 0.044$ ). However, the data are not conclusive enough to determine whether these differences are statistically significant.

## 6. Conclusions

The present study investigated the civic involvement of young people in Romania who aspire to become entrepreneurs, using quantitative data obtained from a questionnaire applied in the framework of a more extensive research. The results highlight a significant potential for entrepreneurship among young Romanians: only 4.4% of respondents have already launched their own business, but 32.5% intend to become entrepreneurs in the future. This percentage reflects an important openness to entrepreneurial initiative, but also highlights the major barriers that prevent this process, including the complexity of starting a business and the lack of essential skills. Many of those not interested in entrepreneurship cited these obstacles, thus suggesting an urgent need for educational programs and specific support for youth entrepreneurship. These findings are aligned with the data of a recent European study (European Union, 2023), which underlines the fact that the challenges faced by young people in Romania are similar to those on the entire continent. In this context, the need for coherent political and economic measures to support the entrepreneurial initiative of young people is becoming increasingly evident.

According to the theory of prosocial behavior proposed by Bénabou and Tirole (2006), a behavior oriented towards the well-being of the community can be integrated into economic processes, and in this study, we identified a link between the desire to become an entrepreneur and involvement in social organizations, such as concerning human rights, climate change or the development of local communities. Although these links are statistically significant, their intensity is low, indicating that civic engagement has a potentially magnified influence on the development of a socially responsible and community-oriented entrepreneurial mindset. Economic motivations seem to play a more important role in the decision to start a business.

Furthermore, the results show that participating in more active forms of civic engagement, such as signing petitions or participating in protests, is not directly correlated with the desire to become an entrepreneur. This suggests that young people with entrepreneurial ambitions are not necessarily attracted to civic activism, but rather focus on economic initiatives. On the other hand, involvement in projects involving collaboration with young people from other cities or participation in activities organized by NGOs was associated with the desire to become an entrepreneur, although the links are of low intensity. This aspect shows that exposure to collaborative networks and opportunities for personal development can play a role in forming an entrepreneurial mindset but is not a decisive factor.

In conclusion, although young Romanians show considerable interest in entrepreneurship, the existence of important barriers and the limited influence of civic involvement on this process suggest the need for clearer and more effective support measures. At the same time, the results indicate that entrepreneurship and civic and community involvement represent two interconnected fields, at the level of motivations and dynamics, both of which are important for the socio-economic development of young people and the community.

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## ARE WE LIVING IN A FAIR WORLD? COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN CHANGES IN PERCEPTION OF BELIEF IN A JUST WORLD AND DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AMONG STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** *The objective of the study was to ascertain the extent to which students' perceptions of the world in which they live and the manner in which resources are allocated evolve over the course of their three-year undergraduate program. To this end, belief in a just world and distributive justice were measured among a sample of 143 students from West University of Timisoara. The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated that, although the two measures exhibited a positive correlation at the sample level, when each year of study was considered individually, there was no correlation between belief in a just world and distributive justice. The ANOVA analysis demonstrated that students' belief in a just world fluctuates as they progress through the academic years, whereas their perceptions of distributive justice remain relatively stable throughout the undergraduate program.*

**Keywords:** social justice, belief in a just world, distributive justice, emerging adulthood; prosocial behavior.

### 1. Introduction

A fundamental concern in most contemporary societies and governments, social justice is a concept deeply rooted in human nature (Hong et al., 2024). The tenets of social justice find expression in the manner in which social resources are distributed, ensuring a fair and equitable allocation (distributive justice), and in the guarantee of physical and psychological security for individuals, along with the opportunity for full and equal engagement in social matters (procedural justice) (Bell, 2007; Reason & Davis, 2005; Li et al., 2019). In essence, distributive justice concerns the fair and just distribution of resources within a community among its constituent members. The principle utilized in the pursuit of distributive justice is contingent upon the specific type of resource in question and the contextual circumstances. It may be based on considerations of merit, necessity, and/or equality. From a meritocratic standpoint, benefits are distributed in accordance with the level of effort expended, the degree of achievement attained, or the value of the contribution made. In terms of necessity, the quantity of the resource in question is allocated in a manner that reflects a hierarchy of needs, whereby the individuals requiring a greater quantity receive more, while those requiring a lesser quantity receive less. From an equality perspective, it is imperative that all individuals be afforded equal benefits (Bottia et al., 2016). Some authors posit that distributive justice can be realized through a strict egalitarian framework or by aligning with the principle of difference. Strict egalitarianism posits that moral equality is an inherent attribute of all individuals, and that this moral ideal may only be actualized in an environment where equality with regard to material goods and services is achieved. In this context, the concept of distributive justice entails a strict or radical notion of equality (Nielsen, 1979), whereby all members of society are to be allocated equal material goods. At the other extreme is John Rawls's principle of difference (1999), which holds that strict equality may be disregarded when inequality results in the least advantaged in society being better off than under strict equality (Bottia et al., 2016). Alternatively, Michael Walzer (1983) proposes a radically pluralist normative theory of justice. According to the author, each society is characterized by a set of principles of justice that are developed within the framework of its shared meanings and traditions. For example, in democratic societies it is possible to identify different distributional spheres, in which different classes of social goods (for example, education, money, health and safety) are allocated in accordance with the principles corresponding to each sphere. At the same time, the conceptual and social meaning of each class of goods will dictate the principles used to distribute them, so that different principles will apply to different spheres (Sabbagh, 2001). Another concept related to social justice is belief in a just world, defined as the extent to which individuals believe that the world works fairly and that everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get (Hong et al., 2024;

Lerner, 1965; Li et al., 2019). The concept was first introduced into the academic literature by Lerner (1965) as a means of describing individuals' perception of their lived reality as just and ordered, in which the distribution of outcomes aligns with the underlying principles of meritocracy and reciprocity (Hu et al., 2024; Valero-Moreno et al., 2020). The justice motive theory (Dalbert, 2009), which suggests that the motive or need for this belief originates in childhood and develops as children learn to forgo immediate gratification and pursue long-term goals, is one theory that researchers have used to explain individual differences in belief in a just world (Hafer & Sutton 2016). Others propose social learning as the origin of just world beliefs, fostered through a variety of processes including ideological teachings, popular culture, and parental influence (Dittmar & Dickinson 1993; Gunter & Wober 1983; Schönplflug & Bilz, 2004; Hafer & Sutton 2016). From a social perspective, believing in a just world creates confidence that a person will be treated fairly, provides a conceptual framework for understanding events and making attributions, and establishes a personal contract with society to uphold shared values (Thomas & Mucherah, 2016). Thus, by helping individuals establish a sense of control, increasing their willingness to follow social rules, and providing the motivation needed to achieve long-term goals, this type of belief plays an important role in adapting to a complicated social environment (Tian 2019). In another approach, believing in a just world is a stable personality trait based on believing that people get what they deserve and that what they get is what they should get (Lerner & Miller, 1978). From this perspective, this belief plays an important role in maintaining social order by providing a motivation for individuals to engage in prosocial behavior (Yang et al., 2024). There are authors who believe that belief in a just world serves an adaptive social function, helping individuals restore their sense of rightness, increasing their sense of control, and reducing anxiety (De Caroli & Sagone, 2014; Hu et al., 2024). Thus, on the premise that only the deserving will be punished, the individual has a sense of control over his or her own destiny and a sense of shelter from harsh realities (Furnham, 2003; Nudelman & Shiloh, 2011). Believing in a just world compels individuals to behave justly and motivates them to use just means to achieve their personal ends. In addition, when individuals witness injustice being committed, those who strongly believe in a just world are more likely to engage in altruistic behaviors and actions aimed at restoring justice (Hu et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2024). Studies have also shown that believing in a just world is associated with trust and psychological health and is beneficial for social cooperation. Its long-term goal is to improve the quality of life on the assumption that a society functions better when it is populated by more productive and happier people (Hafer & Sutton, 2016). However, creating a just society requires not only building and improving a social system that provides equal opportunities and a fair distribution of resources. It also requires educating young adults to be good citizens (Li et al., 2019).

Since the 1960s, it has been observed in high-income countries that the gradual achievement of psychological milestones, such as making independent decisions or taking responsibility for oneself, replaces leaving home, and becomes characteristic of the transition to adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014). This has led to the term "emerging adulthood," which refers to the period between 18 and 29 when people feel they are too old to be teenagers and not yet ready to become full-fledged adults (Reifman et al., 2007). Arnett's (2015) theory of emerging adulthood is based on research showing that a series of complex and dynamic changes occur at this stage, both neuroanatomically and developmentally (research shows that brain development occurs by the late twenties), as well as personally, emotionally, and socially (Spear 2000; Wood et al., 2018). In this context, the author offers a new perspective on the transition from adolescence to adulthood, considering it as a separate, theoretically and empirically distinct period of the life course, characterized by the fact that the individual's subjective experience during this period has implications for long-term development (Wood et al., 2018; Petrovic et al., 2024). Thus, emerging adulthood is considered a unique period in human development, characterized by complex neurobiological, psychological, and social changes (Luo et al., 2024). The foundations of the worldview, defined as a set of basic beliefs and assumptions about social and physical reality, are also laid during the emerging adulthood period. Studies have shown that a college education has an impact on the development of a student's worldview through exposure to new ideas and by providing the necessary framework for intellectual and spiritual growth (Gutierrez & Park, 2015).

## 2. Methodology

The aim of the study was to examine how the belief in a just world and the perception of distributive justice of UVT students change during the three years of their undergraduate studies. The following hypotheses have been formulated:

- 1) Among students in the undergraduate program, there is a relationship between belief in a just world and distributive justice.

- 2) Students' beliefs about a just world change over the course of their three years of undergraduate study.
- 3) Students' perceptions of distributive justice change over their three years of undergraduate study.

A sociological survey was used as a research method, which was carried out between June and September, by applying a questionnaire to a sample of undergraduate students at the UVT. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed that their answers would remain anonymous. They were also assured that the data collected would be statistically processed for strictly academic purposes. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section contains identifying information about the respondents: gender, age, year of study, and religious affiliation. The second section contains questions about the extent to which respondents perceive the world to be a just place and was constructed by selecting 6 items from the original scale measuring belief in a just world proposed by Lipkus (1991), which were recoded with a positive meaning. The third section includes questions about respondents' perceptions of resource allocation and was constructed by selecting 2 items related to equality principle and 2 items related to fairness principle from Hülle et al.'s (2018) original distributive justice scale. Both scales have been translated into the Romanian language (Mimura & Griffiths, 2004). Sections 2 and 3 were developed using a Likert scale model in which participants assigned a value from 1 to 5 (1 - *very little*, 5 - *very much*) to the statements in the question. The scores of the corresponding responses were summed to obtain the total score of the two constructs. Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 21 software. The one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the distribution type of the variables. The association between the two constructs was determined by means of correlation analysis. One-way ANOVA analysis was used to determine differences in students' perceptions of believing in a just world and distributive justice according to year in college.

### 3. Results

The sample consists of 143 students, most of whom are 21 years old ( $M = 23.9$ ,  $SD = 6.557$ ). 33.3% are first-year students, 41.7% are second-year students, and 25% are third-year students. The Orthodox religion is the predominant one (73.6%), followed by the Neo-Protestant religions (12.5%).

The total scores for the two dependent variables were tested for normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results showed that both of them follow a normal distribution (exact  $p > .05$  (2-tailed)). Homogeneity was assessed using the homogeneity of variance test. According to the results obtained (Table 1), homogeneity is respected for both dependent variables ( $p > .05$ )

**Table 1. Test of Homogeneity of Variance**

		<i>Levene Statistics</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Belief in a just world	Based on Mean	.429	2	140	.652
	Based on Median	.301	2	140	.740
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.301	2	127.587	.740
	Based on trimmed mean	.416	2	140	.661
Distributive justice	Based on Mean	1.310	2	140	.273
	Based on Median	1.308	2	140	.274
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.308	2	133.064	.274
	Based on trimmed mean	1.396	2	140	.251

The association between belief in a just world and distributive justice was analyzed using Pearson's correlation, and the result was  $r(141) = .214$ ,  $p < .05$ . The direction of the correlation is positive, meaning that students who have a high belief in a just world have high distributive justice scores. The coefficient  $r^2$  indicates that about 5% of the variance in distributive justice is explained by the belief in a just world. This relationship was then analyzed separately for each of the three years of study. In all cases, nonsignificant correlations were obtained, namely  $r(45) = .242$ ,  $p = .101$  for students in the first year,  $r(58) = .140$ ,  $p = .284$  for students in the second year, and  $r(34) = .327$ ,  $p = .052$  for students in the third year (Table 2).

**Table 2. Pearson correlation for studied variables**

Variable		Belief in a just world	Distributive justice
<i>All sample</i>	Belief in a just world	-	.214*
	Distributive justice	.214*	-
<i>First year</i>	Belief in a just world	-	.242
	Distributive justice	.242	-
<i>Second year</i>	Belief in a just world	-	.140
	Distributive justice	.140	-

<i>Third year</i>	Belief in a just world	-	.327
	Distributive justice	.327	-

$p < .05$

ANOVA analysis was used to determine whether year of study influenced how students perceived justice in the world. Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation for belief in a just world for each of the three categories. The highest average value was obtained for the first-year students and the lowest value for the second-year students. These findings are consistent with Adoric's (2011) theory that belief in a just world decline with age. This decline begins in adolescence and continues into adulthood (Valero-Moreno et al., 2020). The results show that students have different perceptions of justice in the world depending on the year they are in college,  $F(2, 140) = 6.267, p = .002$  (Table 4). The value  $\eta^2 = .082$  implies that the effect is medium according to the criteria proposed by Cohen (1988) (Kinnear & Gray, 2006).

**Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations Comparing**

Anul de studiu	Belief in a just world		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Firtst year</i>	47	20.36	3.721
<i>Second year</i>	60	17.95	3.422
<i>Third year</i>	36	18.31	3.905
Total	143	18.83	3.779

**Table 4. ANOVA**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Year of study					
Between groups	2	166.632	83.316	6.267	.002
Within groups	140	1861.340	13.295		
Total	142	2027.972			

**Table 5. Multiple comparisons**

Year of study (I)	Year of study (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<i>Firtst year</i>	<i>Second year</i>	2.412*	.710	.003	.73	4.09
	<i>Third year</i>	2.056*	.808	.032	.14	3.97
<i>Second year</i>	<i>Firtst year</i>	-2.412	.710	.003	-4.09	-.73
	<i>Third year</i>	-.356	.769	.889	-2.18	1.47
<i>Third year</i>	<i>Firtst year</i>	-2.056*	.808	.032	-3.97	-.14
	<i>Second year</i>	.356	.769	.889	-1.47	2.18

The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Post hoc Tukey's comparisons were used to determine differences between the groups (Table 5). Significant differences were observed between the first year and the second year ( $p = .003$ ) and between the first year and the third year ( $p = .036$ ). There were no significant differences observed between the second year and the third year ( $p > .05$ ).

**Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations Comparing**

Anul de studiu	Distributive justice		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Firtst year</i>	47	12.638	3.04621
<i>Second year</i>	60	12.833	2.41581
<i>Third year</i>	36	12.722	3.04829
Total	143	12.741	2.77999

**Table 7. ANOVA**

<i>Source</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Year of study					
Between groups	2	1.020	.510	.065	.937

Within groups	140	1096.407	7.831
Total	142	1097.427	

To examine students' perceptions of distributive justice over the three years of study, the same type of analysis was used. For each of the three categories, the mean and standard deviation for distributive justice are shown in Table 6. The results of the ANOVA analysis indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in students' perceptions of distributive justice in relation to the academic year,  $F(2, 140) = .065, p = .937$  (Table 7).

#### 4. Conclusions

In this study, we analyzed perceptions of believing in a just world and distributive justice of the UVT students across the three years of the undergraduate program. In relation to the sample under study, belief in a just world has a positive correlation and explains about 5% of the changes in students' distributive justice. However, the first hypothesis is only partially confirmed as the correlation between the two constructs at the level of each year of study is insignificant. One possible explanation may be that changes in perceptions of justice in the world do not occur at the same time and with the same intensity as changes in students' perceptions of resource allocation. The results of the ANOVA analysis showed that students' perceptions of justice in the world differed by year of study, thus confirming the second hypothesis. However, significant differences were only observed between the students in the first and second year and between the students in the first and third year. It was also observed that 2nd and 3rd year students scored lower on belief in a just world than 1st year students. The findings are in alignment with existing research indicating that as individuals age, there is a corresponding decline in their perception of the world as a fair and just place (Adoric 2011; Valero-Moreno et al., 2020). With regard to distributive justice, there is a consistency in students' perceptions over the course of their three-year undergraduate studies. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not confirmed.

There are certain limitations to the study. The sample consists of undergraduate students with an average age of 23 years. As the period of emerging adulthood extends up to the age of 29, a future line of research will involve a comparative analysis of students enrolled in bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs. Future studies could also include a comparative analysis of how female and male students perceive the two constructs.

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## THE IMPACT OF PROBATION ON MINORS IN ROMANIA: A COUNSELORS' PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** *The present study aims to analyze the impact of probation on juvenile delinquents in Romania, considering both the effects on the social reintegration process and the challenges faced by probation counselors. The research method used was the semi-structured interview, applied to a number of 12 probation counselors from the counties of Vâlcea, Sibiu and the city of Bucharest. This qualitative approach allowed for the exploration of the perspectives of professionals directly involved in the case management of juveniles under supervision. Results suggest that probation can have a significant positive impact on reducing juvenile delinquent behaviors, particularly when interventions are tailored to their individual needs. Factors determining success include the active involvement of counselors, family support, and access to educational or psychological counseling resources. However, the study also highlights obstacles such as the high number of cases handled by counsellors, insufficient resources and difficulties in collaborating with the institutions involved. The conclusions indicate the need for a better allocation of resources and policies better oriented towards supporting juvenile delinquents, in order to maximize the positive effects of probation. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of this field and to the improvement of existing practices.*

**Keywords:** probation, probation officer, juvenile delinquents, reintegration, rehabilitation

### 1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency represents a major challenge for contemporary society, not only in terms of the negative impact on young people involved in crimes, but also from the perspective of the social and economic consequences it generates. In Romania, as in many other countries, the justice system has faced in recent decades an increase in crimes committed by minors, and traditional punitive measures, such as incarceration, have shown serious limits in the rehabilitation of these young people. In this context, probation has gained increased attention as a viable alternative to detention, being perceived as a more humane and effective solution for the reintegration of juvenile delinquents into society.

Probation, as an alternative measure to custodial punishment, aims to support the social reintegration of criminals through carefully coordinated supervision and assistance, with rehabilitation and recidivism prevention in mind. For delinquent minors, this measure offers a real chance to correct themselves without being exposed to the negative influences of the prison environment, which can contribute to the strengthening of the criminal identity. According to statistical data, probation-based interventions tend to significantly reduce the rate of recidivism compared to incarceration, which indicates the considerable potential of this approach in transforming the lives of young offenders (Carl & Lösel et al., 2012).

In Romania, the probation system has constantly evolved since its official introduction into national legislation in the 90s, gradually adapting to international standards and modern restorative justice requirements. This transition reflects a paradigm shift in the treatment of juvenile delinquents, emphasizing not only the sanctioning of criminal behavior, but also the identification and correction of its underlying causes. Therefore, probation becomes a basic tool in the holistic approach to juvenile delinquency, which includes psychological, educational and professional assistance to support the social reintegration of young people.

In a constantly changing society, where the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency is influenced by variable factors such as poverty, family disorganization, negative peer group influences and access to technologies that can amplify deviant tendencies, an approach based on prevention and rehabilitation is essential. In this context, probation not only offers an alternative to detention, but also a way of early intervention that can prevent the worsening of deviant behaviors and recidivism.

However, the effective implementation of juvenile probation is not without its challenges. The juvenile justice system in Romania constantly faces challenges related to limited human and financial resources, insufficiently developed infrastructure, as well as poor inter-institutional cooperation between the various structures that have a role in the supervision and rehabilitation of minors. In addition, social stigma and limited access to education and training continue to be significant obstacles to the success of probation programs.

Analysis of the impact of probation on juvenile delinquents thus becomes particularly important in understanding the potential of this measure to reduce recidivism and facilitate the social reintegration of young people. Studies show that active family and community involvement in juvenile rehabilitation plays a crucial role in the success of probation (Hussain & Sajid 2024). In this regard, the probation program should include not only behavioral supervision of the minor, but also psychological and social assistance, vocational training and support for personal development.

This paper aims to explore in depth the role and impact of probation on juvenile delinquents in Romania, to analyze the challenges and opportunities of this system, as well as to identify good practices that could contribute to improving the efficiency of probation programs. The research will attempt to provide an integrated perspective on how probation can contribute to the reduction of recidivism and the social reintegration of minors. Particular attention will be paid to the importance of the family and social context in the success of these measures, as well as the role of probation officers in ensuring effective supervision and intervention tailored to the needs of each juvenile.

## **2. Research design and methodology**

The present research aims to achieve the following general objectives: evaluating the perceptions of probation counselors on the effectiveness of reintegration programs for delinquent minors; identifying the challenges encountered by probation counselors in managing juvenile delinquent cases; exploring the impact of methods and strategies used by probation counselors on juvenile reintegration.

In this research, the main method used was the interview method and it was chosen because of its flexibility, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the professional experiences and perspectives of probation counsellors. A number of 12 interviews were carried out, each with an average duration of 60 minutes. As I was not allowed to record, they were written down manually during the discussions to respect confidentiality and ensure a comfortable environment for the respondents. Each interview was reviewed and completed immediately after the discussions were completed, in order to preserve as faithfully as possible the information provided.

Thus, the interview method allowed obtaining some valuable qualitative data, providing a detailed picture of how counselors perceive and apply reintegration strategies. It also favored the identification of solutions and recommendations regarding the improvement of probation interventions, starting from the direct experiences of those involved.

The research sample consisted of 12 probation counselors, selected from the counties of Vâlcea and Sibiu, as well as from the municipality of Bucharest. These counselors were chosen based on their experience working with juvenile delinquents and active involvement in social reintegration programs. The geographical distribution was also carried out to compare the perceptions and practices of councilors in counties with different socio-economic characteristics. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, the names of the probation counselors will be coded with their initials in the data interpretation section. This approach will ensure the anonymity of each advisor while allowing for a clear and consistent interpretation of responses. Each advisor will be identified by a unique code based on initials, and these codes will be used throughout the analysis to correlate individual responses with the perspectives expressed. This complies with the ethical standards of research, guaranteeing the integrity of the data collected.

Data collection was carried out between July and September 2024 based on an interview guide, with an emphasis on the following topics: the role of the probation counselor in working with delinquent minors, the impact of probation on minors, the main needs and challenges of the probation system in Romania. The guide combined open questions to allow participants to express themselves freely, but also guiding questions to ensure coverage of all relevant topics.

## **3. Results**

- The role of the probation counselor in working with minors

The probation counselor plays an essential role in the process of rehabilitation and social reintegration of minors who have committed crimes. This position is described by counselors as a complex

one, involving a wide range of responsibilities that go beyond simply monitoring compliance with probation conditions.

Most of the interviewees emphasized the fact that a probation counselor is not just an observer of the behavior of minors, but an active factor in their rehabilitation, having supporting, mentoring and intermediary roles between the various institutions that contribute to the minor's reintegration. RC described the counselor's role as a catalyst for change: *"The counselor is more than a person who checks that the minor is complying with the conditions imposed by the court. We are there to guide, listen and offer solutions. Many of these children have not had a trusted adult in their lives, and we take on that role. Without a relationship of trust, we cannot talk about real rehabilitation."*

This aspect of guidance and mentoring is vital in the context of multiple vulnerabilities that minors present, such as family trauma, social exclusion and lack of educational support. Therefore, counselors must be able to build trusting relationships and create an environment where minors feel supported and encouraged to change their behavior.

At the same time, some counselors emphasized the complexity of their role, often having to assume a series of additional responsibilities compared to the traditional ones. AZ explained: *"We are often psychologists, mediators, and negotiators. In many cases, we are the person who stands between the court system and the juvenile, between the family and the school, trying to get all parties to work together for the good of the child."*

Thus, the role of the probation counselor is a multifaceted one, and the success of the minor's rehabilitation largely depends on the counselor's ability to adapt his intervention methods to the specifics of each case and to build a functional partnership with the minor and with the institutions involved in the rehabilitation process.

- The impact of probation on minors

Probation has a profound and often transformative impact on juveniles entering the system, particularly by addressing behavioral and emotional issues, educating and supporting them in the process of social reintegration. This process gives juveniles a chance to avoid detention, learn new skills, and rebuild their lives in a supervised and supportive environment. Counselors interviewed repeatedly emphasized that probation can become a catalyst for positive change, but success is highly dependent on the juvenile's involvement and support from family and institutions.

One of the main advantages of probation is to avoid detention and, implicitly, to avoid the negative impact that the prison environment could have on minors. They remain in the community, thus being exposed to opportunities for development and social reintegration, without suffering from the stigma associated with detention. RM emphasized this aspect: *"Avoiding detention is crucial. These kids are still moldable. Detention can have devastating effects on them, both psychologically and socially. Instead, through probation, we give them a chance to reintegrate without being labeled for the rest of their lives."*

Another major benefit is the educational and vocational support provided in probationary programs. Minors are encouraged to return to school or participate in vocational training, which provides them with a path to independence and a more stable future. AZ noted that *"many of these young people had no direction in life. Probation gives them access to education and vocational training, which can completely change their future prospects. It's important to show them that there are alternatives to criminal behaviour."*

Psychological counseling and emotional support is another significant benefit. Many of the minors have suffered trauma or been exposed to dysfunctional environments. Probation gives them access to specialized counselors who help them develop emotional management skills and overcome trauma. CP explained: *"Psychological counseling is essential for many of these children. Without the help of a specialist, they would not know how to manage their anger, sadness or frustration, which makes them vulnerable to relapse."*

Another benefit of probation is the opportunity to develop healthy relationships with counselors, who often become support figures and positive role models for these youth. Counselors guide them and give them resources to rebuild their lives in a positive way. MR said: *"The fact that minors have an adult who cares about them and supports them makes a huge difference. Many of them have never had a relationship like this with someone who showed them that they cared."*

Thus, probation plays an essential role in facilitating behavioral changes in minors. From improving emotion management to reducing impulsive behaviors, counselors often see significant changes during probation. However, they emphasized that the changes do not appear suddenly, but are a gradual process influenced by several factors.

Among the factors influencing behavioral changes is access to psychological counseling. Many deviant behaviors are related to trauma or emotional dysfunction. Counseling helps minors become aware

of the sources of their problems and learn effective ways to manage them. IS noted that *“many of these children do not know how to control their impulses. He learns, through counseling, to identify his emotions and react more rationally. It’s a long process, but with the right support, many manage to improve their behavior.”*

Family relationships and family support, respectively, also play a crucial role in the success of probation. Counselors note that juveniles who benefit from a supportive family environment tend to show faster progress in their behavior. AZ pointed out: *“When the family is involved and provides support, behavioral changes are much more visible. These children need stability and security, and the family can provide these things when they work with us.”*

Involvement of minors in recreational activities or positive social groups contributes to the development of healthier behaviors, helping them develop social skills and improve their self-esteem. EG said: *“Getting them involved in social or group activities helps them build healthy relationships and feel included. A lot of them have been isolated or just had negative relationships, so it helps them redefine their identity.”*

Probation counselors have observed that most juveniles go through certain developmental stages during probation. These stages are not necessarily rigid or universal, but can provide a general picture of how juvenile behaviors develop during the period of supervision.

In the early stages of probation, many juveniles show resistance or denial about their actions or the need for behavioral change. This phase is marked by distrust of counselors and a refusal to fully cooperate with the intervention plan. CP said: *“In the beginning, many of them refuse to accept responsibility for their actions. They either blame external circumstances or completely deny that they need help. It is a barrier that we must overcome with patience.”*

After a period of denial, most juveniles enter a phase where they begin to reevaluate their behaviors and explore alternatives offered by probation counselors. This phase may be marked by awareness of issues and a greater openness to cooperation. BI explained: *“After a few weeks or months, they begin to realize that probation is not an adversary but an opportunity. Little by little, they are becoming more receptive to our discussions and the alternatives we propose.”*

Once juveniles move past the exploratory phase, many of them begin to show a more serious commitment to the probation plan. At this stage, clear positive changes can be seen, such as improved behavior at school or the development of better relationships with family and friends. LD said: *“It’s very satisfying to see these children start to take their lives seriously. In this phase, they become much more involved and responsible for their own actions.”*

Probation success is therefore largely defined by prevention of recidivism, and counselors have identified several critical factors that contribute to this.

One of the most important factors that contribute to the prevention of recidivism is the development of a trusting relationship between the minor and the counselor. A relationship based on mutual respect and emotional support helps juveniles maintain positive behavior even after probation is completed. MR pointed out: *“Without trust, nothing works. When you succeed in gaining the child’s trust, he starts to want to make real changes in his life.”*

Another important element is the provision of ongoing support after the probationary period ends. This may include regular counseling, involvement in community activities or mentoring programs. EB explained: *“Many of them need support even after their probationary period is over. If they don’t have a solid support system, the risk of recidivism increases greatly.”*

Another essential component in the prevention of recidivism is the social and economic integration of minors, either by returning to school or by obtaining a job. These opportunities help them regain their self-confidence and set long-term goals. AZ pointed out that *“when children see that they have a future – either through education or a job – they are much less likely to reoffend. They begin to want nothing more than to be trapped again in the vicious circle of criminality.”*

- The main needs and challenges of the probation system for minors in Romania

A central aspect discussed by most of the counselors interviewed is the lack of resources and specialized programs for minors. They indicated that, although the legislative framework is generally well structured, implementation at the local level suffers from the lack of the necessary infrastructure. RC, for example, emphasized that *“we need more resources, more counseling centers and programs that are adapted to minors. You can’t apply the same methods as for adults.”* It raised the issue of the lack of individualized approaches to the unique needs of minors, especially those from dysfunctional families or vulnerable backgrounds.

Another councillor, AZ, drew attention to the difficulties of finding effective inter-institutional collaborations: *“There is not enough collaboration between the education system, local authorities and probation services. Everyone is minding their own business and we find ourselves the only ones trying to help these young people”*. This problem highlighted by AZ is a structural one, suggesting the need for a better integration of the efforts of different institutions that can contribute to the rehabilitation of minors.

Equally important is the lack of ongoing training for counsellors, a problem mentioned by several interview participants. MR mentioned that *“the training we have is insufficient. The needs of young people are changing, we must always be aware of new methods of intervention, but we have neither time nor resources”*. Thus, it was emphasized the need for continuous training programs for probation counselors, which would allow them to adapt to the socio-cultural realities of the young people they work with.

The constraints identified by the advisers are multiple and cover a wide range of issues, from poor infrastructure to staff shortages. The IP described the problem in simple terms: *“We are too few for how many minors we have to manage. Each case takes a lot of time, but we can't give everyone the attention they need.”* In this way, a systemic problem of the undersizing of probation teams, which often end up being overwhelmed by the number of cases handled, has been highlighted.

In addition, IS pointed out that in many cases there are difficulties in finding local specialized services: *“In many areas of the country, we simply do not have enough rehabilitation centers or programs that are geared towards the needs of minors. Most of the activities are concentrated in big cities”*. This centralization of resources reduces access to services for youth living in rural or less developed areas, making probation much more difficult to implement.

Another major obstacle identified by the counselors interviewed was the lack of a clear framework for evaluating the progress of minors. EG stated that *“it is difficult to measure the success of our interventions. We have some general indicators, but they are not specific to minors and do not reflect the reality we are facing”*. This lack of standardization in assessment makes it difficult to monitor progress and adjust interventions according to the actual needs of minors.

Councillors agreed that a structural overhaul of the way the juvenile probation system works, with a stronger focus on the needs of juveniles, is needed. The CP emphasized that *“we should focus more on prevention. If we could work better with schools and families early, many cases could be prevented.”* This opinion reflected the desire of many counselors to emphasize early interventions and education so that the escalation of criminal behavior is avoided.

In addition, the interviewed counselors appreciated that a modernization of educational and vocational training programs is necessary. LD suggested that *“we need to give young people concrete skills for the future. A professional training adapted to the needs of the labor market would give them a direction, a purpose”*. Through this, the counselors highlighted that the rehabilitation of minors must not be limited to correcting criminal behavior, but must also include personal and professional development, offering them a viable alternative for the future.

Also, another aspect mentioned was the need for more effective collaboration between the authorities and other organizations. BI stated that *“we need to have an integrated system, where all actors - the police, schools, social services - collaborate in real, not just on paper”*. Such collaboration would allow for faster and more effective intervention, providing integrated support to minors and their families.

Thus, the counselors interviewed emphasized that the future of the juvenile probation system should be marked by better inter-institutional collaboration, investment in educational and professional resources, but also by an increased focus on preventing criminal behavior through early interventions and support family.

#### **4. Discussions**

The probation officer plays an essential role in the success of the social reintegration process of minors who have come into conflict with the law, being a main actor within the juvenile justice system. It ensures that alternative sanctioning measures are effectively implemented and tracked, thus contributing to the prevention of recidivism and facilitating the social reintegration of minors. The probation counselor's mission is complex and involves a multidisciplinary approach, focused on risk assessment and management, as well as implementing a personalized intervention plan.

Intervention skills are fundamental to probation counselors. Techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational therapy are essential for changing dysfunctional thoughts and behaviors and increasing the minor's motivation for change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). These methods are used to develop coping strategies and to promote pro-social behaviours, thus contributing to reducing the risk of recidivism and facilitating the social reintegration of people under probation.

In addition, communication and relationship skills are critical to the success of probation interventions. Counselors must develop advanced skills in active listening, empathy, and negotiation, which are essential for building a trusting relationship with beneficiaries and facilitating collaboration in implementing intervention plans (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Conflict management and mediation skills are also important for resolving disputes between offenders and other parties involved, such as victims or families, and for preventing problems from escalating (Deutsch & Goldman, 2006).

Continuing professional education is crucial to keeping skills up-to-date and adapting to changes in the field. Probation counselors must participate in continuing education programs that cover recent developments in criminology, criminal law, intervention techniques, and case management (Taxman, 2018). Continuing education allows advisors to apply best practices and stay informed of recent research and innovations in the field.

Professional supervision also plays a critical role in the continuing development of probation counselors. Supervision provides opportunities for feedback and reflection, facilitating the identification and addressing of challenges encountered in day-to-day work (White et al., 2015). Professional and peer support groups are also important for maintaining motivation and preventing burnout, thus helping to improve performance and ensure adequate support for beneficiaries.

In terms of community resources, probation officers need to develop networks of resources in the community to provide adequate support to beneficiaries. Collaboration with non-profit organizations, educational institutions and employers is essential for access to education services, vocational training and work opportunities. These collaborations contribute to the creation of personalized reintegration plans and to ensuring comprehensive support for beneficiaries. Building partnerships with other institutions, such as rehabilitation centers and youth support organizations, is essential for implementing integrated reintegration plans and ensuring comprehensive support (Taxman, 2018). These partnerships facilitate access to resources and services necessary for successful reintegration and help prevent recidivism.

Studies have shown that juveniles who receive constant support from probation counselors and tailored interventions have a significantly higher chance of avoiding recidivism and successfully reintegrating into the community (Botescu & Miu, 2016). Thus, the probation counselor becomes a key factor in the social reintegration process, having a direct impact on the rehabilitation and prevention of future criminal behavior.

The probation counselor thus plays an essential role in the successful reintegration of minors into society. Through assessment, monitoring, emotional and social support, inter-institutional collaboration and prevention of recidivism, the counselor contributes significantly to the rehabilitation of minors. Collaboration with the family and other institutions is crucial in this process, ensuring an integrated and successful intervention. Thus, the probation counselor is not only a monitor of compliance with legal conditions, but also a mentor who actively supports the behavioral change and social reintegration of minors.

## **5. Conclusions**

Probation is an essential pillar of the criminal justice system, with the role of facilitating the rehabilitation of criminals and providing an alternative to incarceration, especially for minors, where the risk of recidivism can be significantly reduced through specialized interventions. In Romania, juvenile probation is based on the work of probation counselors, who play a crucial role in monitoring and supporting young people under supervision, in collaboration with local social and educational institutions. The process of juvenile reintegration involves a complex approach, where factors such as access to resources, family support and the community setting directly influence the success of this intervention.

A key issue emerging from interviews with probation officers is the lack of adequate resources to effectively support the rehabilitation process. Counselors in Bucharest have indicated that, although the capital offers wider access to education and therapy programs, the high number of cases prevents them from giving the necessary attention to each minor. The overloading of the probation system in Bucharest creates difficulties in the personalized monitoring of each case, so counselors often have to resort to standardized solutions, at the expense of individualized approaches. Instead, in Vâlcea and Sibiu, counselors face other major challenges — resources are limited, and in many cases, local institutions lack the necessary infrastructure to provide minors with adequate psychological or educational support. In Vâlcea, for example, the councilors pointed out the lack of vocational training programs for young people, which makes their reintegration more difficult, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The efficiency of probation is directly influenced by the allocated resources, but also by the ability of counselors to coordinate the necessary interventions. Probation counselors highlighted that although the working methods are well structured, the efficiency of the process is affected by the lack of collaboration between probation institutions, schools and mental health services. Such coordination would facilitate a multidisciplinary intervention that better meets the complex needs of minors. In many cases, these institutions work separately, which can lead to fragmentation of support for minors and loss of continuity in rehabilitation interventions.

In conclusion, the present research highlights the complexity of the juvenile probation reintegration process, highlighting the major challenges that probation counselors face. Lack of resources, insufficient inter-institutional collaboration and family difficulties are factors that significantly influence the effectiveness of probation. A more coordinated approach, more developed local resources and more consistent family support could contribute to improving reintegration outcomes and reducing juvenile recidivism

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## WHAT SHAPES YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE JOB MARKET? ROMANIAN MENTALITIES AND REALITIES

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**Abstract:** *In Romania, the relationship between younger generations and the labour market is shaped by multiple factors, including economic, social, and cultural ones. Compared to past generations, today's youth have access to more opportunities but also face challenges distinct from those of their predecessors. Their approach to employment reflects not only individual aspirations but also the influence of mentalities shaped by the country's recent history and the demands of a globalized and globalizing capitalist economy. Caught between different economic realities, inheriting a deficient education system, and adopting cultural models from abroad, young people strive to find jobs that meet their needs—needs that only partially align with employers' demands. In our paper, we will examine several key aspects of the complex relationship between young people and the labour market, as reflected in articles and publications from the fields of human resources and business.*

**Keywords:** *young people, jobs, labour market, mentality, Romania*

### 1. Introduction

Among European Union countries, Romania has, for many years, recorded a significant percentage of young people who, after completing secondary school, neither pursued any form of further education (academic or vocational) nor entered the labour market (Eurostat data for 2008–2017, in Bădescu et al., 2019: 4). Consequently, Romania often ranks at the bottom in Eurobarometer surveys regarding youth integration into the labour market, job options, and opportunities to secure employment. Currently, Romania reflects a widespread situation where many young people are employed in jobs that do not correspond to their aspirations or qualifications. Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a report by the German foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (as a result of a research study conducted in 2018 on the values of young people from ten countries in Southeast Europe) indicated that less than one-third of surveyed young Romanians were employed in the field for which they had been trained. At the same time, over one-third had jobs in a different domain than their field of study (Bădescu et al., 2019: 44). A few years later, we find a similar percentage concerning people aged 18–35: “33% of surveyed Romanian youth stated that the available job openings they found were not interesting or suitable for them, 30% complained about the low salary offered for their first job in Romania, and 27% said employers had overly high expectations of them” (Zamfir, 2023).

These data, along with many others, reveal both the inadequacy of the education system in meeting employer requirements (and more broadly, the trends in the labour market) and the unwise choices made by graduates. A series of opinion polls also highlight a tendency to blame employers for the difficulties encountered in their first job experiences (Zamfir, 2023). However, little is said about the options young people make regarding their future professional training. Many do not understand what they want in terms of a career, while others choose fields or professions for which they are not well-suited. This inadequacy, less visible or studied, also contributes to the broader picture of the relationship between recent generations and their jobs.

### 2. The perpetuation of old mentalities

The (im)possibility for young people to find a job — and one that aligns with their aspirations — depends primarily on human factors but also reflects a particular connection to the recent history of Romanian society. Some pre-1990 mentalities and behaviours have persisted, albeit in a diminished form, into today's generations. For instance, the idea of financially supporting young people after reaching adulthood, especially those who are studying.

In Western countries, many young people had to (and still must) work to finance their education. In Romania, however, young people have not faced such challenges [according to a 2022 Eurostat report, Romania had the lowest percentage of young people employed during their studies, at 2%, compared to

73% in the Netherlands] (Popa, 2023). Under the communist education system, all levels of schooling, up to the highest, were fully funded by the state. Employees (not just the young ones) could earn a high school or university degree through evening classes. While this required sustained effort from participants, it did not incur the costs seen abroad, where private educational institutions are the most expensive.

Even today, there is a certain expectation that the state should cover educational expenses. Similarly, there remains the belief that a diploma (particularly a university degree) should guarantee a job. As one commentator observed: "Due to the enthusiasm for pursuing higher education — one degree after another, some more or less accredited — and every parent's desire for their child to have a diploma, we have theoretically raised the country's cultural level. Because we have tens of thousands of graduates [...]. But in reality, many of them are not adequately prepared. In 2001, out of 2,200 candidates for the bar exam, only 21 were admitted." (Călin Zamfirescu, on TVR, 2012).

Young people are not professionally prepared, yet parents push them forward when this should have been done earlier. "Parents would come to us with their child's résumé and say, 'I want to get my child hired.' 'How old is your child?' '25.' 'Well, they're not a child anymore; they're an adult!' I mean... This has a lot to do with the excessive pampering that our system, particularly the distinctly Romanian parental system, fosters in children." (Cătălin Nan, president of the National Association for Parents, in Nechita, 2024).

Such views and behaviours persist, and like any entrenched mentalities, they will not disappear easily. During the communist era, the prevailing idea was that a young person studying should focus exclusively on school: where parents could afford it, they bore the entire financial burden. This was particularly true for academic education, with the expectation that after graduation, the young person would secure employment, usually in their field of study. The notion of supporting young people financially until they complete university (and sometimes even a master's program) still exists in certain families today. Some parents see it as their duty to provide this support (often with sacrifices in families with modest incomes), which delays the young person's real engagement with the challenges of the labour market.

### **3. There are so many motives for not succeeding**

Some young people are in no hurry to find a job and develop a narrative that critiques employers, the education system, society—or all these together. Achieving financial independence is seen as a daunting task, so complex that it demoralizes and discourages young people from making efforts toward self-fulfillment. Some parents themselves contribute to their children's (very) delayed integration into the labour market, believing that their offspring should enjoy benefits they themselves were denied in their youth. "It's part of our cultural story, somehow, where young people are still encouraged by parents to stay a bit longer and not take a job, even after finishing university," said Aida Chivu, an HR specialist, in a ProTV News report (2024). Parents seek to be protective in a highly volatile world undergoing significant transformations, where new professions are emerging that did not exist before. These new jobs increasingly value soft skills, an aspect not heavily emphasized in Romanian education. A few decades ago, Romanians knew that obtaining a diploma would clearly lead to various professions. Today, however, many occupations have disappeared, and diplomas have lost their value, as only work experience matters. Therefore, can we expect Romania to continue ranking at the bottom of EU opinion polls? Alongside Italy and Greece, Romania was identified this summer in a Eurobarometer as having "the highest number of unemployed individuals among those who have completed a form of education" (ProTV News, 2024). Italy is well-known among European countries for its high number of young adults living with their parents for extended periods. Romania is in a similar situation regarding young people under the age of 30 (Euronews, 2024). In both countries, we see the same pattern of parents remaining protective of their children, even after they reach adulthood, including in decisions about their professional paths.

However, the cultural model is not the only factor at play; the limited financial capacity of these individuals to pay rent—or even more challenging, to buy a home—before the mentioned age must also be considered. Some young people come to feel that, despite putting significant effort into finding a good job, they are still unable to afford housing or more ambitious projects. In other cases, frequently changing jobs or occupations becomes a mere effort to ensure financial survival, leaving little to no resources for professional development. "Many adolescents end up accepting jobs with low wages relative to the effort required, which can exhaust them both physically and emotionally, leading to discouragement and a loss of hope that they will ever achieve the goals they have set for themselves in life," (Cohut, 2023). This trend toward de-skilling increasingly contributes to a reduced engagement with the labour market, reflected in diminished interest, openness to learning new things, and acquiring new job skills. These are also plausible

explanations for young people's demotivation—or, in extreme cases, their indifferent attitude toward obtaining any job. As a result, we are witnessing the emergence of a critical mass of young people who are interested in working just enough to survive at a minimal level. These young individuals feel like prisoners of an era, a system, or a world that fails to value them, treating them instead as mere cogs in a larger machine.

The demotivation and disorientation of young people are understandable realities, especially in the context of the chronic lack of support exhibited by the Romanian state. Some timid initiatives come from the Ministry of Labour: in the spring of 2024, the ministry announced in a press release the allocation of funds for young people determined to enter the workforce. The money, disbursed through the National Employment Agency [AJOFM], is referred to as "incentives" and falls into three main categories: the activation bonus, the integration bonus, and mobility bonuses. For instance, the first category provides "1,000 lei for employment (approximately 200 euros, author's note), for a minimum of three months, to unemployed youth without unemployment benefits who find a job." The relocation bonus (a subcategory of the mobility bonuses) is granted for up to three years, amounting to a maximum of 900 lei per month, covering  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the rent paid by young people (approximately 135 euros, author's note), when they take a job more than 50 km away from their place of residence (Ministry of Labour, 2024).

It is worth noting that the first two categories of incentives are aimed at young people registered with the AJOFM, which effectively excludes those who are not enrolled in the agency's records. It remains unclear what impact this initiative has among young people (to the extent they are even aware of it), particularly those living in rural areas, who find it more difficult to reach the towns where AJOFM branches are located. Moreover, Romanian youth generally do not view these agencies as key resources in their job search efforts, given that the jobs offered are often considered either poorly paid or lacking in prestige.

The ministry's initiative comes very late, after decades during which young people—especially those with minimal education and from rural areas—have emigrated in the hundreds of thousands to earn a living abroad. "Younger emigrants come almost exclusively from the poorest layers of society." (Bădescu et al., 2019: 77). In any case, young people's expectations do not refer on palliative measures but on stable, diverse jobs and a regulated labour market. The fact that many young people no longer return to the country shows that, in reality, these expectations have almost vanished.

#### **4. What is to be done?**

Most young people understand that the key to success lies in cultivating a desire for growth and continuously seeking development opportunities. Under the economic pressures imposed by globalization, many young individuals (some of whom are pursuing professional or academic education) apply to multiple jobs, hoping to be called for an interview for at least one. Beyond their personal aspirations for their professional future, they recognize that without an open attitude toward challenges, they risk failure. This mindset often involves accepting work that is less desirable or enjoyable—and possibly lower paid—with the understanding that it represents a transitional stage toward something better or more desirable. This perspective explains the tendency to gravitate toward sectors requiring either unskilled or minimally skilled labour.

Thus, a series of reports, studies, opinion polls, and the expertise of human resources specialists highlight the preference of graduates or those seeking part-time collaborations for industries such as retail, HoReCa (Hotels and Restaurants), marketing, promotion and sales, food delivery, education and tutoring (Gigs Team, 2023), or the events industry ("hostess or brand ambassador at various social events, concerts, or conferences") (Glăvan, 2023). Young people are also open to jobs in call centers, tourism, and roles such as "in-store sales, call center support, BPO (business process outsourcing, author's note), [and] if they speak a foreign language, the added value is greater than work experience. And not least, but still prominent, HoReCa/tourism, where people without experience are sought after" (Ana Visian, Best Jobs, in *Știrile ProTV*, 2024). Other less commonly mentioned but still in-demand sectors include the food industry, transportation/logistics, and manufacturing (Enache, 2024). For rural areas, in particular, young people may turn to occasional or seasonal work, often as day labourers (Gigs, 2022).

In the industries mentioned above, young people face fewer competitors, as older and more experienced individuals are less likely to pursue these roles. On the other hand, jobs in these sectors do not pay as much as young people might aspire to, but they provide a space to gain both experience and life lessons. These experiences, even if less pleasant, help individuals gain insight into the labour market and adjust their behavior for future job opportunities.

The strengths of these industries lie in the variety of job opportunities available, flexibility, and even the possibility of supplementing income for those who already have a primary source of earnings.

However, the most significant advantage is the opportunity to develop or refine individual skills that are typically in demand in the labour market.

It is noteworthy that industries such as retail, sales, HoReCa, and particularly event organization, should not be seen merely as sectors that absorb unskilled or low-skilled labour. Even when young people are accepted for jobs for which they lack formal qualifications, their performance depends on their willingness to put in effort and remain open to new and sometimes initially unpleasant challenges. These industries demand the presence and/or development of soft skills to a greater extent than other fields. The ability to communicate effectively, interact with enthusiasm and courtesy, attract customers (Glăvan, 2023), maintain presence of mind, and accept overtime are critical in these sectors.

The skills developed in these areas represent, in the long run, more significant gains for young people than the immediate monetary rewards. The way young people understand and embrace the stakes of employment in sectors with high levels of human interaction ultimately reflects their approach to jobs they might not have initially aspired to, but which serve as essential learning experiences for the labour market. Moreover, refining or acquiring soft skills broadens a young person's employability, enabling them to transcend local or regional limitations in securing a job.

Aware of the growing need to improve their abilities, Romanian youth are increasingly active on recruitment platforms, as evidenced by statistics from recent years. For over two decades, submitting resumes on specialized websites has been an accessible method for young people. The anticipated economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic likely explain the increased interest among applicants. For instance, last fall, young people applied to an average of "8–9 jobs each, a significant rise compared to the beginning of the year, when they applied to 6–7 positions. Additionally, the number of new resumes increased by 15% in October compared to the previous month" (Vișian, 2023).

Although the source does not specify the percentage of young people among the over 1.1 million applicants recorded in October 2023 alone, other statistics suggest that they form a leading demographic. For example, during the summer of this year, individuals aged 18–24 represented the second-largest group in terms of applications submitted on the eJobs platform (Enache, 2024). It can be inferred that youth interest peaks during summer months due to seasonal jobs available during vacation periods. However, statistical trends have become less predictable than in the past. Another example, focusing on the BestJobs platform, revealed a similar level of interest in October 2023 among students and entry-level candidates as in the summer, likely driven by the appeal of part-time and seasonal positions (Vișian, 2023).

## 5. Conclusions

The relationship between younger generations and the labour market is a key factor in the economic sustainability of any society. In Romania, policymakers and economic leaders have neglected – and continue to ignore – the potential and needs of younger generations. Young people represent one of the most vulnerable segments of society, often following an educational system misaligned with labour market demands and being forced to navigate the peculiarities of Romanian capitalism, which leaves large segments of the population exposed to varying degrees of poverty. These are the primary reasons many young individuals end up working in jobs and fields unrelated to their training. This disconnect fosters widespread dissatisfaction with their work and frustration about having studied in one field while working in another. Equally important are those who lack access to professional training, forcing them into low-skilled, physically demanding, and low-prestige jobs.

For some, changing fields or taking a temporary job is seen as a compromise and a transitional phase until they can secure employment aligned with their professional qualifications. For others, it is a pathway to financial independence. Additionally, a job in a new field may stem from a deliberate decision to pivot professionally, which is more common among those with higher education compared to those with only secondary education. Some university or master's program graduates realize, even before completing their studies, that they are unlikely to succeed in their field and instead choose to explore other career directions.

On the other hand, the evolving expectations of recent generations (compared to youth from previous centuries) complicate their relationship with current or future jobs. Moreover, delayed entry into the labour market—often occurring several years after reaching adulthood—makes it challenging to adapt to an economic reality perceived as harsh. Of course, comparisons must account for the vastly different socio-economic contexts and labour market structures of the 21st century. Today's youth often aspire to high salaries, easy work, and rapid advancement in career hierarchies. However, such ambitions are more sustainable on an individual level than at the group or generational level. However, recruitment specialists emphasize that companies "seeking to attract young workers must better understand the profile of the

younger generation within a society where jobs have largely become digitalized. They should consider that today's young people desire flexible work schedules that allow them the freedom to work from anywhere without requiring their presence in a specific location." (Mihaela Forgaciu, in Cohut 2023).

There is also a certain detachment among young people regarding both the prospect of securing and losing a job. This reflects the ease with which their generation approaches life and their lack of attachment to values with which they do not identify. Some young people have realized that the effort invested in obtaining a diploma is rarely rewarded with the extraordinary career they dreamed of – or even with a position in their field of study. The likelihood of applying to a dozen jobs without receiving a single response is increasingly common, perpetuating disappointment across entire generations.

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## FOSTER CARER'S PROFILE. INSIGHTS FROM ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** *Background. The most important pieces of recent legislation on child protection are the updated Law No. 272 and Law No. 273 of 2004. A normative act relevant to foster care is the Emergency Ordinance 27/2024 that modifies some of the conditions for obtaining the professional maternal assistant certificate, raising real challenges in widening the network of maternal assistants/foster carers. Purpose. Our study aims to outline the profile of maternal assistants within a GDSWCP in the north-west region of Romania. Methodology. In the framework of the quantitative research carried out to outline the profile of the foster carers/maternal assistants we used the study of documents officially registered within the specialized service of the GDSWCP. Results. In July 2022, 90 professional foster carers were employed, of which 5 men and 85 women. Their high average age is noteworthy, namely 54.54 years. We were interested in variables such as education level, marital status, whether they had children of their own, background, whether they had a job at the time of requesting the assessment for attestation, the motivation for choosing this profession, the disciplinary methods used in the foster carer's family as well as the presence of physical punishment in the foster carer's childhood.*

**Keywords:** *child protection, children with special needs, child placement, foster care, foster carer profile*

### Introduction

If we trace the evolution of legislation in the field of children protection rights, we can see that there are several distinct stages, namely: before 1989, then the period immediately afterwards when a rapid repair was attempted, in the form of crisis intervention, in order to lay the foundations for the reconstruction of the system - 1990-1991 -, the transition stage of important but uncoordinated changes - 1992-1996 -, the stage of fundamental changes, of consolidation of an adequate legislative basis, called by Greenwell (2002, p.2) "the real changes" stage in the protection of children's rights - 1997-2003 - and the period from 2004 to the present.

Since 2004, with the enactment of the Children's Law (Law 272/2004), we can speak of a coordinated development, internally and internationally correlated, towards the promotion and guarantee by the State of all children's rights, as set out in the 1989 UN Convention (Baciu, 2023). Roth (1999, p. 27-41) proposed a phasing of the reform covering the period 1990-1991, the period of rapid change, which she, quoting Elena Zamfir, calls the period of reparative regulations (Roth-Szamoskozi, 1999, p. 28 ), 1992-1996, the period of regulations focusing mainly on material support for children, and 1997, the beginning of the third stage, the "judicial reform of child protection" (Roth-Szamoskozi, 1999, p. 36).

The real reform begins in 1997, with the appearance of Emergency Ordinances no. 25 and 26, which brought regulations that were the basis of modern legislation on adoption and the protection of children's rights. Emergency Ordinance No 26/1997, which formed the basis of Law 272/2004, was approved the following year by Parliament as Law 108/1998.

The most important pieces of recent legislation are the updated Law No. 272 and Law No. 273 of 2004 on child protection. The Emergency Ordinance 27/2024 modifies some of the conditions for obtaining the professional foster carer/maternal assistant certificate, raising real challenges in widening the network of maternal assistants.

The World Report on Violence against Children (Pinheiro, 2006) emphasizes that "families are the best providers of physical and emotional care for children" (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 18), which is why maternal care has a central position in the system of special protection of children.

### Methodology

The exploratory study aimed to process data from the files of 90 foster carers in quantitative research on the foster parent profile.

**Sample**

The data of 90 foster carers employed by a General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection (GDSWCP) was processed. The number of processed files represents the number of all foster carers/maternal assistants employed by GDSWCP in September 2022.

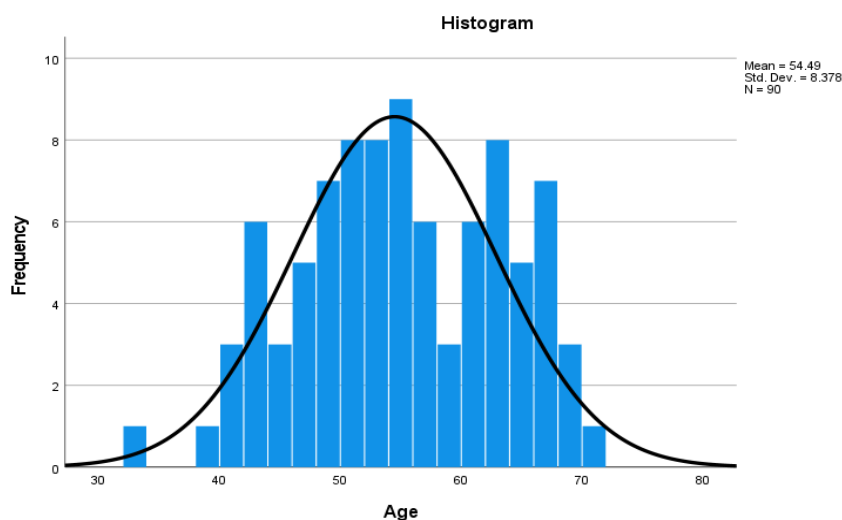
The main objective of the study is to improve information about the profile of foster parents and the reasons for choosing this profession.

**Foster carer`s profile**

*Current age of foster carers*

Their average age is 54.49 with a minimum of 33 years and a maximum of 70 years, a mode value of 54 years and a SD of 8.37 years. If we consider the age of entering the system, we notice that it varies between a minimum of 26 years and a maximum of 56 years old with an average of 41 years (SD of 6.6) and a modal value of 42 years.

**Figure 1. Foster carer`s current age**



Source: Made by the author

*Gender. Length of service*

As expected, most of the foster carers are women (94.4%). The length of service varies from a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 25 years with a mode value of 22 years.

**Table no. 1 Gender**

	N	%
Female	85	94.4%
Male	5	5.6%

Source: Made by the author

*Residence*

Regarding the current residence, we have answers from 89 of the 90 subjects, 31.9% living in urban areas and 67% in rural areas. Most of the foster carers declare that their houses are comprised of 3 rooms, the minimum number being 2 and the maximum 7. This data appears in the case of 84 subjects (6 missing values).

**Table no. 2 Household dimension  
Number of rooms**

	N	%
2	11	12.1%
3	37	40.7%
4	23	25.3%
5	10	11.0%
6	2	2.2%
7	2	2.2%
Missing System	6	6.6%

Source: Made by the author

About the type of housing, 89 subjects answered, 78% living in a house and 20.9% in an apartment, 95.6% being their own or their parents' property and 3.3% living in rentals.

*Foster carer's education*

A percentage of 18.9% of foster carers graduated only 8 classes, sometimes followed by a vocational school, the majority having 10 (36.7%) or 12 classes (40%), totalling 76.7% of the foster carers, only 4.4% completing higher education.

**Table no. 3 Foster carer's education**

	N	%
10	24	26.7%
10+SP	9	10.0%
12	31	34.4%
12+SP	5	5.6%
Higher education	4	4.4%
8	9	10.0%
8+SP	8	8.9%

Source: Made by the author

*Marital status*

Most child carers are married or remarried (84.4%), single parents in 13.4% of the situations and 1.1% in a consensual union situation.

**Table no. 4 Marital status**

	N	%
Married	76	84.4%
Unmarried	1	1.1%
Divorced	7	7.8%
Widow(er)	5	5.6%
Consensual union	1	1.1%

Source: Made by the author

*Previous job*

Regarding the job they had at the time of requesting the certificate, 59 of them had no job, 11 were unemployed (with unemployment benefits) and 20 had a job. Therefore, only a percentage of 22.2% had a job at the time of entering the child protection system as employee, their professions being rather



unqualified ones (e.g., skilled worker, receiver-distributor, waiter, forester, day labourer, commercial worker, milk collector etc.).

*Characteristics of foster children*

None of the 90 foster carers initially requested the placement of children with special needs, 9 of them receiving along the way children who, in their subsequent development, were diagnosed with a disability. In these situations, they were additionally trained, re-evaluated and given a certificate that would allow them to take care of these children.

Of the 90 parents, 82 (91.1%) received a certificate for caring for a maximum number of two children, 5 of them for one child and 3 parents for three children. Over time, the certificate for one of the foster parents was increased to be able to care for two children instead of one, another one was entrusted with three children instead of two and one received an increase from three to four children. All these changes followed in best interest of the children, aimed at placing siblings together. As a rule, these changes to the data of the certificate come as a request from the GDSWCP with the agreement of the foster carer and not as an express request of him/her. Foster carers that can receive one or two children are advised to accept another child in foster care for immediate needs, when a colleague goes on leave. Therefore, in many certificates it is mentioned that they "can receive one/two child(ren) in foster care with the exception of periods of leave of a foster carer when he/she can receive another child by transfer".

*Number of the foster carer's own children at the first evaluation*

We notice that most foster carers have 2, 3, 4 or 5 children of their own (67%), in decreasing order from 2 to 5. Their number varies from 1 to 11 children from the foster carer's own family.

**Table no. 5 Number of the foster carer's own children**

	N	%
1	7	7.8%
2	27	30.0%
3	20	22.2%
4	11	12.2%
5	9	10.0%
6	3	3.3%
7	3	3.3%
8	1	1.1%
9	4	4.4%
10	2	2.2%
11	2	2.2%
Missing System	1	1.1%

Source: Made by the author

*Religious confession*

Depending on the denomination, the foster carers distribution is as follows: Orthodox, Reformed, Baptist, Pentecostal, Adventist, Unitarian, Jehovah's Witness, and Roman Catholic. After Orthodox confession, Pentecostal one is the most represented among foster parents.

**Table no. 5 Religious confession**

	N	%
Orthodox	59	65.6%
Reformed	3	3.3%
Baptist	5	5.6%
Pentecostal	14	15.6%
Adventist	2	2.2%
Unitarian	3	3.3%
Jehovah's Witness	3	3.3%
Roman Catholic	1	1.1%

Source: Made by the author

*Reasons to work as foster carer*

As Tremblay et al. (2009) underlined we can consider motivation as an important vector of professional success. The same authors also stated that we need to make distinction between motives/reasons and motivation. Because we are interested in the success of childcare in placement at foster carers, we need to make sure that we have correctly assessed the reasons why people work as childminders.

From the perspective of motives for choosing the profession, we found the following:

Most foster carers (34 out of 88 people, 38.6%) declare that they have chosen this profession out of love for children.

16 people (18.18%) indicate that the reason was to have a secondary job and out of love for children.

14 people (15.90%) were motivated by the desire to have a job.

7 people (7.95%) declare that they chose the profession because they love children and have free time that they can devote to their care.

4 of them consider that foster care offers a stable job, 3 of them mention the salary/job, the fact that they chose this profession for the benefit of their own child and, thirdly, for the children that they cared for themselves.

2 foster carers state that they chose the profession solely due to free time being a motivating factor.

The remaining 8 foster carers indicated the following motivations:

1 person for the job and for the benefit of one's own child

1 person because of the lack of own children

1 person because of the lack of own children and the need for a job

1 person out of love for children and for the benefit of one's own child

1 person for work, free time available for the benefit of one's own child

1 person for free time and love for children

1 person for free time and lack of own children

1 person for free time, love for children and a job

We note that, as the only motivation or in combination with others, the three most frequently mentioned reasons are *love for children* (77 situations), *the desire to have a job* (41), *the existence of free time* (cited by 13 people).

We have identified 5 basic categories that explain the choice of being a foster carer/maternal assistant as a professional. These can appear alone or in different combinations as reasons for the choice made. These categories are the following:

a. for the love of children; b. job; c. free time; d. for the benefit of one's own child; e. due to lack of own children

*Methods of disciplining the foster carer's own children*

As it appears from the final evaluation report of the foster carer for obtaining the certificate, out of the 90 future foster carers at the time of the evaluation, only 3 people were recorded as having a non-compliant parenting style, respectively the use of physical punishments - 2 people - (hair pulling, hitting with a stick) or verbal abuse and neglect of one's own children - 1 person. All candidates received the certificate. The first two foster carers (who admitted that they sometimes use corporal punishment) were recorded in their employment file that they were informed that corporal punishment is prohibited. The third was recommended training courses aimed directly at the functional relationship between parents and children.

Later, in the third case, (at the 2004 reassessment - it being a foster carer from 1998), the following were recorded in the file: "she is impulsive, decides for the child, does not communicate effectively, does not know how to listen, does not allow the child's initiatives, does not get involved in the child's education, does not show empathy, flexibility, reflexivity. Resolution: she cannot successfully fulfil the duties assigned to her in this profession". The foster carer was warned, received a written reprimand, and was recommended further training courses to support the appropriate training. In autumn 2022 she was to be recertified.

*The presence of physical punishment in the foster carer's childhood*

The available data provides information about foster parents' childhood experiences of physical punishment.

Distribution of responses

53.3% (48 respondents) of foster parents reported having been subjected to physical punishment as a child. This suggests that more than half had experiences involving such disciplinary measures.

41.1% (37 individuals) reported that they had not experienced physical punishment. This group is significant but remains smaller than those who had been exposed to physical punishment.

5.6% (5 cases) are missing data. This may reflect either non completeness of response or reluctance to discuss a sensitive topic.

**Table no. 7. Physical punishment in the childhood of the foster carer**

	N	%
No	37	41.1%
Yes	48	53.3%
Missing System	5	5.6%

Source: Made by the author

Emotional and cultural involvement. The high rate of parents who have experienced physical punishment may reflect the social or cultural norms of their childhood when this type of discipline was more accepted. These experiences may also influence how they perceive and apply discipline in their relationship with children in foster care.

Impact on their current role. Foster parents who have experienced physical punishment may be more likely to either avoid it completely as caregivers or normalize it depending on how they internalized these experiences.

Those who have not experienced physical punishment may have a different approach, more based on other forms of discipline such as communication or positive reinforcement.

Significance of missing data. The 5.6% missing data may reflect difficulties in responding due to subject sensitivity or lack of confidence in data confidentiality. It is important to consider whether these respondents share other common demographic characteristics that explain the missing responses.

These data provide an important starting point for understanding the influence of background on the style of care adopted by foster parents. Further analysis might be useful to relate these responses to current attitudes and practices in childrearing, as well as to factors such as age, education or cultural background.

*Conclusions and recommendations*

Foster carers are usually people over 40 years old who have their own children, - already teenagers or youngsters - with elementary or secondary education, mainly from rural areas. They are motivated by the desire to help and to have a job at home, to complete the seniority necessary for retirement, and/or they have free time.

Additional clarifications are needed regarding the motivation for choosing the profession and how it can vary over time, from the moment of employment till present days.

Although no foster carer requested the care of children with special needs, they ended up doing it because once they received children who proved to have deficient development from a physical, neurological, intellectual etc. point of view, they immediately received also the training and re-certification, the children not being oriented to be cared by another foster carer.

The foster care network is not sufficiently developed, the requests - because of legislative changes - put pressure on GDSWCP to find alternatives to institutionalization. Foster carers over 65 years old are still working in the system and those who have some deviations are usually warned and reprimanded and kept in the system.

Amendments that are made by the Order 27/2024 change the attestation criteria, such as: the minimum age to become a childminder becomes 21; the minimum level of education required is high school graduation; the employment contract is of indefinite duration; the childminder cannot cumulate salary and pension; they can look after 2 children maximum with some exceptions; the attestation is open-ended and is endorsed every two years/the certificate is valid for 2 years; training courses of 80 hours of which 50 theoretical and 30 practical training; at least one adult member of the household must have an income, apart from the childminder.

We are not advocating for the employment of foster carers who are at least high school graduates, nor even for formal continuous training more frequent than once a year, but for necessary support for them and reasonable/realistic expectations of them. This means that, if the foster carer is faced with behaviours of the child that he/she does not know how to deal with, with situations that exceed his/her knowledge and competences, there should be a social worker advisor, psychologist, psychiatrist, etc. immediately available to address the problem before the foster carer - child relationship deteriorates. Most of them are living in rural areas and the social worker assigned to work with them is at the county level organization.

We propose that the retirement age be set at 65 years with the possibility to extend the work contract for a maximum of three additional years. We believe such an extension should be granted only in cases where it benefits teenagers in foster care. Specifically, this would apply when the retirement of a foster carer would otherwise require an adolescent to change foster families for a year or two before aging out of the system.

The issues discussed above pushes the GDSWCP to widen the network of foster carers instead of overburdening the existing staff. Effective recruitment campaigns targeted at the profile of the foster parent/maternal assistant are necessary to ensure that children in need of care and stability are matched with capable families who can provide them with a nurturing environment.

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# STRENGTHENING RURAL COMMUNITIES: THE IMPACT OF LOCAL ACTION STRATEGIES ON VULNERABLE GROUPS

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**Abstract:** *Local Action Groups (LAGs) are essential tools in promoting rural development and social inclusion in the European Union. They can have a significant positive impact on local rural areas and implicitly on vulnerable groups within them, promoting inclusion and social cohesion. On the other hand, there are LAGs that may face various barriers that may limit the expected results. The main purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the impact of Local Action Groups (LAGs) on the process of social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, with a special focus on Roma communities, in the territories where these organizations operate. To answer the research question, which aims at how the activities and collaborations of the LAGs influence the social and economic integration of vulnerable groups, especially the Roma communities, in the territories where they operate, we conducted a qualitative study, a focus group, based on a semi-structured interview guide. The results of the study confirm the positive influence of the LAGs, along with the importance of simplifying administrative procedures, diversifying funding sources and stimulating the involvement of young people*

**Keywords:** Local Action Groups (LAGs), vulnerable groups, Roma

## 1. Introduction

The integration of vulnerable groups in local development processes is an essential priority in the social and cohesion policies of the European Union (Barca, 2008; European Commission, 2020). In this context, the Local Action Groups (LAG) play a central role by implementing the Local Development Strategy (SDL), which provides a framework for the development of projects aimed at reducing inequalities and promoting social inclusion. The active involvement of LAGs can have a positive impact on communities and implicitly on vulnerable groups within them (Tuesta-Tapia et al, 2024; Klamár, 2019).

The specialized literature emphasizes the importance of collaboration between local organizations and LAGs in promoting social inclusion. Putnam's (2000) study highlighted that collaborative relationships and social capital are determinants of community development. These relationships facilitate the participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes, thus promoting social cohesion and reducing marginalization. The LAGs represent a platform for promoting inter-institutional collaboration and for developing sustainable partnerships that support the inclusion of marginalized groups. Projects financed by LAGs cover a wide range of fields, from health and education to labor market integration and supporting social entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2019; World Bank, 2014). These initiatives not only provide direct support to beneficiaries, but also contribute to the strengthening of social capital in local communities (Healy & Côté, 2001; Woolcock, 2001).

This research aims to analyze the impact of LAG activities on the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, with a particular focus on Roma communities. Through a qualitative approach based on focus group interviews and primary data analysis, the study investigates collaborations between LAGs and other local entities, as well as the results of implemented projects. In addition, the research explores the challenges encountered in the implementation of SDL and formulates recommendations for optimizing future strategies, emphasizing inclusive and sustainable development (Miroiu, 2011; Moulart et al., 2010; Gaventa, 2004).

## 2. The importance of LAGs

Local Action Groups (LAGs) are essential tools in promoting rural development and social inclusion in the European Union. These public-private partnerships are fundamental in the implementation of the LEADER approach, which aims to develop local communities through the direct

involvement of local actors in the decision-making process, alongside the development of the local rural community (European Commission, 2013; Esparcia et al., 2015). In Romania, LAGs have played a significant role in supporting vulnerable groups, including Roma communities, through projects aimed at improving living conditions and facilitating socio-economic integration (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2015).

Recent studies highlight the positive impact of LAGs on social inclusion (Vávra, 2002; Guzal-Dec & Zwolińska-Ligaj, 2017; Buda & Pop, 2024). For example, a World Bank report emphasizes that the active involvement of local communities in the development and implementation of projects contributes to reducing poverty and increasing social cohesion (World Bank, 2014). In addition, research carried out by the Institute of Social Economy shows that LAGs have facilitated the access of vulnerable groups to resources and opportunities, thus promoting the sustainable development of rural areas (Institutul de Economie Socială, 2016 Ilie et al, 2021; Palmisano, 2016).

However, challenges remain. The lack of adequate financial resources limited institutional capacity and bureaucratic barriers, along with limited experience can hinder the effectiveness of LAGs in achieving the proposed objectives (European Court of Auditors, 2010; European Court of Auditors, 2010; Institutul de Economie Socială, 2016). Also, the diversity of funding sources used by LAGs highlights the complexity of resource management and the need for innovative strategies to maximize impact (OECD, 2019). In order to maximize the positive impact on vulnerable groups, a continuous evaluation of the strategies and practices implemented, as well as their adaptation to the specific needs of the communities served, is essential.

### **3. Methodology**

The main purpose of this study is to analyze and evaluate the impact of Local Action Groups (LAGs) on the process of social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, with a special focus on Roma communities, in the territories where these organizations operate. The research aims to provide a detailed perspective on how LAGs contribute to reducing inequalities and promoting social cohesion through initiatives and projects dedicated to these categories.

Starting from the main research question: "How do the activities and collaborations of LAGs influence the social and economic integration of vulnerable groups, especially Roma communities, in the territories where they operate?", we formulated the following research objectives:

1. Identification of organizations in the territory of the LAGs that focus on supporting vulnerable groups and evaluation of their collaboration with the LAGs.
2. Analysis of the objectives, activities and results of social projects financed by LAGs, with a special focus on projects dedicated to vulnerable groups and Roma communities.
3. Evaluation of the impact of social projects financed by LAGs on the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups.
4. Proposing solutions and strategies for optimizing the actions of LAGs in supporting local development and social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

We also stated the following secondary questions:

1. What are the main organizations that collaborate with LAGs in supporting vulnerable groups and how do they contribute to the development of SDL?
2. What types of social projects have been funded by LAGs and what have been their results on the targeted communities?
3. What are the challenges and successes encountered in the implementation of social projects and what strategies could be adopted to improve their impact?

Regarding the method used, the research was based on the sociological focus group interview, an approach that facilitates obtaining valuable qualitative information through structured and semi-structured discussions. The choice of this method was justified by its ability to capture multiple perspectives and provide an in-depth understanding of the collaborations, initiatives and project outcomes implemented by the LAGs.

The main tool used was a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore key themes related to collaboration with other organizations, outcomes of social projects and challenges encountered. The guide included central questions designed to investigate the objectives, activities and impact of LAG-funded projects on vulnerable groups:

1. Which organizations in the LAG area primarily focus on addressing issues related to Roma or vulnerable groups in SDL development? Could you explain how you collaborate with these organizations and what are the main activities, projects and results they have achieved in the territory of the LAG?
2. Could you describe the main objectives, activities and results of LAG-funded projects in the social field, especially those submitted or awarded to NGOs focusing on vulnerable groups (VG) or Roma communities? In addition, can you provide information on all projects funded by the LAG in the social component, including social POCU funding lines and other funding lines specifically targeting vulnerable groups?
3. What are the successes and failures you have encountered in your work and what would be related to these successes-failures? What are your proposals to optimize local development actions in the future?

The respondents were strategically selected to include relevant members of the LAG structures, such as representatives of the LAG management, members of the local public administration, representatives of NGOs and partner companies, but also direct beneficiaries of the financed projects. The research included four focus groups, held in the North-West, South-West, North-East and South-East regions of Romania, each focus group being organized within a representative LAG territory for that area. This regional approach ensured the diversity of perspectives, and the relevance of the conclusions obtained

#### 4. Result

Within this study, four focus groups were organized, each including five participants, which allowed the collection of relevant responses to the proposed themes. The participants, of whom 9 women and 12 men, had diverse profiles, being selected to provide varied perspectives based on their professional experience. They included people active within the LAGs, occupying positions such as executive director, LAG manager, project evaluator, president or legal officer.

The obtained results highlight the importance of understanding the contributions of LAGs in promoting social and economic inclusion, as well as in facilitating the access of marginalized communities to resources and opportunities. Evaluating the performance of these organizations provides a basis for developing more effective strategies adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable groups. LAGs that stand out through successful activities can be considered good practice models for less active ones.

The analysis highlighted a division between the LAG organizations, they being divided into two categories: on the one hand, those that do not collaborate with organizations focused on vulnerable groups, either because of the lack of these groups in the territory, or because of the lack of steps necessary to create structures functional representatives

"Like I told you, we didn't have any collaborations." (FG1, R3, M).

"On the territory of the Association [...] we do not have Roma associations, or at least we have not identified ourselves until this moment." (FG3, R4, F).

"We don't have a Roma organization in our LAG and we don't need associations targeting minorities." (FG3, R7, F).

respectively those where there are such NGOs active and with outstanding results in terms of their involvement in the development of vulnerable groups.

"[...] we have within the GAL, in the association, three member associations that are very active. [...] we partnered two or three more associations that still support vulnerable groups: [...] children with disabilities, [...] vulnerable people from the territory of the city of Negrești de Iași, [...] both young children, as well as people with disabilities, elderly people, respectively sick people." (FG1, R1, F).

"We have a member association in the GAL, which represents the Roma minority, and on the new strategy we have another association in the partnership agreement [...], which already carries out activities with children, especially from vulnerable groups - they have activities in school. The association that is a member of Gal did not have an intensive activity, they did not provide us with information about their results." (FG1, R5, M).

"The two associations we had were formed in two localities of Roma ethnicity. An association was led by a priest and his wife, the teacher, and then there was a local actor who managed to have some punctual actions. Some activities to support the Roma community, whether they were cultural or medical support. On the other side, it was about another Roma community, quite obvious, and there were also some collaboration projects with the Dutch and Germans, but the actions are punctual, and the NGOs, [...] were active, had certain booms in within a project." (FG2, R1, F).

*"Yes, in the GAL territory, apart from our association that works with seniors, I think there are also associations that work with children, I am not aware of any Roma communities in this territory." (FG3, R10, M).*

*"There are NGOs that deal with disadvantaged people, but not only Roma. There is also within our GAL, an NGO that deals with disadvantaged people, children, Roma, elderly people, disabled people, so it does not specifically treat only Roma, but quite a wide range." (FG4, R1, M).*

Therefore, during the discussions, the collaborations with various member associations of the Local Action Groups (LAGs), which are active and support vulnerable groups, including disabled children, vulnerable people from different localities and Roma ethnic communities, were emphasized. However, difficulties were also reported in the activity of some member associations, such as the lack of information regarding the results obtained. It was also highlighted that some associations, especially those from Roma ethnic communities, had specific support actions, while others had more consistent activities within specific projects. In addition, other NGOs supporting various disadvantaged categories, including but not exclusively Roma, were mentioned, demonstrating a wide range of social interventions within local communities.

For organizations in the first category, it is important to highlight the reasons behind the lack of engagement, and opportunities to increase engagement in this direction can be identified. On the other hand, the organizations in the second category should benefit from permanent support from the LAG organizations, in order to intensify their efforts to address the specific problems of vulnerable groups within local development. It is essential to promote collaboration and exchange of best practices between all LAG organizations to ensure inclusive and sustainable local development for all segments of the community.

*"The NGOs that we have as partners in the LAG carry out activities not through the LAG, but in particular with children, [...] including those with autism and other integration problems. In principle, the most important thing is that in the direction of social needs or needs for vulnerable groups in the social category, we really need a lot of money and involved people who want to change something, to be able to help as much as possible. Indeed, those who are involved in the projects and receive support are involved." (FG3, R1, M).*

In the absence of specialized organizations dedicated exclusively to the defense of the interests of vulnerable groups, the LAG organizations are committed to carrying out projects aimed at providing support to the disadvantaged community. So, these LAG organizations adopted a proactive approach, trying to provide support on multiple levels for these vulnerable groups. Through their projects, they have tried to cover various aspects of the life of these communities, from access to health and education services, to the promotion of employment opportunities and economic development. They also provided assistance in issues related to housing, social integration and combating discrimination. Their efforts were primarily aimed at improving the quality of life and increasing the chances of success for vulnerable groups in the community.

*"At the moment we have that project we did on the digitization side, in which we are willing to help, so we are waiting at the headquarters for anyone who wants to be helped on this side. At the events we participate in, we promote this initiative and we are ready to receive them." (FG1, R4, M).*

In some cases, in the absence of specialized non-governmental organizations, the social services within the town halls have intervened to cover the needs of the communities, initiating and running projects aimed at solving problems and supporting members of the Roma community. These projects were designed to address the specific needs identified at the community level and to ensure access to services and resources needed to improve the quality of life. Through these initiatives, social services have played a particularly important role in promoting social inclusion and improving living conditions for members of Roma communities, as well as disadvantaged groups, thus contributing to increasing social cohesion and reducing inequalities.

*"The best collaboration is with Baia Sprie town hall, with their social service. Since we are also based in Baia Sprie, they have addressed this issue to minorities, and they actually have quite a few projects in this direction." (FG1, R3, M).*

*"We collaborated with the social services in all the town halls, in the UATs, in the territory, which facilitated our contact with the people who needed support, and so I got to know the territory and the people in the territory very well." (FG1, R1, F).*

*"Regarding vulnerable groups, through a project in which the city of Târgu Neamț was the beneficiary, a day care center was created for people with disabilities, and here I am referring to children*



*with autism. The center was equipped with equipment and furniture specific to children with such a deficiency. The project was completed, it had a value of 134,000 euros. It was also implemented with continuity on the POCU, it was included in the successful projects [...]. It was a working visit with all the LAGs from the North-East region who also visited this center, very interesting, useful and useful for children and families who have children with disabilities. We hope in the future we can continue and do more for these issues and this social sector." (FG3, R8, F.).*

On the other hand, it is important to highlight the fact that there are also isolated cases where organizations dedicated to assisting vulnerable groups are present in the territory, but effective collaboration between them and the Local Action Group (LAG) has not materialized. These organizations may already be engaged in activities and projects targeting the specific needs of vulnerable communities but may not be integrated into local networks or aware of opportunities to collaborate with the LAG in the area. Lack of collaboration can be caused by various reasons, such as lack of communication, shifting priorities or misunderstandings about shared goals. It is essential that all parties involved identify and overcome obstacles to build effective partnerships and maximize the impact of their actions in support of vulnerable communities. By strengthening the collaboration between specialized organizations and LAGs, a more holistic and coordinated approach can be ensured to improve the situation of vulnerable groups in the territory. From this point of view, an openness on the part of the LAG can be observed in order to establish an open, collaborative relationship with them.

*"Now we also have two organizations with which we have not yet succeeded. We will also see what they want, what are their guidelines, and I hope it will be useful." (FG1, R3, M).*

*"We found such an organization. This week will be the first on-site meeting. We preferred to go and see what is happening there and not to have some discussions from the office or on the phone. I hope it will be a good collaboration [...]" (FG2, R2, M).*

During the discussions on this topic, collaborations with associations outside the territory were also highlighted, which, unfortunately, did not always materialize in funded projects. These collaborations can be extremely valuable, bringing experience, resources and new perspectives within local communities. However, although the intentions may be good and there is a desire to collaborate, practical obstacles such as difficulties in obtaining funding or discrepancies in priorities and objectives can prevent the realization of concrete projects. It is important that all parties involved make efforts to overcome these obstacles and turn collaborations into tangible and sustainable projects. Transparent communication, mutual understanding and ongoing engagement can play a crucial role in facilitating productive collaborations and maximizing positive impact on vulnerable communities.

*"And we have collaborated here before, at the level of a larger city, of a municipality. It's an association ASOC, let's call them, and they deal with vulnerable groups. There was collaboration with them, but it did not materialize through a project (from outside the territory)." (FG1, R3, M).*

Situations were also reported in which the GAL teams faced a barrier put up by those with whom they wanted to collaborate. In the specific context mentioned, difficulties were encountered in establishing partnerships with groups that managed projects for vulnerable communities, within the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU). Even if there were clear needs and vulnerable groups in the territory that would have benefited from these projects, communication with these entities also proved to be impossible, with "closed doors". This highlights the lack of openness and cooperation on the part of organizations or interest groups, which could have contributed to solving social problems in the community. Such obstacles to collaboration can hinder the effective implementation of projects and affect the desired results in terms of development and improvement of living conditions for vulnerable groups. It is essential to identify these barriers and try solutions to overcome the obstacles and facilitate collaboration between all actors involved in promoting the social and economic well-being of communities.

*"There were also those projects on POCU for vulnerable communities. We really tried to have a collaboration with you because they were vulnerable groups from our territory. It was impossible to talk. So there were some closed doors." (FG2, R2, M).*

The lack of consistency among NGOs, their lack of preparation to function as long-term institutions, as well as the absence of specific programs or activities, in short, obstacles to balanced social development, represent another issue raised in this theme.

So, it is emphasized that Local Action Groups (LAGs) have produced effects and are actively involved in the community, but collaboration with all the factors involved is essential to achieve common goals. So, due to the existing difficulties in this regard, as well as in the absence of the desired results, it is considered to abandon certain efforts, as well as to reorient the financial allocation.

*"NGOs are not prepared to function as an institution for a long period of time. For various reasons [...] Punctual on activities, on certain projects, there are not even programs. It does not seem natural for us, the LAGs, to touch this component. Because we have a balanced social development to do. The gals are active and have produced some effects, they haven't hit the market since yesterday. I believe that in any relationship the interest of society should prevail and, in this context, all involved and interested factors should somehow be willing to collaborate, regardless of who takes the first step. Unfortunately, things don't go the way we wanted. We'll try one more financial allocation, and if things don't work out, we'll probably give up."* (FG2, R1, F).

An example of a successful project with significant impact in the community is the project carried out by the local UAT, with Radio-Prăjeni LAG as partners. Its main objective was to provide integrated social services for 250 people. The association focused on seniors in rural communities, the school offered after-school services and trips for students, and the LAG supported entrepreneurship by financing small rural businesses. Also, the project included the professionalization of people from the countryside through guard courses. Running for 2 years, the project was extended by an additional 6 months for certain components and had a significant impact in the community. The elderly also received furniture for their homes, and social activities such as thematic meetings, hot meals and material support were greatly appreciated. Such services are essential in rural areas and bring significant benefits to the respective community.

*"it was not an easy project, because it is not easy to work with vulnerable people in many ways, but it was a great benefit in the community."* (FG3, R8, M).

The difficulties encountered in accessing the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU) for the operationalization of the social infrastructure have significant consequences for one of the organizations. In the absence of such funding, the responsibility for ensuring the functionality of the infrastructure rests entirely with the non-governmental organization (NGO). This means that the NGO must find other sources of funding or bear the costs of building and maintaining the infrastructure needed for the project. For example, the NGO may have to allocate financial resources for the payment of utilities or for the provision of the necessary personnel to operate and administer the social infrastructure. This implies additional pressure on the financial and human resources of the organization, as well as more rigorous management of these resources to ensure the smooth running of the project.

In addition, the lack of POCU funding can affect the effectiveness and sustainability of the project in the long term, as NGOs have to find alternative ways of funding or take on additional operational costs. Thus, failure to access POCU can put considerable pressure on the organization's ability to deliver quality services and support the needs of the vulnerable community effectively and sustainably.

*"As a social project, we also encounter problems in addition to depopulation and the aging population. In this sense, we had the initiative to make day centers by measure of social infrastructure. So we have a beneficiary who has signed a financing contract, is at the last request for payment, is about to be licensed. The only problem is that he has not been able to access through the POC to operationalize the infrastructure and it will fall to him to keep the day center operational after he finishes the payment request."* (FG1, R5, M).

Even in the absence of accessing POCU funding, organizations find alternatives to support their projects and meet their proposed objectives. They are turning their attention to identifying other available sources of funding. Although some projects were financed exclusively through the LAG, they are already starting to generate positive results. The lack of access to POCU funding does not discourage the efforts of organizations, but on the contrary, leads them to explore other funding opportunities in the future.

A relevant example is the project for the multifunctional center, which was designed to support and integrate people in vulnerable situations. This project was not limited only to children with disabilities or those of Roma ethnicity, but also considered mothers in difficult situations, such as divorce or abortion. Also, direct beneficiaries of the project included family members of people with disabilities or those affected by drug use.

These initiatives were designed to address the various aspects of social marginalization and to provide the necessary support to a wide spectrum of beneficiaries. The interest in the continuation of these projects remains high, and the organizations are determined to continue efforts towards ensuring the support and inclusion of these vulnerable categories in the community. Therefore, funding alternatives are being considered and plans are being made to continue these initiatives in future financial allocations.

*"We have several projects. Those that were exclusively financed through the LAG are already generating results. Even if the POCU funding was not accessed, this does not mean that another funding will not be taken into account in the future, and the objectives are intended to support and integrate people in*

*various vulnerable situations. For example, the project for the multifunctional center was not addressed only to children with disabilities, only to children of Roma ethnicity, it also targeted mothers in situations of divorce or abortion. Direct beneficiaries of the project were considered including those who are disabled or drug users. It is again a topic that has aroused interest and interested us recently. Consider that these things have been thought of as direct beneficiaries and indicators to be achieved in a social infrastructure project, as I mentioned, as far back as 2018, and the interest is still there. That we are talking about children with parents who have gone abroad, that we are talking about children from single-parent families or any other category identified at the territorial level in a situation of marginalization, are beneficiaries within such projects, and we take into account that these things be continued on the next financial allocation."* (FG2, R1, F).

The representatives of the organizations also highlighted the importance of using transition funds for project implementation. A relevant example is the project financed under the strategy, which allowed the construction of a day care center. The allocation of transitional funds allowed the support of future activities and the obtaining of licensing for the social service provided in this center. Moreover, funds were allocated for the energy efficiency of the center, underlining the intention to continue investments to improve the infrastructure and services offered.

*"And here, a project, the HARD project, was financed through the strategy, the construction of the day center. The activities will be supported, there will be licensing for social service in that day center in the near future and on transition funds. Funds were also allocated to us for the energy efficiency of the center. So we will also have money for another project submitted for the center from the transition funds."* (FG1, R3, M).

Also of note is the decision to allocate transition funds for three other projects soon. This demonstrates a strategic and responsible approach to the management of available resources, ensuring that investments are directed to the priority needs of the community and that the focus is on sustainable development and increasing the quality of life for project beneficiaries. The use of transition funds in this way reflects the organization's commitment and ability to maximize the impact of investments and ensure the continuity and sustainability of the initiatives implemented.

*"We financed a project, from the body of the strategy, we had money for a single project. From the transition money we allocated money for 3 more projects, we just left the call and instead we financed the first POCU. So two projects so far and three more in the near future."* (FG1, R1, F).

The mention of AFIR funds in the context of project financing highlights the diversity of funding sources sought and used for community development. AFIR (Agency for the Financing of Rural Investments) represents an important source of financing for projects aimed at rural development, especially in areas such as agriculture, rural infrastructure and economic diversification.

*"Theoretically, from what was predicted in our strategy as an objective, it was achieved. We had allocated 40,600 euros to the social area for two projects. The two projects were submitted in two rounds of funding and were funded. Everything was ok, they were completed at least on the AFIR side."* (FG4, R1, M).

In the case of Confluence Moldave LAG, AFIR funds seem to be one of the main sources of funding accessed, especially for projects related to rural and agricultural development. This may indicate a specific orientation of local development strategies towards the needs and economic potential of the rural area.

The mention of the fact that, apart from the AFIR funds, no other funding lines, such as POCU, were accessed, suggests that the process of accessing European funds within the Moldavian Confluence LAG is still under development or that priorities have been more focused much on the funds available through AFIR. However, this observation may provide an opportunity to diversify funding sources and explore other available European programs and funds, which could complement and expand the LAG's project portfolio.

*"Unfortunately, GAL Confluence Moldave, apart from AFIR funds and the AFIR line, we did not access other financing lines, such as POCU or ... that is the only one from us at AFIR and they are the specific objectives of AFIR."* (FG3, R2, F).

The implementation of social projects involves a considerable volume of documentation, which adds an additional level of difficulty to the implementation process. This aspect related to the large volume of documents that is necessary to ensure compliance with legal requirements and to justify each stage of the use of funds, is one of the challenges that LAG associations face. Unfortunately, this aspect can sometimes become difficult, as the need to prepare and present a large number of documents can consume significant resources of time and energy.

Therefore, in this section, valuable recommendations from the respondents were provided, highlighting both the weaknesses of the current process and suggestions for improvement. One of the reported problems was related to the large volume of documents required in the implementation of social

projects. The implementation of these projects often involves complex bureaucracy and the need to prepare and present a large amount of documents can be a challenge for organizations.

*"Plus, the enormous volume of documents needed to implement social projects. From some money that does not materialize in a physical investment, the implementation is a bit difficult in the sense that you need a lot of supporting documents for the travel of that money. And even if the experts find that there is a need in the territory, the work was done according to the documents, but they additionally ask for other justifications and other documents that, I don't know if instead of doing something useful in that time, we have to sit and think about a document through to demonstrate the activities."* (FG3, R1, M).

Achievements are the backbone of any LAG association, as they not only validate the efforts made, but also fuel the teams' motivation to continue their valuable work. When members see that their projects have a significant impact on the community, that they bring tangible change and that they are valued by its residents, they feel encouraged to move forward. These successes become sources of inspiration and encouragement, turning obstacles into challenges to overcome and fueling their ambition to successfully achieve their proposed goals.

In most cases, successes represented completed projects that had a significant impact and generated positive effects at the community level. These projects were the turning points that brought tangible and beneficial changes in people's lives. For example, upgrading local infrastructure, implementing educational programs or organizing community events were initiatives that brought a sense of unity and progress to the community. Such successes not only improve the quality of life of residents, but also strengthen community spirit and confidence in the ability to make positive changes.

The perspective expressed by one of the respondents brings into discussion an interesting view on the value of projects financed by European funds. For him, the importance of a project is not only determined by its scale or complexity, but also by the fact that any project implemented with the support of these European funds represents in itself a valuable success. Moreover, once the project is won and materialized into tangible achievements, its level of success increases significantly. This perspective emphasizes the importance of European funding in stimulating the development of communities and in achieving the established objectives.

*"[...] I would like to say that the fact that you have implemented a project through European funds, whether small or large, is already a success. I no longer say the fact that you won it, that there was also a need for involvement and that's why I would take it as a success. The fact that I have implemented it, again increases the area of success."* (FG3, R9, F).

One of the notable achievements mentioned by the dialogue participants is the financing of the kitchen modernization of a children's center, an essential contribution that had a significant impact on the development of the community. The moment when the members of the GAL association could taste the dishes cooked in that modernized kitchen brought an additional source of motivation. This strengthened the association's team, demonstrating to them that their sustained work and active involvement in projects bring tangible results and improve the quality of life in their community, in turn benefiting from the results of their work.

*"The greatest satisfaction was when I participated with the children from the IANA Foundation. Last year, within the IANA Foundation, there are two centers in Nicolae Bălcescu's town together with the children, the second center was inaugurated and where I saw, together with the Prince of Liechtenstein, who has an important contribution, the sign on which was written GAL Confluente Moldave a sponsored with 82,000 euros the kitchen. The moment we were served with products from that kitchen, we also felt a sense of pride that we were able to make a small contribution to the development of the community."* (FG2, R2, M).

The inauguration of sports bases or multifunctional fields is another remarkable success assumed by the associations, because they bring multiple benefits to the community. These facilities offer residents the opportunity to enjoy recreational spaces and practice various sports activities, thus contributing to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, these places become meeting and socializing centers for people in the community, giving them a chance to interact and engage in collective activities.

Through these initiatives, people feel part of the community, regardless of their differences, and strong bonds are formed between its members, thus strengthening social cohesion and a sense of belonging.

*"Now we await with interest the inauguration of the sports base or the multifunctional field. We hope with God's help this fall to inaugurate and be there with the children and participate in a mini-football match. These would be the satisfactions."* (FG2, R2, M).

The beneficiaries declared themselves very satisfied with the collaboration they had with the LAG associations and appreciated the support they received from their members.

*"As a beneficiary, we are watching the next stage, but we are happy with how this stage has gone. For us it was the first project to put on. After we tried a start-up, there we realized that four employees were needed. We only put three, we didn't succeed. We hope the new program will be just as accessible. I have no recommendations to make. We were satisfied with the advice of the GAL, with their guidance."* (FG3, R3, F).

Another significant achievement highlighted is given by the fact that the associations were able to promote their cause effectively, being present at various cultural and social events. Here, they had the opportunity to present their activities, concerns and projects to the wider community, thus helping to increase people's awareness and involvement in their initiatives.

The organization of public meetings and various cultural events is a vital aspect in community involvement and the promotion of local traditions. Most of the Local Action Groups (LAGs) I interacted with had the opportunity to either organize public meetings or organize various events such as local fairs and festivals. Although financial resources were limited for such initiatives in some communities they managed to organize successful events, representative of local traditions and folklore.

In this regard, a festival was exemplified that attracted an impressive number of participants, over 17,000 people, and had a positive impact on the promotion of local culture. With displays of folk motifs, traditional costumes and local folklore performances, an authentic experience was provided to those who attended, attracting visitors from outside the area as well. Through these events, the organizers strove to promote and preserve local traditions, thus contributing to their understanding and appreciation by a wider audience.

*"We, like the LAG, have organized meetings several times, public meetings, meetings for various other actions, such as fairs. We had public meetings in every commune, at least one. [...] We have here, in the Gurghiului Valley, a festival of the Gurghiului Valley, at which I am also the president of this association. I was also the festival organizer for the last two years. It was quite a successful festival with over 17,000 people in attendance. First of all, this festival is not a party, like in other places. Everything is tradition, local folklore, popular wear. That's what it all boils down to, besides the fact that each town hall, a partner in this association, has an allegorical house there, where popular motifs from the past, popular costumes and old things that have been used in households over the years are displayed, we also have a local vocal group, each presenting a 15-20 minute show. So a nice thing to know that a lot of people come from other parts, who have nothing in common with our area. We try to promote our local traditions and folklore."* (FG4, R1, M).

However, respondents claimed that they also encountered difficulties. One of the main challenges mentioned is related to the insufficiency of material funds intended for LAGs. The amount allocated to these organizations is considered insufficient considering the needs that are imposed at the level of certain territories. Although LAGs make considerable efforts to implement projects and initiatives beneficial to communities, financial limitations sometimes prevent them from fully achieving their goals. Participants stress the importance of more substantial funding to be able to effectively address the issues and support the sustainable development of local communities. It is expected that action will be taken in this regard in the future.

*"The dissatisfactions would be that the money for the LAGs is quite small and that the funding should be a bit higher. We are waiting for the funds on FSE Plus and we will see how we will write the strategy."* (FG2, R2, M).

Not only do the representatives of the LAGs believe that the funds are insufficient, the beneficiaries of the projects have the same perspective, so the funding for the Local Action Groups (LAGs) is also considered low by the participants. They suggest that an increase in funding would be beneficial, given the experience and confidence the associations have gained in project management. It also emphasizes the importance of simplifying administrative procedures to make the project management process more efficient and accessible.

*"The funding at the GAL, as a colleague said before, is quite small. If it were bigger, it wouldn't hurt because the GAL already, these associations, are not from yesterday and today. For example, GAL Podul Inalt, for some time. So it already has many projects won, at least the GAL Podul Inalt really has many projects won. At one point I knew it was somewhere in the 2nd place in the country. So there are many of us who have gained some trust, we are in a feeling with them and we interact easily. We could handle bigger, more serious projects, it wouldn't hurt and if the procedure were simplified a bit, that would be the icing on the cake."* (FG3, R9, F).

Human resources are a major challenge in general, underscoring the idea that the professionalization of staff is extremely important for the success of the organization. This is achieved over time by ensuring continuity and rewarding employees appropriately. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of offering competitive wages to attract and retain qualified employees.

*"[...] the human resource is a big challenge, it is very important to professionalize the staff we work with and this is only done over time, through continuity and through funding. If you have good wages, good people will come. At least he will come."* (FG3, R10, M).

The highlighted problem is not only perceived by the representatives of the LAG associations, but also by the project beneficiaries who received support from these associations to start their own businesses. However, they face difficulties in recruiting staff and barriers in people conception.

#### Perspectives

It is encouraging to note that, even if not all organizations have submitted and implemented projects on the social component, they have shown their interest and openness to also focus on social measures in future strategies. This indicates an evolution in thinking and adaptation to the needs and demands of changing communities. By addressing social issues, these organizations can contribute to increasing the quality of life in their communities and strengthening social cohesion. In this sense, these initiatives are expected, which should be followed by concrete actions that bring tangible benefits to community members.

*"We have every interest to catch in the future strategies and ... social measures."* (FG2, R2, M).

The recommendation is to ensure the continuation of the financing of the social infrastructures that have already been built, using other European or governmental funding sources to keep them active and functional, considering the existing financial limits in the rural environment.

Since financial resources are reduced in rural areas, it is necessary to explore other sources of financing, such as European or government funds, to ensure the functioning of social infrastructures. Given that these infrastructures were financed through the National Rural Development Program (PNDR), an option would be to continue their financing through the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU). This continuity of funding would allow these infrastructures to continue to provide services and benefits to the community.

The possibility of accessing Norwegian funds to support the association's projects should also be explored. It is important to document and understand the procedures for accessing these funds in order to identify the optimal solutions for the organization's needs.

*"in rural areas, due to low financial resources, the only possibility is other European or government funds for operation. I think that, considering that social infrastructures were financed by AFIR, the solution would be a continuity of the POCU project for the further operation of these social infrastructures, the construction of which was financed by FADR. That would be a recommendation, to finance what has already been built and established. We are not familiar with Norwegian funds. I don't know if Norwegian funds are a solution for our association. We are going to investigate."* (FG3, R10, M).

The feedback received from a beneficiary underlines the fact that the project implementation process can neither be described as difficult nor as easy, but involvement is essential to overcome this stage. However, the beneficiary suggests that the procedure could be simplified, as it is currently considered a bit cumbersome.

The beneficiary notes that implementing a project and submitting the necessary documents are not impossible but require considerable effort and continuous dedication. However, he believes the procedure is too complicated and could be streamlined to make the process easier for everyone involved. A simplification of the procedure would be welcome and would significantly improve the experience of the beneficiaries in the running of the projects.

This simplification of administrative procedures could reduce administrative burdens and make the process more accessible and manageable for all involved. In this way, the participation of more community members and their involvement in projects can be further encouraged, but at the same time, a more efficient use of available resources can be ensured.

*"As a project to be implemented, as a way to submit documents, it is neither difficult nor easy. All in all, it all gets done in the end if you put in the effort. But, the procedure is rather cumbersome, it could be simplified a bit. A simplification would be welcome, indeed welcome."* (FG3, R9, F).

A pertinent recommendation comes from a beneficiary who encountered considerable bureaucratic difficulties. According to his experience, the situation would improve significantly by implementing a digitized system that would simplify the process and save time resources. More precisely, the beneficiary suggests that it would be ideal to be able to send the documents in digital format, thus avoiding the need to make repeated trips to institutions such as the town hall to obtain and submit the necessary documents.

*"This digitization should make the documents as digital as possible Without going to the town hall seven times for a role certificate."* (FG3, R6, F).

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis carried out in this study highlights the crucial role of collaboration between organizations in the territories of Local Action Groups (LAG) and entities dedicated to supporting vulnerable groups, especially Roma communities, in the implementation process of the Local Development Strategy (SDL). The results obtained underline the complexity and potential of these partnerships, demonstrating that effective collaboration can lead to successful initiatives in health, education, employment and social inclusion. However, the lack of adequate representation and collaboration in certain LAG territories was identified as a major challenge, suggesting the need for proactive measures to involve organizations representing the interests of these groups.

In regions where collaboration is active, projects funded by LAGs have demonstrated a significant positive impact on social inclusion, providing improved access to essential services and economic opportunities. However, the study also identifies important limitations, such as lack of financial resources and inconsistency of data, which affect the effective implementation of projects. These challenges underscore the need for more rigorous strategic planning, more effective communication and a clear alignment of priorities between LAGs and their partners.

In terms of funding, the diversity of sources used reflects the complexity of the social funding landscape, but also the ingenuity of organizations in using available resources. Successful projects demonstrate a comprehensive approach, integrating both infrastructure and social services, which has significantly contributed to the development of communities. Collaborations with schools, associations and other local entities have expanded the range of services offered to beneficiaries, although challenges related to accessing funding, maintaining sustainability and navigating administrative complexities remain, indicating the need for innovative strategies.

The study demonstrates that LAGs have a strong positive impact on vulnerable groups, by promoting inclusion and social cohesion, supporting sustainable development, and improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups. However, the results of LAGs can be limited by financial, bureaucratic and logistical constraints that need to be addressed. Based on the analysis carried out, we recommend simplifying administrative procedures, diversifying funding sources by adopting a multi-fund approach and stimulating the involvement of young people in the local development process. By adopting coordinated and innovative strategies, LAGs can continue to make a significant contribution to creating more inclusive and resilient communities.

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## CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE STRATEGIES IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS OF PRE-UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** *Management and crisis handling within educational institutions are fundamental to ensuring a safe and functional environment for the learning process. Crises in this context can vary in complexity, encompassing threats to institutional security or public emergencies such as pandemics or natural disasters. Regarding preparedness, educational institutions should develop crisis management plans that address a wide range of potential scenarios. These plans should be designed in accordance with best practices in crisis management and integrated into a broader institutional administrative framework. Effective communication is a key component in managing educational crises. It is essential to establish well-defined communication channels, both internally, among staff and students, and externally, with parents and the local community.*

**Keywords:** management, educational crisis, school conduct, behavioral disorders, school counselor

### 1. Introduction

The mechanisms for anticipating, defining, managing, and resolving a crisis situation involve considerable effort, requiring well-defined yet cautious intervention strategies, as well as an increased consumption of mental and physical energy, all of which can have unpredictable consequences on the psychological balance of those involved. A crisis can cause significant trauma, as it tends to affect related elements that initially may appear unaffected by the situation that triggered it.

The escalation of a crisis is often amplified by inadequate interventions or even by the lack of intervention from teaching staff, who may lack the necessary managerial skills to manage such situations effectively. Typically, a crisis is recognized only at critical moments, despite the presence of early warning signs, which significantly limits the chances of a quick and efficient resolution.

In summary, the characteristics of a crisis include a sudden onset without prior warning, which directly impacts the information system, distorting messages, impeding communication through constant blockages, and disrupting information channels—all of which contribute to a state of generalized confusion. Moreover, a crisis fosters an atmosphere of insecurity and generates states of panic, eliminating the value-based points of reference essential for effective orientation in such situations.

From a managerial perspective, addressing a crisis highlights the novel and unpredictable nature of the situations triggered, which cannot be compared to any stable element within normal conditions, often giving an impression of insolvability. This frequently results in significant difficulty in identifying effective short-term intervention solutions. However, the most harmful effect of a crisis is the psychological and organizational trauma, as crises can paralyze or even halt the current activities of an organization, disrupting its balance both internally, through confusion and insecurity, and externally, by discrediting the reputation of the staff and the educational framework involved.

In most cases, teaching staff focus their efforts on instructional activities and the teaching process, unintentionally neglecting the complexity of educational situations in terms of attitudes and relationships, thereby inadvertently contributing to the emergence and development of crisis phenomena (for more details see Otovescu, 2012). In examining the factors that encourage the occurrence and progression of educational crises, several unfavorable attitudes and behaviors have been identified, including delayed and insufficiently prompt interventions, isolated and incoherent reactions, lack of long-term strategies, absence of firmness and consistency in assuming responsibilities, as well as a flawed perception of situations, leading to feelings of incompetence and lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, the fear of reprisals from superiors in cases of personal intervention contributes to a state of waiting, with the hope that solutions will be provided externally.

Educational crises can be classified according to several criteria. Based on their temporal development, they can be instantaneous, arising suddenly and without warning, or intermittent, subsiding after interventions but reappearing after a certain period. By relevance, crises can be critical, potentially

leading to the disintegration of the organization, or major, which have significant effects but still allow for organizational recovery. Depending on the number of subjects involved, crises can be individual, group-based, or collective, with a broader scope, affecting the entire educational community.

## **2. The role of the school counselor in educational crisis situations**

The school counselor is a specialist in the field of education, responsible for planning and conducting individual or group counseling activities aimed at helping students adapt to the specific challenges of the school environment. They implement career education programs designed to develop essential competencies within the "Counseling and Guidance" curriculum, organize extracurricular vocational orientation activities, and promote health education programs aimed at developing students' skills to manage a healthy lifestyle (Mitchell and Gysbers, 2018).

The qualification of a school counselor is essential for teachers with degrees in fields such as psychology, educational sciences, or social sciences who seek to specialize in educational counseling and guidance. The specific competencies for this role are developed and strengthened through continuing education programs organized by institutions within the national education system, dedicated to teacher training (Sink and MacDonald, 2020).

The school counselor operates in a safe and controlled environment, whether in the counseling office, the career guidance office, or the classroom, in accordance with the requirements of the role, to address specific school-related issues such as school adaptation, motivation, study habits, absenteeism, academic failure, and dropout (Brown and Trusty, 2005). Additionally, the counselor evaluates students' academic performance, behavior, and development using specific methods and tools tailored to school counseling, identifying family-related issues such as abuse, neglect, or bullying that could impact the student's development and academic performance.

The counselor's activities also include planning and organizing educational counseling sessions, both individual and group, aimed at supporting students and providing crisis intervention for issues such as learning difficulties, school adaptation challenges, or absenteeism. Additionally, the counselor facilitates self-awareness and personal development for students, assisting them in building the skills necessary for making career-related decisions. In this capacity, the counselor examines relevant personal characteristics for vocational guidance and aligns them with available educational and career opportunities, creating vocational profiles and recommending study programs suited to the students' aptitudes and interests (Schmidt, 2014: 39).

In addition to regular activities, the school counselor organizes extracurricular events that provide students with essential information for career decision-making, such as career days, visits to institutions and organizations, or meetings with professionals from various fields. The counselor also develops and implements prevention and intervention programs addressing risk behaviors, such as school violence, substance abuse, and alcohol consumption.

Collaboration with parents, legal guardians, and other education specialists is essential to adapt the school curriculum to students' needs and to address academic, behavioral, or other related issues. In this context, the counselor applies educational counseling principles, methods, and techniques to provide the necessary support for student development. The counselor's theoretical and practical competencies span areas such as counseling and educational therapy, educational sciences, psychology, language and communication, technology usage, and social relationships.

To fulfill their responsibilities, the counselor must demonstrate a high general learning ability, the capacity to process information quickly, and the skill to make rational decisions. The professional interest profile suited to this field is social, investigative, and enterprising (SIE), making it essential for the counselor to exhibit seriousness, diligence, meticulousness in task completion, emotional stability, and strong communication skills (Lambie and Davis, 2007).

## **3. General characteristics of conduct disorders**

Conduct disorder is characterized by a repetitive and persistent pattern of antisocial, aggressive, or defiant behavior that leads to the violation of age-appropriate social norms. This behavioral pattern, being external to the individual, is much more severe than typical child mischief or adolescent rebellion, as it involves a systematic violation of social expectations and extends beyond isolated occurrences of these behaviors. The diagnosis of conduct disorder requires the presence of a stable and continuous pattern of dysfunctional behavior, as antisocial acts or infractions alone are not sufficient criteria for diagnosis (Frick, Ray, Thornton and Kahn, 2014).

According to the classification presented in the DSM-IV (1994), conduct disorders are divided into four major categories. The first category, aggressive conduct, includes behaviors that cause or threaten physical harm to other people or animals, such as bullying, initiating fights, or using weapons capable of causing serious injury. In the second category, non-aggressive conduct includes behaviors that cause material loss or damage, such as deliberate arson or property destruction. The third category refers to deceitfulness and theft, involving behaviors such as breaking and entering, frequent lying to obtain goods, or stealing high-value items without direct confrontation with the victim. The final category, serious rule violations, includes behaviors such as running away from home or frequent truancy before the age of 13 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013: 19).

The typology of conduct disorders, based on the environment in which they manifest, can be divided into several subtypes. Family-limited conduct disorder refers to aggressive and antisocial behaviors that occur only in interactions with family members. Unsocialized conduct disorders are characterized by persistent antisocial and aggressive behavior that significantly impairs relationships with other children. In contrast, socialized conduct disorders involve antisocial or aggressive behaviors among children who are generally well-integrated within their peer group, such as group delinquency or group theft.

Based on the age of onset, conduct disorders can be classified as follows: childhood-onset type and adolescent-onset type. Childhood-onset disorders involve problematic behavior before the age of 10 and are more common in boys, who often exhibit physical aggression and have difficulties with peer relationships. If these disorders persist, individuals may develop antisocial personality disorder. In contrast, adolescent-onset disorders are less characterized by aggression and have a lower impact on interpersonal relationships, with a significantly reduced risk of developing antisocial personality disorder (Moffitt, 2006: 570-598).

The classification of conduct disorders by severity includes three levels: mild, moderate, and severe. Mild conduct disorders are characterized by a low intensity of problematic behaviors that cause minor harm to others. Moderate conduct disorders involve a greater number of problematic behaviors and have a significant impact on those around them. In severe cases, individuals display numerous conduct issues that cause considerable harm to others. Studies suggest that only one-third of conduct disorder cases develop into psychopathy in adulthood, with their progression largely dependent on the age at which the first symptoms appear (Rutter, 2003: 189-509).

#### **4. Factors and causes of conduct disorders**

The factors contributing to the onset of conduct disorders and the manifestation of violence are correlated with variables such as personality traits, genetic predispositions, demographic and environmental factors, as well as situational and nonsocial factors. Personality factors, in particular, provide consistency over time and differentiate individuals from one another. For instance, high self-esteem is frequently associated with aggressive behaviors, especially in individuals with unstable self-esteem, such as narcissists, who become more aggressive when their self-image is threatened (Baumeister, Smart, and Boden, 1996; Bushman, 1998: 30).

Emotional factors also play a significant role in violent behaviors. Individuals with learning difficulties, who have frequently experienced failures, are often dependent on others to meet their needs, which can lead to low self-esteem and a negative self-assessment (Zarkowska and Clements, 1994). Additionally, individuals' beliefs and attitudes influence aggressive behaviors. For instance, beliefs regarding the use of violence as a solution for interpersonal conflicts can lead to a predisposition toward aggressive acts, and in certain social contexts, such as street gangs, respect and fear are prioritized values (Horowitz and Schwartz, 1974, Klein and Maxson, 1989).

In addition to personality and emotional factors, genetic factors highlight differences in aggressive tendencies between genders. Men are more prone to direct acts of aggression, while women more frequently exhibit indirect aggression (Anderson and Bushman, 2002). Gender differences in aggression are present from early childhood and remain stable throughout adolescence (Knight, Fabes and Wilson, 1996). Additionally, biological factors, such as brain dysfunctions or a difficult temperament, can increase the likelihood of a person developing behavioral problems (White, 2001: 139; Anderson and Bushman, 2002).

Regarding familial and social factors, the family environment has a major impact on aggressive behaviors. Individuals who experience parental rejection or inadequate care are at a higher risk of developing behavioral and emotional disorders. Conversely, children who grow up in cohesive and harmonious families are less likely to exhibit such behaviors (Patterson, DeBaryshe and Ramsey, 1989). On a social level, the school environment plays a significant role. Factors such as excessive competition,

an insecure social environment, and tense relationships with teachers can trigger disruptive behaviors, and educators who exhibit emotional instability or excessive rigidity can exacerbate students' problems (Loeber and Farrington, 2001).

Situational factors influence aggression through their effect on cognition and emotions. Direct provocations, such as insults or physical aggression, are among the most common causes of aggressive behaviors (Anderson and Dill, 1995). Additionally, frustration, defined as an obstacle to achieving goals, contributes to increased levels of aggression, especially when another person is perceived as responsible for the failure (Berkowitz, 1989: 29-54). Aversive conditions, such as noise or high temperatures, along with alcohol or drug consumption, can amplify aggressive tendencies (Bushman, 1993: 192).

Cognitive factors, such as difficulties in communication and problem-solving, can influence emotional adaptation and aggressive behavior. These difficulties are common among individuals with learning disabilities, where the interaction of multiple factors leads to the development of behavioral disorders (Dodge, Coie, and Lynam, 2006). Aggression is not determined by a single cause but is the result of complex interactions among physiological, psychological, and situational factors, such as exposure to violence or easy access to weapons (Gutzloe, 2001: 154).

Factors contributing to the manifestation of aggression also include negative peer influences, family tensions, and deficient educational models. A conflicting family environment or prolonged exposure to media that promotes violence can lead to deviant behaviors. Additionally, strained teacher-student relationships and lack of supervision increase the likelihood of developing behavioral disorders (Bandura, 1973: 168). In this context, aggression is the result of complex interactions, and its prevention requires a comprehensive approach focused on education, psychological interventions, and support for the family and social environment (Anderson and Huesmann, 2003).

### **5.Theories and explanatory concepts of conduct disorders and violent behaviors**

One of the greatest challenges schools face is related to conduct disorders and manifestations of violence and aggression—types of behavior that certain personalities often consider necessary for social survival. There are three main theories regarding aggression: one posits that it is innate, following Sigmund Freud's view that people are born with an instinct to be aggressive and violent; another theory sees aggression as a response to frustration; while a third considers aggression to be a learned social behavior (Freud, 1920: 59-64; Dollard et al., 1939; Bandura, 1973: 170).

According to social learning theory, aggressive behavior is not innate but acquired through observing and imitating models in the environment. In this context, a child learns aggressive behaviors when these actions are directly rewarded or when they observe others receiving rewards for aggressive acts (Havârneanu and Şoitu, 2001). This theory, along with other perspectives on aggression, provides a useful framework for understanding and managing this type of behavior.

Among the main modern theories of aggression is the cognitive neoassociation theory, which posits that aggressive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are stored and linked in memory, thereby influencing future reactions (Collins and Loftus, 1975). Similarly, the script theory, formulated by Huesmann (1986: 125-139), suggests that exposure to media violence leads children to learn aggressive scripts that they may later apply in various social situations. Other theories, such as the excitation transfer theory and the social influence theory, emphasize that aggressive behaviors can result from external influences, such as events that provoke physiological arousal or social interactions (Zillmann, 1979: 127, Tedeschi and Felson, 1994).

Regarding personality, Freud (1920: 1-64) believed that people are born with aggressive tendencies that must be managed throughout life. These tendencies are often observed in choleric, impulsive, and volatile personalities, which display distinctive behaviors. Additionally, studies on violence have shown that certain personality traits, such as impulsivity and learning deficiencies, can increase the likelihood of violent behaviors (Anderson and Bushman, 2002). In a similar vein, Horney (1998: 153) described the "aggressive type" as an uninhibited individual who asserts their desires through violent behaviors and imposes their will on others.

Social learning theory emphasizes imitation and modeling, suggesting that children imitate the aggressive behaviors of adults, making aggression a form of learned social behavior. Children who witness acts of violence or participate in such behaviors during childhood are more likely to adopt these behavioral patterns in the future (Bandura, 1973: 122). Additionally, the family environment plays a crucial role in the development of aggressive behaviors. Research indicates that a lack of affection, low parental control, and aggressive behaviors within the family are directly correlated with violent acts in children (Patterson, DeBaryshe and Ramsey, 1989).

Social conditions, such as parents' excessive concern for their children's future, feelings of disappointment with society, or social depression, can lead parents to neglect the emotional needs of their children. These children are often exposed to inappropriate peer groups where they learn and apply violent relationship models (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). To have a significant impact on reducing violence among children and youth, preventive measures must consider a variety of triggering factors, including family and social conditions (Eisenberg et al., 2003).

The family climate plays a crucial role in explaining conduct disorders among children and youth. The family is the primary influence in a child's psychological and psychosocial development, and the atmosphere within the family has a direct impact on the child's behavior. In disorganized families, the lack of parental authority, insufficient control, and lack of affection lead to social maladaptation, with children growing up in a conflict-ridden environment that negatively affects their emotional and moral development (Bowlby, 1988: 89-129). A child raised in such an environment will often respond to aggression and hostility with aggressive or self-destructive behaviors, and accumulated tensions may manifest as sudden outbursts of anger and violence (Patterson et al., 1989).

In contrast, an overly permissive family climate, where parents are excessively protective and invest emotionally in the child to an extreme degree, can lead to antisocial behaviors. This form of upbringing, which shields the child from the "dangers" of society, whether real or imagined, may create low frustration tolerance and lead to deviant behaviors (Baumrind, 1991: 88). On the other hand, attachment theory suggests that a child's healthy development is influenced by the parents' sensitive responses to the child's emotional needs. The absence of such responses can result in insecure attachment and the development of reactive attachment disorder (RAD), which affects the child's ability to form healthy relationships (Hall and Geher, 2003).

In conclusion, aggression is not determined by a single factor but is the result of complex interactions between biological, psychological, and social factors. To reduce aggressive and violent behaviors in children and youth, a comprehensive approach is essential, encompassing educational and psychological interventions as well as strong support from family and the school community (Bandura, 1973: 194, Patterson et al., 1989).

### **6. Conduct disorders in the school environment**

Absence from classes represents an avoidant and defensive behavior, often occurring in situations perceived as challenging, such as tests, conflicts with peers or teachers, or participation in certain activities. The reasons for absenteeism vary depending on the age of the students. For younger children, absence may be associated with "school phobia," a fear related to specific school situations. In contrast, among adolescents, absenteeism may be linked to teachers' attitudes, interpersonal conflicts, and the influence of external peer groups exerting a negative impact, as well as the family's perspective, which may convey the message that academic success is essential for acceptance and love (Parker, 2006: 231).

Theft of insignificant items within the family or school environment can stem from a lack of attention and affection from parents, as well as the absence of acceptance of the child's individuality. Such behaviors may indicate a need to attract attention or fill an emotional void (Jenkins, 2009: 1504-1508).

Vandalism, manifested through aggression toward peers' belongings, reflects low self-esteem, low frustration tolerance, and poor self-control. These behaviors can result from rebellion against the school system or a feeling of maladaptation to the school environment (Farrington, 1993: 381-416).

Aggression manifests in various forms, including verbal aggression (insults), physical aggression (bodily harm), and passive aggression (refusal to participate in activities, oppositional behavior) (Szabo, 2010: 89-107). The causes of aggression are diverse and may include the expression of negative emotions, release of tension, the need to dominate others, imitation of aggressive behaviors observed in the family, media, or peer groups, as well as peer pressure and lack of respect. Additionally, low self-esteem, physical or emotional abuse in childhood, and stress factors within the family environment, such as inconsistent discipline and lack of emotional support, can contribute to these behaviors (Anderson and Bushman, 2002).

An effective psycho-pedagogical intervention involves counseling not only the child but also the family and teachers, aiming to identify the specific factors contributing to the student's emotional and behavioral difficulties and to understand the interactions among these factors. The intervention plan can be structured across several areas, including building a relationship based on trust and respect among parents, children, and teachers; encouraging the child through praise and rewards for desired behaviors; getting to know the child's peer group; providing an appropriate family model; and establishing clear

rules. It is essential to monitor video games and movies accessed by the child and to encourage responsibility by assigning age-appropriate tasks—all of which contribute to the development of a healthy and balanced personality (Berkowitz, 1993: 133, Cummings and Davies, 2002).

### Conclusions

The frequency of conduct disorders varies over time; according to some authors, these disorders are most prevalent between the ages of 14 and 18, after which they tend to decrease. However, when they persist into adulthood, they often take on characteropathic forms that become stable and increasingly display antisocial tendencies.

In most cases, conduct disorders in youth involve a series of changes that evolve from simple to complex. Often, these disorders begin with minor behavioral deviations, such as lying, which signal the development of negative personality traits. Up until puberty and adolescence, such behavior is typically expressed as familial, school, or social maladjustment. From puberty onward, however, it can evolve into antisocial behaviors as a result of undeveloped responsibility, limited self-awareness, and socio-emotional immaturity. Generally, deviant behaviors manifest in stereotypical patterns, highlighting an inability to progress under the influence of education.

In psychological assessments, it is crucial to identify children and adolescents with behavioral and aggressive conduct disorders, as these individuals often display significant difficulties in adapting to and integrating into social and school environments.

The earlier these children are identified and a plan is devised to help them overcome their difficulties, the more effective the intervention will be, allowing the individual to exhibit functional behaviors more quickly. Conversely, if the identification of conduct disorders is delayed, the effectiveness of the intervention is reduced, and the individual becomes more difficult to rehabilitate, with stable and repetitive behavior patterns becoming ingrained in their personality structure.

A more challenging situation arises with children who were not identified as having conduct disorders during childhood or adolescence, with their behaviors being dismissed as mere indulgence (thought to be a temporary phase that would resolve spontaneously). In such cases, psycho-pedagogical intervention has typically not occurred, increasing the risk that these behaviors will become stabilized and/or evolve into antisocial actions.

Aggressive behavior represents a form of conduct disorder that can be extremely difficult to modify, even in childhood; therefore, the success of counseling and intervention relies on the combined efforts and close collaboration between the family, educators, school counselor, and, not least, other specialists in psychotherapy.

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## THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSITIONAL SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** *In this article we are focused on the role of primary and secondary socialization on young people in contemporary society. We started from a few questions, such as: What place do socialization courts occupy or how do they appear in the transition of young people from the communist period to the one immediately after 1989? By what criteria are they ranked? What are the agents of socialization? What impact do social courts have on young people's lives? What are the benefits of primary and secondary socialization on the individual? What factors influence the socialization process? What are the conditions for the efficiency of this process? To what extent has their role changed throughout history? With what repercussions on the person, family or society? To some of these questions, we tried to find answers, relying both on the specialized literature and on the data obtained through qualitative methods, especially interview and observation. The field investigation was carried out in the Municipality of Iași, with the population being specialists who intervene in the educational process, but also beneficiaries of education, students and parents. Following the analysis, we observed that the roles of the family and the school still remain decisive, especially when there is a continuity and complementarity between the two and when they support each. Unlike the communist period, there is a more visible influence of the Church, but also of the mass media, especially the Internet. The latter has a positive role in the conditions in which it is used judiciously.*

**Keywords:** socialization; socialization courts; young people; transitional society; digitization.

### 1. Introduction

The last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century are characterized by important changes in political, economic and social structures (Zamfir, 2018: 103). The transition from a political dictatorship and a centralized economy to democracy and a market economy generated a decrease in the quality of life for part of the country's population.

One of the social categories affected by the social inequalities generated by the transitional society is represented by young people. According to Romanian legislation (law no. 350/2006), young people are represented by citizens between the ages of 14 and 35, who are in the first process of training social and professional skills. Their path to maturity and to the assumption of social responsibilities is difficult, and they need guidance to complete their life plan (Nicoară, 2002:130).

Socialization means the assimilation of values, norms of conduct necessary for the coexistence of a social group. Psychologically, socialization means causing someone to acquire behavioral patterns that allow him to integrate into society (Neculau, 1977: 9). Socialization implies, on the one hand, a simultaneous process of identification and differentiation, and on the other hand, the socialization of the individual is always associated with a process of individualization of the social (Stănculescu, 2002: 66). Thus, becoming sociable means "opening up" to those around you, acquiring collective experience and knowledge.

Socialization involves three forms:

- *primary socialization* takes place during early childhood, during which the child is subject to the influences exerted by the parents, which he internalizes.

- *secondary socialization* takes place by means of learning the norms, the roles that regulate the child's relations with his peers. It is oriented towards affective neutrality, enduring various changes, no longer controlled and limited by the neighborhood.

- *continuous socialization* takes place throughout life, assimilating new roles, values, skills, abilities and life experiences. According to Voinea and Apostu (2008: 54-57), within this form one can distinguish anticipatory socialization (learning the values, beliefs and behaviors of a group to which the



person does not currently belong, but to which he adheres), resocialization (refers to learning a new set of values, beliefs and behaviors that are different from the previous ones).

## 2. What instances of socialization contribute to the formation of the person?

The main instances of socialization in contemporary society are the family, the peer group, the school, the church, the mass media and work, etc. (Bernstein, 1978: 229).

In the qualitative survey carried out in the Municipality of Iași, the socialization courts are ranked by the category of specialists (formed during the communist period) as follows: the family is on the first place, followed by the school (reading), the church, the mass media, the community, sports clubs (including contests, tours carried out in the country and outside it), group of friends, "participation in cultural, artistic and religious activities", "discussions with professors from the university environment" such as and "visiting many places foreign to Romania" that formed a different way of thinking.

The interviewees attribute a decisive place to the family in education by "forming an appropriate behavior with love for work", "transmitting values", offering "rules or responsibilities". Along with father and mother, the specialists also mention other people of the extended family, such as brothers, "elder sister", "two older brothers", grandparents and aunts, "a cousin of the mother whom I consider to be the second mother", which had a decisive role in their socialization.

Numerous researchers are interested in the processes of family socialization achieved through language, considering them not only a "vehicle" of information that circulates between parents and children, but also a carrier of values and attitudes, which determine the general relationship with the world (Stănculescu, 2002: 75). Although families perform common socializing functions, in reality there are numerous differences in the way each family socializes its children, differences that are given by the type of society (traditional or modern), by the socio-professional categories of the parents, by their residence.

The school's influence on the education of some specialists is reduced to "some of the good teachers", "a few teachers", "the well-trained teachers we had that I've had", "the clear rules of the boarding school", "the influence of specialized magazines". Other interviewees mention "many teachers" who succeeded in instilling in them a love for reading and in-depth study, for studying universal literature, for "the history and civilization of some peoples such as the history of the French and German people", provoking their interest in continuing their studies and passion for the profession.

The school has always been, still is and will be an essential institution, highlighted by the importance given to education as a factor in socialization and the formation of human capital, in people's access to high social positions, in social change, and the level of education correlates with the quality of life (Mărgean, 2009: 298). The socialization function of the school can be summarized as the development in individuals of the spirit of employment and the capacities for their future role performances (Parsons, 1977: 122). In this sense, the interviews highlight the following:

"The school doesn't really have a role in education, only to remind students how to behave, education is done by the family, the environment, including the school through the group of students. The teachers are less concerned with the educational issue and more with transmitting knowledge, and I think this is the problem of Romanian education. Education is not something tangible, the school should also educate by personal example, provide good behavior to follow or provide models through the content of the lessons. The role of the school cannot be diminished with the passage of time. The school remains a factor of progress and a factor of the future... The school should be looked at more carefully by the authorities and the teaching staff should be well trained" [teachers, 60 years old, public institution, internal mobility].

*"The school has an informative, formative and support role, following the evolution of both the students and the teaching staff through those semester and annual assessment sheets for assessing the quality of educational services" [teacher, 34 years old, public institution, urban, internal urban mobility],*

*"I notice that the school has a rather limited role. I try to tell my colleagues whenever I have the opportunity not to have reservations in openly discussing the problems faced by the students and not to be rigid. For me, it's not important to get a grade of 10, that is, only to learn, but also to know how to manage in life" [female, 38 years old, teachers, public institution, urban, internal mobility],*

*"The school, first of all, has the role of training, information, socialization and support" [director, 51 years old, private school institution, urban, internal mobility],*

*"There are also families that have no economic potential, have a low level of education where work is not a value, here is the part of the vicious circle. These children have little chance of leaving the educational social zone in which they are. The school should intervene the most where the family cannot provide support to the child who needs it" [teacher, public institution, 47 years old, urban].*

The school must not only instruct, but form, develop attachment to the homeland, favoring economic and social progress (Parsons, 1977: 122). Schools acquire legitimacy to the extent that their objectives are linked to cultural values such as socialization and education. Therefore, the school has both the mission to educate and the mission to contribute to the social well-being of students. This is achieved by deepening the differences within the school institution, shifting the focus of activities from "educational" to "social support" in the case of certain disadvantaged social categories, offering them certain services (Nistor, 2024). Children who come from disadvantaged families have little chance of leaving the educational social zone in which they are. The school should intervene more by asking them in different activities or circles called "Parents' School" or "Parents' Club", capitalizing on this social category.

The first primary group known in human history (outside the family) was the group of neighbors. Joining groups is possible in the presence of certain conditions such as: neighborhood, age, sex, professional group (Neculau, 1977: 11). The position of the family, the strategies and reactions of its members can stimulate or block the child's openings towards similarity groups. The group offers the adolescent not only the framework of free affirmation, but also security, safety, distancing from the ironies of adults and the authority of superiors. The neighborhood can contribute to the establishment of the relationship or intensify it. The surrounding environment plays an essential role in the way of experiencing experiences and in the way of perceiving the other (Gheorghiu, de Saint Martin, 2011: 140).

During the communist period, the behavioral problems of some children were solved through the solidarity of neighborhood networks, within which relatives and work colleagues were preferred. Thus, both in the rural and in the urban environment, the role of the neighborhood in socialization is decisive. In the urban environment, the neighborhood is seen as an educational space close to families, such as "the staircase of the block, in front of the block and behind the block".

"...there were contradictions related to the group of friends in the sense that the parents were careful with which girl or which boy I was talking to" [female, 42 years old, parent, internal mobility]; "...the most obvious contradictions were between the school and the group of friends (negative environment) and between the family and the group of friends because of money and different opinions" [male, 16 years old, student, public institution].

These contradictions are caused by the family's impossibility to see the child's real age, the children's terror caused by their surroundings and, above all, by the desire of some parents to realize their aspirations through their children.

From the survey entitled "Young people and the decision at different levels" (Ilie, 2004: 271), the following conclusions can be drawn: almost 2/3 of young people in Romania are members of certain age groups with whom they meet regularly, a third of them declare that they are part of various associations or organizations. 30% of young people are not present in either formal or informal groups. The informal association is presented to a greater extent among teenagers (approximately 70%) and young people up to 25 years old (more than 2/3) and, to a lesser extent, among those over 25 years (only half of them). The most frequent activities that young people carry out together are parties (more than 1/3 mentioned them among joint activities) and going out to discos or clubs.

Apart from family and school, the Church is also remembered in education through the transmission of moral-religious values: "when I was little, I went with my family to services during the year"; the influence of the spiritual father is frequently remembered, even though it was the communist period. During this period, religious education, in most of the interviewed families, was entrusted to the grandparents.

In the case of 4 interviewed priests, it is highlighted that they did not receive religious education in the family, because their parents were not practitioners, but showed a personal search for God: "My parents were not practitioners, I did not receive a religious education in family, but at home the priest was received on the occasion of religious holidays, there were icons on glass in the house, the Bible was in the library and it was read, even though it was during communism. I met God through a personal approach that a teenager makes and after that I enrolled in the Faculty of Theology" [priest, 39 years old, emigrant in France, stable].

The mass media form the fourth constant environment of the child's life, along with the family environment, the school environment and the group of friends (Cherghit, 1972: 39). Mihai Coman (2007: 24-25) orders the components of the mass media system as follows: according to the medium on which the message is transmitted, print media (books, newspapers and magazines, posters) are distinguished from electronic media (radio, television, computers); according to the method of purchase, the products purchased directly (books, newspapers, magazines, tapes and CDs) are distinguished, those for which an access fee is paid or not (public service television on airwaves, cable television, the Internet); according to the content, information media can be separated from entertainment media and from advertising media; according to the size of the audience that receives these messages, mass media, group media can be identified. However, the unpleasant aspect of the communist period was the censorship for any word that did not agree with the communist ideology.

In the post-December period, the means of information diversified, facilitating access to information and making new forms of communication appear called multimedia - "on-line" systems (from electronic mail or e-mail to the World Wide Web, through which masses of people have access to databanks collected in various sites), teletext/transmission of written texts through television channels, video games and television (Coman, 2007). Although the Internet is the most popular means of information among the forms of multimedia communication, Nichols (2019: 129-141) identifies some disadvantages: it represents one of the causes of challenges to competence, accelerating the destruction of communication between experts and ordinary people, diminishing from people's ability to carry out thorough research, it changes, in a negative sense, "the way we read, we reason", it changes the person's behavior in the sense that he becomes more irritable and unable to hold constructive discussions, unable to distinguish real information from "whatever a search engine shows her"; people are no longer reading in the traditional sense, but "speed scrolling", horizontally, headlines, summary pages, overturning the norms that usually govern face-to-face interactions. At the same time, the above author appreciates that in the technological age, access to information is faster and more frequent than ever, facilitating conversations between people who would otherwise never have met. Also, the interviewed specialists state that the Internet facilitates the communication of emigrant families with their children or with the extended family and with the managers. Students accept online counseling in favor of counseling in the psychotherapist's office.

*"As a head teacher, I observe from a student whose parents are abroad how they manage to control their three minor children, talking to them on messenger or on the phone" [teacher, conductor, 33 years old],*

*"... after the end of the prevention program "Love and responsibility", approx. 15% of the students came to the office for counseling, and the rest chose online counseling because it is easier for them to talk on Messenger or e-mail than face to face" [social worker, female, 37 years old, urban].*

*However, in the education of specialists, the mass media intervened less "inappropriate behaviors in school are the negative influences of the mass media".*

*"We didn't have the internet, we didn't have the multitude of television channels, we didn't have the possibility to travel abroad more easily, and the young people have all these... We had nothing else to do but read and by reading, we created a general culture which, unfortunately, now exists among few young people" [male, director, 42 years old, school institution, urban],*

*"The results of the contests or the projects of the students and teachers are not publicized, but the behavioral deviations of some teaching staff or some students. We have values, but we don't know how to promote them" [fem. 32 years old, teacher, urban environment].*

*The category of students and that of parents rank the instances of socialization as follows: in the first place is the family, followed by the school, then the church, the mass media and the group of friends, actors, models of singers. This category recalls the influence of the family, referring to: "severe grandparents" who wanted perfection and responsibility for the deeds done, family friends, aunts or uncles close to the students' age, guardians.*

*"Until the age of 17, I was part of a group that was violent, showing terribleness in class and when I realized it, I withdrew. I spend my free time either with friends for a beer or reading psychology books. ...If the student receives a good education in the family, he will not be influenced by negative surroundings, practicing immoral acts... I discovered the role of the school only in the 13th grade, because I had many outings with the principals and colleagues. In my case, school has the role of socialization, integration and education" [male, 20 years old, student at a public institution].*

The students believe that "his teachers", "many teachers", "teachers and professors who took care of education" and "the school through the steps I followed" are responsible for updating this socialization role. As for the clothing models, the students choose them from the world of celebrities.

Among the means of information, the most used by students is the Internet. On the one hand, it has a positive role:

"Through the internet I joined a Club and I am vice-president... I organize parties, certain educational shows with young people" [female, 19 years old, student at a public institution],

...it's very difficult for me, especially since my father left us.. The feelings that the father wants to express now on the phone or on Messenger are fake" [female, 12 years old, student, parents emigrating, one in Greece and the other in Italy],

On the other hand, it can also have a negative impact:

"Many of the classmates attach importance to the Internet, not getting involved in school life, watching different movies, not for their age. This can become a danger through films with violent, aggressive scenes, the language used by some of the guests on television is imitated by colleagues at school, even reaching conflicts with teachers or colleagues" [female, 19 years old, student at a public school ],

*"... the internet can become a threat when students take ready-made reports and no longer have the pleasure of reading" [father, 54 years old, higher education, parental family, a boy, urban environment, Romania, parents, secondary school education], "parents must supervise children on the Internet, because there are many sites that disturb the peace of the child" [female, 15 years old, emigrant to France].*

*Two interviewed parents say about their children that, if they did not impose on them, they would not learn; they let themselves be "led by the wave" like a good part of their colleagues, copying reports from the Internet, without reading a book. Other parents have a good perception of the Internet in which they see the professional and social stakes for their children. Internet connection is indeed understood as a means of behaving like a "good parent" by providing the child with all the means necessary for school success (Lelong, Martin, 2004, p. 63). Indeed, contrary to expectations, parents show themselves to be less attentive and concerned with the continuous control of the websites consulted by their children. Very diplomatic parents remain attached to the cult of books and research on paper, and are quite skeptical of encyclopedic research on the Internet.*

Thus, some of them are less liberal than others and adapt more difficult than they think to the practices of the Internet, while others quickly acquire the media practices on the screen (TV, video games).

The digital environment, beneficial because it provides access to information in all fields, helps to perform tasks faster and more efficiently, affects communication, social relations and family ties, also brings the great challenge of addiction and affecting social relations and family ties (Nachi, Messaoud, 2024).

Some students interviewed spend their free time in front of the TV, others watch TV only for news, certain movies and less on the Internet (especially those from rural areas who do not have the possibility of purchasing a computer).

The parents, just like the interviewees from the specialist class, state that, among the television programs, during the communist period, they only liked the entertainment and sports shows.

"... I believe that apart from the school and the family, the spiritual priest and the extended family must also be involved in a child's education" [female, 15 years old, emigrant to France, parental family-deceased father, popular class].

For this category of students, the Church contributes a lot to the education of young people, teaching them how to behave in relation to others and to divinity. "Catholic priests from Iasi are closer to the children who come to church on Saturdays. Within the Church, I get involved in helping children younger than me. I attend different campuses every vacation, the amounts are small for these outings. At every meeting, the animators help us learn a lesson about moral values" [female, 12 years old, student, emigrant parents, one in Greece and the other in Italy].

"The church has an important role in the lives of Christians through their participation in the Holy Liturgy, through the connection with the priest and the religious teacher. Orthodox priests do not hold special services on Sundays as Catholics or Protestants do, but within each Archdiocese of the Orthodox Church, various projects are carried out that benefit needy families" [specialist, female, 37 years old, 14 years old, urban environment] .

The church is present through priests who come to families on the occasion of performing religious services, getting involved in their problems.

*"Priests were present in my family and I felt the role of the priest since childhood" [parent, female, 42 years old, internal mobility]. Therefore, regarding the ranking of socialization institutions by the two categories of interviewees, it is observed that parents with higher education emphasize cultural education, knowledge of foreign languages from an early age, enrolling their children in the Conservatory, sports and artistic clubs; their own children do not have many friends, but "they don't insist either", because they don't know the qualities of their colleagues and they are afraid of joining groups with delinquent behaviors. Students, especially those from popular families, communicate with their parents "certain general aspects", not personal, because their opinions are different in choosing a girlfriend or friends.*

### Conclusions

As in the previous period, during the transition to democracy and the market economy transition towards democracy and market economy, families that can provide a secure affective environment for young people, represent the foundation of the socialization process. Within such families, young people acquire social norms, form their work skills, acquire moral values and social behaviors.

Also another role of parents is to support young people in choosing the school institution suitable to their interests and knowledge and to obtain a professional qualification. Strong emotional bonds established within the family contribute to joining a group of friends with positive influence or prevent risky behaviors (addictions or type or aggressive behaviors).

But, when parents do not offer positive models of education or do not have enough time for children (they are busy with the basic service or go to work outside the borders of the country, etc.), other educational institutions, such as the school or the church, are forced to fulfill the educational functions of the family. Thus, the school social work mission of such institutions helps students to overcome social borders and have access to higher social positions than those of the family of origin.

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## DIGITAL TEACHERS IN DIGITAL SCHOOLS

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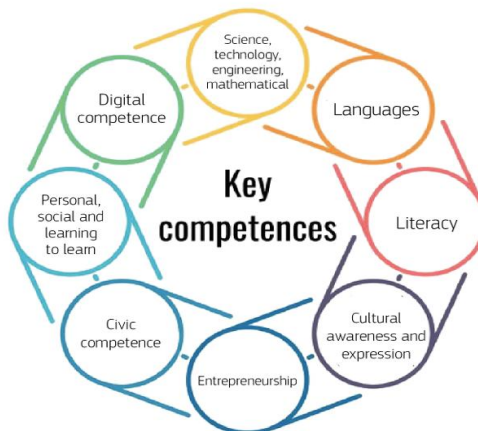
**Abstract:** *Anchoring education and school in society has always been an essential condition for the functioning and relationship between the two. Education has always had to take into account social requirements and adapt to changes. In a technological and digitalized society, there is need of people who are trained for this. As such, schools must also consider the development of digital competences. This study presents the results of a confirmatory research conducted among teachers regarding their training needs in the field of digital pedagogy, as well as a diagnosis of the level of development of teachers' digital competences, based on their self-assessment. The opinion questionnaire that we used was applied, through a Google form, to a number of 3305 teachers of various specializations, who teach in pre-university education schools in the counties of the S-W of Oltenia region. The results obtained after the application of the research tool allowed an analysis of the needs, so that a continuing professional development program in the field of digital pedagogy could be subsequently designed.*

**Keywords:** *Digital competences, New communication technologies, Digital pedagogy, DigCompEdu European framework.*

### 1. Introduction. Conceptual Delimitations

The use of new communication technologies has become inevitable in today's society, in any field of activity (Dubey, Tiwari, 2020; Levano-Francia, Sanchez Diaz, Guillén-Aparicio, 2019). Digital competence is included in the Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, as it can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key competences



Source: Vuorikari, Kluzer, and Punie, 2022: 5

The pandemic period demonstrated that digital technologies are not only useful and necessary, but also indispensable (Perifanou, Economides, 2022).

Several phrases have been used in recent years to describe digital skills and competences. Bashkireva *et al.* (2020: 2) summarizes them: information and communication technology (ICT) skills; technological skills; information technology skills; 21st century skills; information literacy; digital literacy; digital competences.

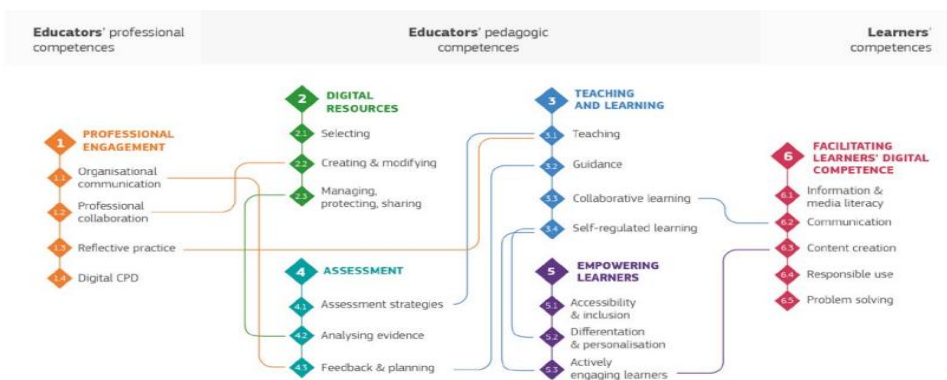
DigCompEdu defines the term "digital resource" as: "any content published in a computer-readable format" (Redecker, 2017, apud Heine, Krepf, König, 2023: 3715).

Digital competence is defined by some authors as “The ability to use digital technologies in a meaningful way for studying, working and for everyday life is called digital competence” (Katare, Saxena, 2018: 342). It represents “a modern concept that describes technology-related skills which include media and communication, information and communications technology (ICT) literacy, technology and computing, and information science” (Lapates, Flores, 2019: 15).

According to Ferrari (2012, apud Salas-Delgado, M.A. *et al.*, 2022: 1), digital competence represents “the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are required when Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and digital media are used to solve problems, manage information, create, and share content and build knowledge”.

The most complex model regarding teachers’ digital competences is the European framework (DigCompEdu), which offers a holistic framework regarding these competences. The complexity of this construct is reflected in the existence of several domains (areas) shown in figure no. 2.

Figure 2: DigCompEdu structure



Source: adapted from Palacios-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2023: 116

According to Katare, D., Saxena, N. K. (2018: 343), we can differentiate two categories of digital competences: for everyday life and for professional activity, each having several levels of development, as it can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Categories of digital competences

Category	Levels	Skills
Digital Skills for All	Adoption	Basic education and literacy; Familiarity with technology devices and services
	Basic Use	Basic understanding of technologies, software, and applications; Knowledge of digital privacy and security
Digital Skills for ICT Professionals	Creative use of Adaptations	Basic computing skills; Familiarity with basic algorithms
	Creation of New Technologies	Sophisticated programming skills; Knowledge of complex algorithms

Source: Katare, Saxena (2018: 343)

These competences contribute to the development of identity, thinking and decision-making skills and values (Milenkova, Keranova, Peicheva, 2020). According to Zaloga and Bryczek-Wróbel (2023), the higher the level of digital skills of the information society, the higher the awareness of threats and the effectiveness in counteracting cybercrime is, which translates into a higher level of social security.

Digital technology must be integrated into all areas of education, teacher training, educational infrastructure, methodology (pedagogy), educational resources and leadership management at all levels

and in all sectors of the education system (Morze, Vasylenko, Gladun, 2018, apud Morze, Smyrnova-Trybulska, Boiko, 2019: 366).

According to De la Calle, Pacheco-Costa, Gómez-Ruiz, Guzmán-Simón (2021), teachers' digital competence must be analyzed in the general context of social sustainability, digital competence being able to ensure access to the pressing issues and aspects of the current society, such as migration, gender equality, etc.

As a facilitator of the learning process, the teacher also supports the development of digital competences of the students and their colleagues (Inamorato dos Santos *et al.*, 2023).

## 2. Research Design

The research we conducted aimed to investigate, among teachers who teach in pre-university education, the level of development of digital competences, as well as training needs in the field of digital pedagogy.

The hypotheses of this research were the following:

1. Knowing the level of development of teachers' digital competences allows shaping a continuing training program, which is able to ensure their development.

2. Identifying the thematic options of teachers facilitates the design of a training program curriculum, appropriate to their training needs.

### *The description of the research instrument*

In order to carry out this analysis, we used a questionnaire-based survey, the instrument being applied through a Google Form. By applying the questionnaire, we aimed to establish the initial level of the teachers' digital competences. The questionnaire also took into account the knowledge of the teachers' training needs in terms of topics of scientific interest. All these aspects were presented in the form of two complex items, which included several sections and subsections. The item regarding the assessment of the level of digital competences was designed in accordance with the European framework of digital competences DigCompEdu, namely the six areas of competence. To assess the level, we used a four-step scale (Advanced, Medium, Basic, Do not have the competence), with respondents having the obligation to select for each competence, one of the mentioned options. The six areas of competence are as follows: 1. **Professional engagement, with the following competencies:** 1.1. Organizational communication; 1.2. Professional collaboration; 1.3. Reflective practices; 1.4. Continuous professional development, using digital technologies; 2. **Digital resources**, the subsumed competences being: 2.1. Selecting digital resources; 2.2. Creating and modifying digital resources; 2.3. Managing, protecting and sharing digital resources; 3. **Teaching and learning**, with the following competences: 3.1. Teaching; 3.2. Guidance; 3.3. Collaborative learning; 3.4. Self-regulated learning; 4. **Assessment:** 4.1. Assessment strategies; 4.2. Analysing evidence; 4.3. Feedback and planning; 5. **Empowering learners**, comprising the competencies: 5.1. Accessibility and inclusion; 5.2. Differentiation and personalization; 5.3. Actively engaging learners; 6. **Facilitating pre-schoolers'/preschoolers'/pupils'/students'/other learners' digital competence:** 6.1. Information and media literacy; 6.2. Digital communication and collaboration; 6.3. Digital content creation; 6.4. Responsible use; 6.5. Problem solving. The item regarding the topics that are in line with the training needs of the teachers included the six thematic areas, each including several topics.<sup>1</sup>

In order to record the opinions of the subjects, we used a scale also consisting of four steps: Not at all; To a small extent; To some extent; To a large extent. We are presenting here the six thematic areas: I. The role of the teachers' digital competences; II. Digital educational resources; III. Teaching, learning and assessment with digital technologies; IV. Digital technologies in education - an overview; V. The potential of technologies for active learning; VI. Digital pedagogy and the challenges of the near future.

### *Data collection procedure*

The questionnaire was applied to all the subjects selected for the sample (3305), via Google Form.

The group of subjects consisted of 3305 teachers, of different specializations, coming from schools in both urban and rural areas, including schools located in disadvantaged areas, in the S-W of Oltenia region.

We should also mention that, although the number of respondents was 3305, it varies from one question to another, due to invalid answers.

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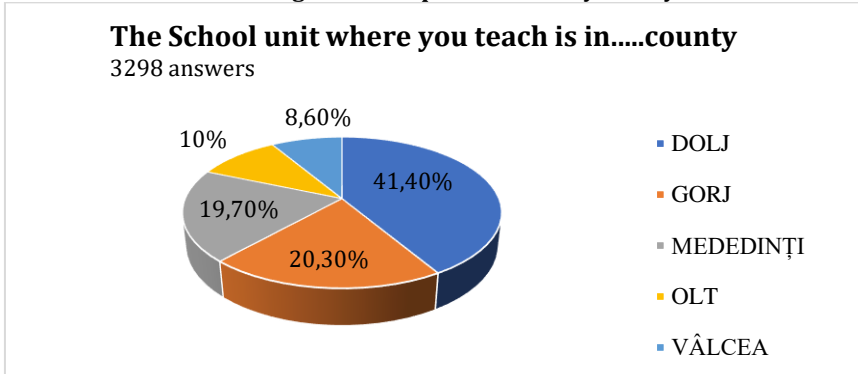
<sup>1</sup> Recommended by *Pedagogie digitală pentru cadrele didactice din învățământul preuniversitar Ghidul solicitantului* (The Applicant Guide *Digital pedagogy for pre-university teachers*), 2024: [https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/\\_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2024/PNRR\\_24/Apel\\_Pedagogie\\_digitala/Lansare\\_apel/Ghid\\_solicitant\\_apel\\_PNRR\\_Pedagogie\\_digitala.pdf](https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2024/PNRR_24/Apel_Pedagogie_digitala/Lansare_apel/Ghid_solicitant_apel_PNRR_Pedagogie_digitala.pdf)



We will now present the target group on which the questionnaire was applied.

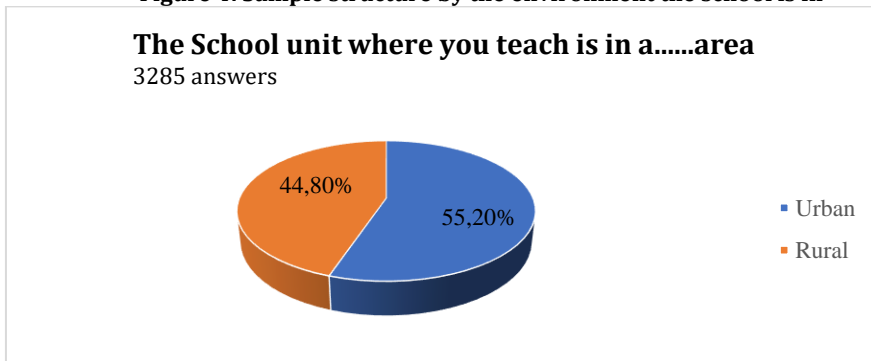
As for the distribution of the sample across the five counties where the questionnaire was applied, as shown in figure 3, over 40% were from Dolj county. Similar percentages are from Gorj (20.3%) and Mehedinți (19.7%) counties. 10% of the subjects are from Olt county, and 8.6% - from Vâlcea county. The difference in percentages is also given by the total number of teachers employed in pre-university education in each of the five counties, knowing that Dolj county clearly stands out from the other counties in this regard.

**Figure 3: Sample structure by county**



55.2% of the teachers teach in urban schools, and 44.8% - teach in rural schools (as shown in figure no. 4).

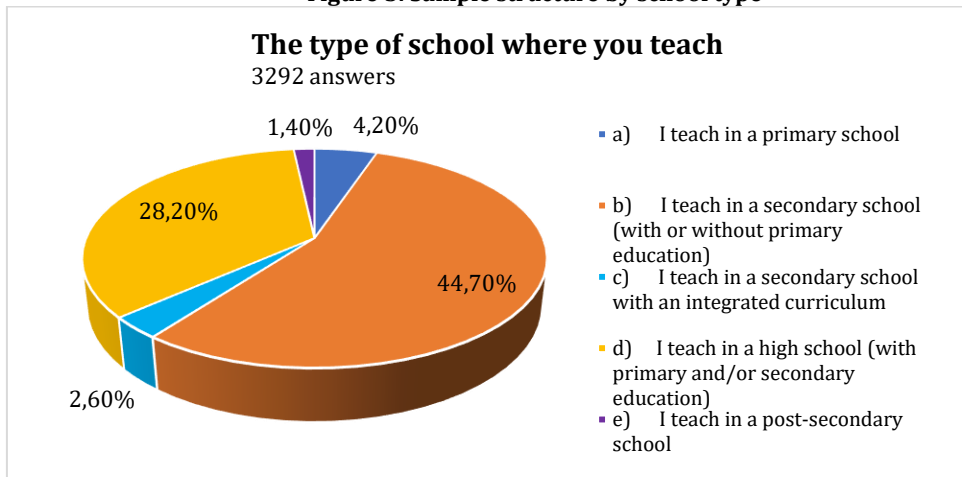
**Figure 4: Sample structure by the environment the school is in**



One of the questions in the questionnaire asked teachers to mention the type of school they teach in, choosing from the options provided or mentioning a different one, if applicable.

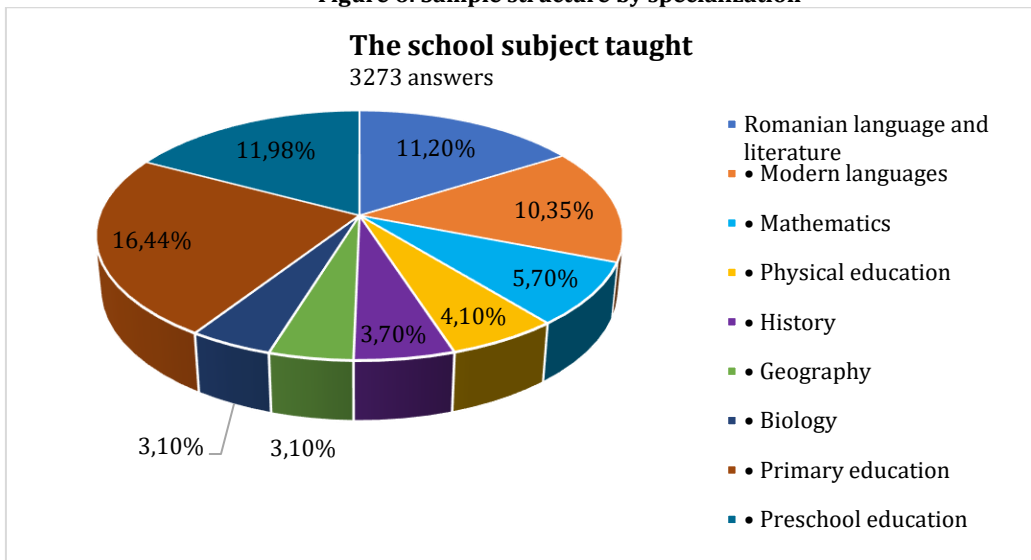
Figure 5 shows the teachers' options, expressed as percentages. We note that 3293 teachers responded to this item, and of these, 18.1% chose another option.

**Figure 5: Sample structure by school type**



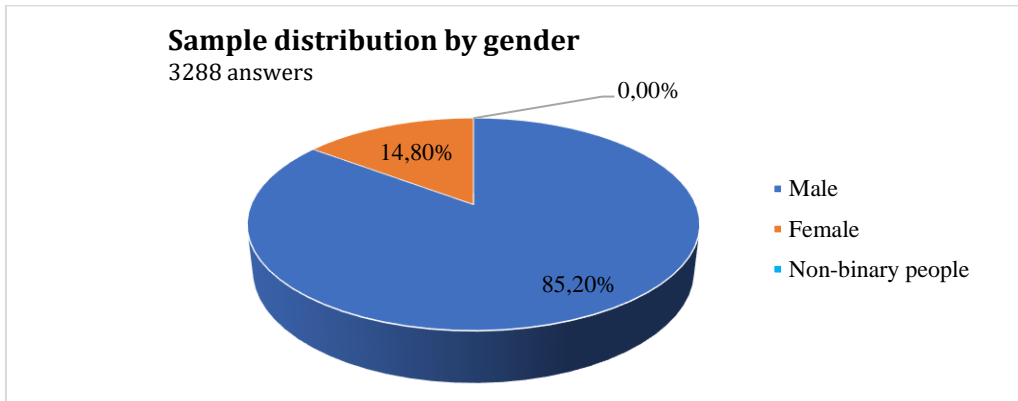
Regarding the subject taught, the teachers' responses covered a wide range of options again. Figure 6 shows the most important percentages.

**Figure 6: Sample structure by specialization**

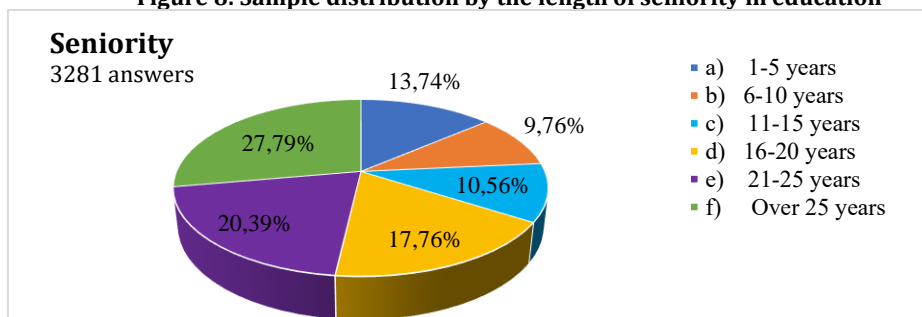


The majority of respondents (85.2%) were female, as it can be seen in figure 7.

**Figure 7: Sample distribution by gender**



**Figure 8: Sample distribution by the length of seniority in education**



As it can be seen in figure 8, almost a third of the subjects have over 25 years of seniority. 20% of them have between 21-25 years, 17.76- between 16 and 20 years.

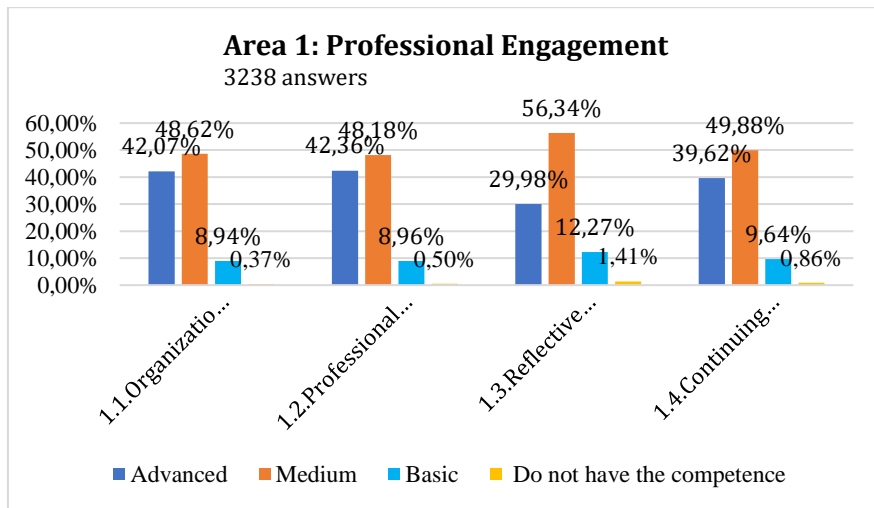
### 3. Results and discussions

As previously mentioned, the questionnaire included questions regarding the self-assessment of the digital competence level of development, in the six areas, according to the European framework and questions regarding the assessment of teachers' training needs, from the topics point of view in the field of digital pedagogy, which are of utmost interest<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>For this category of items, we referred to the thematic recommendations in the *Pedagogie digitală pentru cadrele didactice din învățământul preuniversitar Ghidul solicitantului* (The Applicant Guide *Digital pedagogy for pre-university teachers*), 2024: [https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/\\_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2024/PNRR\\_24/Apel\\_Pedagogie\\_digitala/Lansare\\_apel/Ghid\\_solicitant\\_apel\\_PNRR\\_Pedagogie\\_digitala.pdf](https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2024/PNRR_24/Apel_Pedagogie_digitala/Lansare_apel/Ghid_solicitant_apel_PNRR_Pedagogie_digitala.pdf)

We are first analyzing the teachers' responses to the first category of items. Thus, for **Area 1: Professional Engagement**, the results are presented in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: The subjects' opinion on their own level of digital competence development, corresponding to Area 1, according to DigCompEdu**



As it can be seen, most of the teachers considered that they have an average or advanced level, for all four skills corresponding to Area 1. Competence 1.3. Reflective practices gathered the most responses for the option corresponding to the average level.

Regarding the competences included in Area 2. Digital resources, the results presented in figure 10 indicate the fact that teachers consider that they have an average level of development for each of them.

**Figure 10: The subjects' opinion on their own level of digital competence development, corresponding to Area 2, according to DigCompEdu**

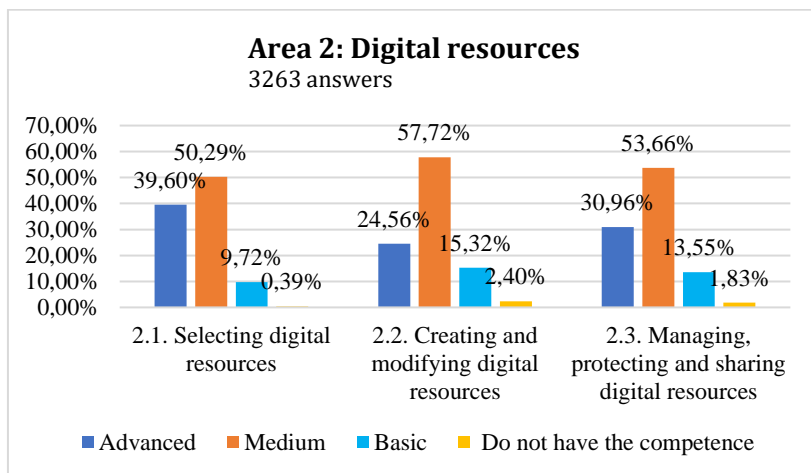
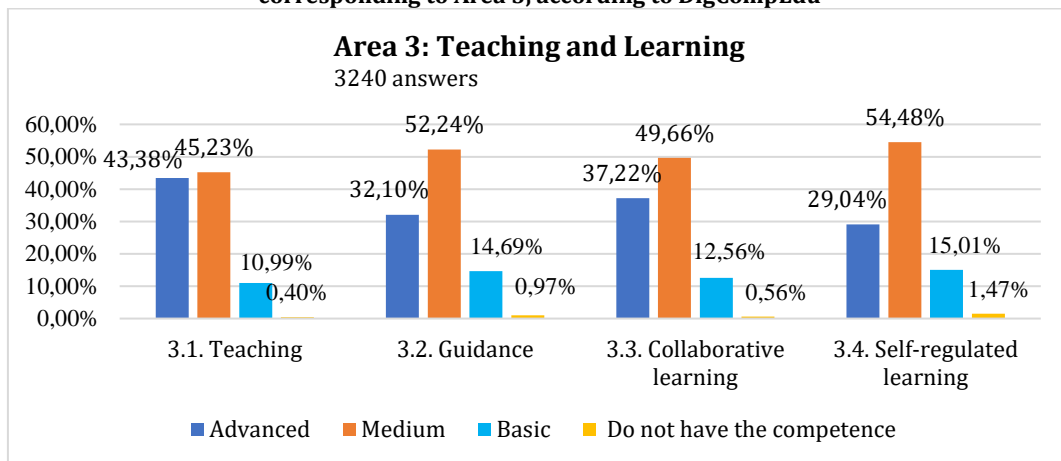


Figure 11 presents the results for the item regarding self-assessment of competences corresponding to area 3. Teaching and Learning.

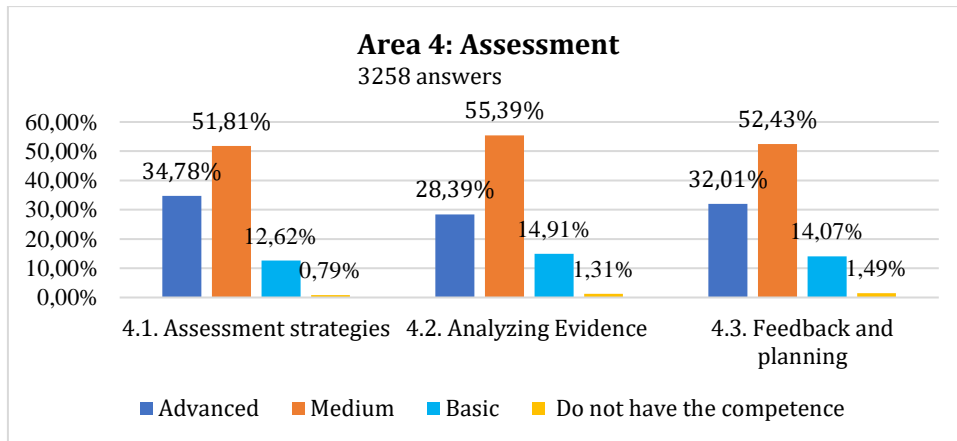
**Figure 11: The subjects' opinion on their own level of digital competence development, corresponding to Area 3, according to DigCompEdu**



Teachers' responses are also distributed primarily on the two previously mentioned options, the highest percentage for the average option being found in competence 3.4. Self-regulated learning.

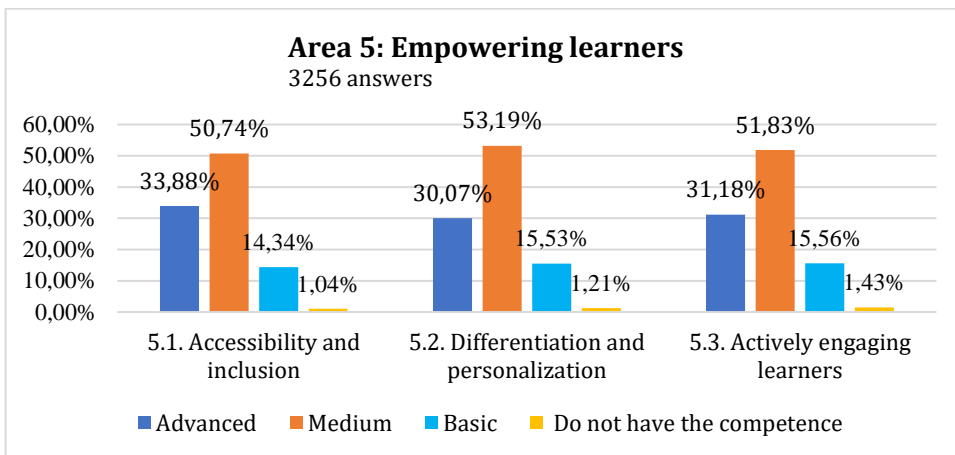
For Area 4. Assessment, for each of the three competences, over 50% - for competences 4.1. (Assessment strategies) and 4.3. (Feedback and planning), respectively, over 55% - for competence 4.2. (Evidence analysis) - of the surveyed teachers chose the option referring to the average level. A very small number of teachers (under 1% or between 1-2%) declared that they do not possess the competence.

**Figure 12: The subjects' opinion on their own level of digital competence development, corresponding to area 4, according to DigCompEdu**



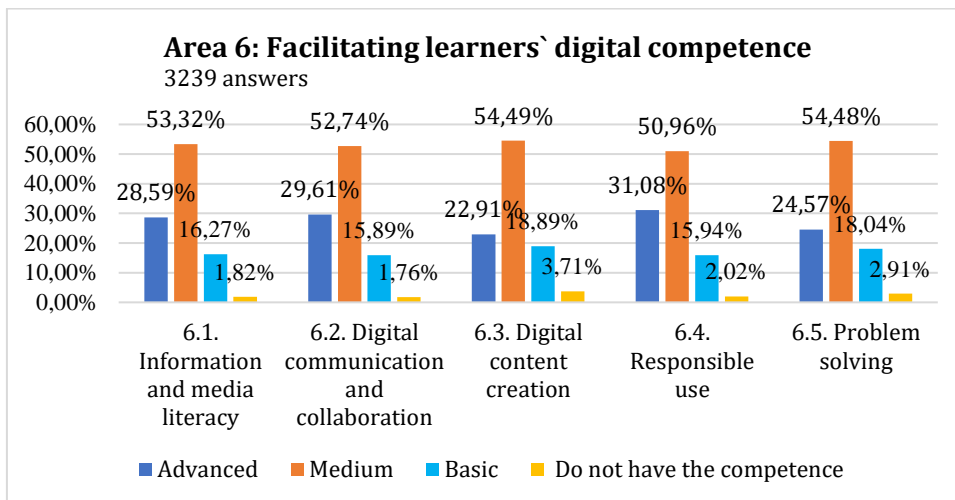
Approximately the same values were recorded after collecting the responses to the item regarding the self-assessment of competences that fall under Area 5. Student involvement. About one third of the respondents consider that they have an advanced level of development of each of the three competences, and over 50% consider that they have an average level. The number of those who have a basic level is around 14-15% (figure 13).

**Figure 13: The subjects' opinion on their own level of digital competence development, corresponding to Area 5, according to DigCompEdu**



Graph 14 presents the results of the item on self-assessment of competences for area 6 of competences, according to DigCompEdu.

**Figure 14: The subjects' opinion on their own level of digital competence development, corresponding to Area 6, according to DigCompEdu**

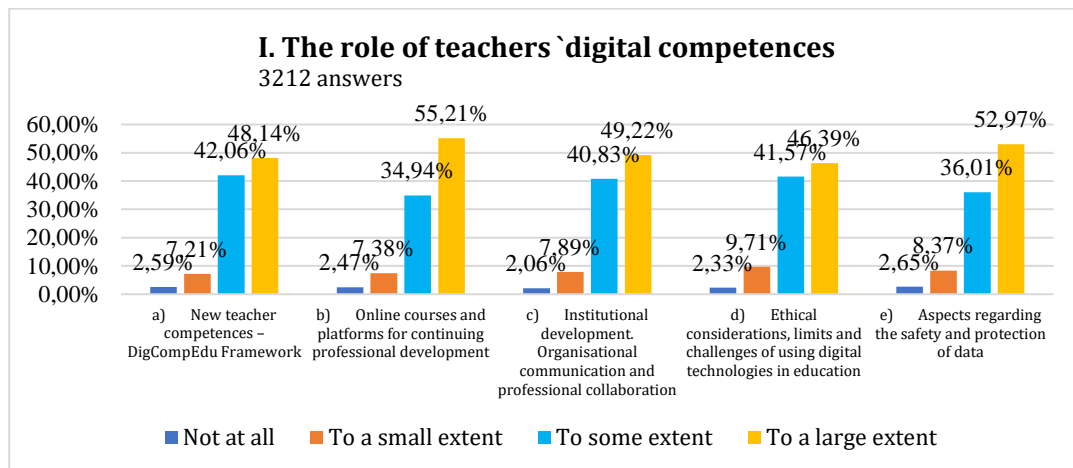


For each of the five competences in this domain, over 50% of the teachers assessed themselves as having an average level. Unlike the other domains, in this case, the number of teachers who declared that they did not possess the competence, increased (3.71% - for competence 6.3., 2.91% - for competence 6.5., respectively 2.02% - for 6.4.).

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to know the teachers' interest in the proposed topics in the field of digital pedagogy. We structured the topics into six thematic domains, corresponding to the 6 competence domains, according to DigCompEdu.

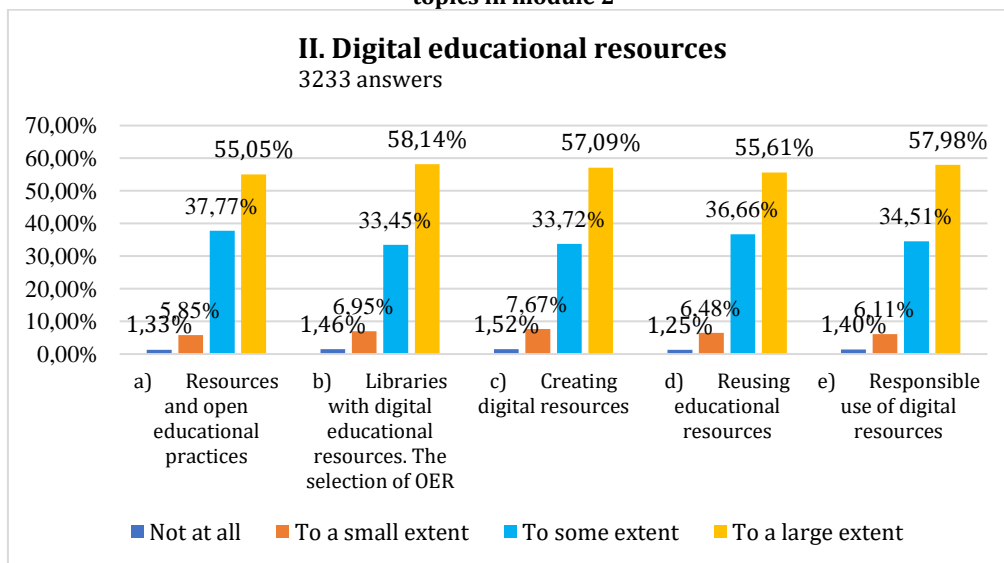
Thus, for the first thematic area, entitled The role of teachers' digital competences, almost half of the subjects surveyed declared that the sub-themes in this thematic structure are of great interest. Also, a significant percentage of the teachers declared that they are very interested in these topics (figure 15).

**Figure 15: The subjects' opinion on the usefulness of digital competence development topics in module 1**



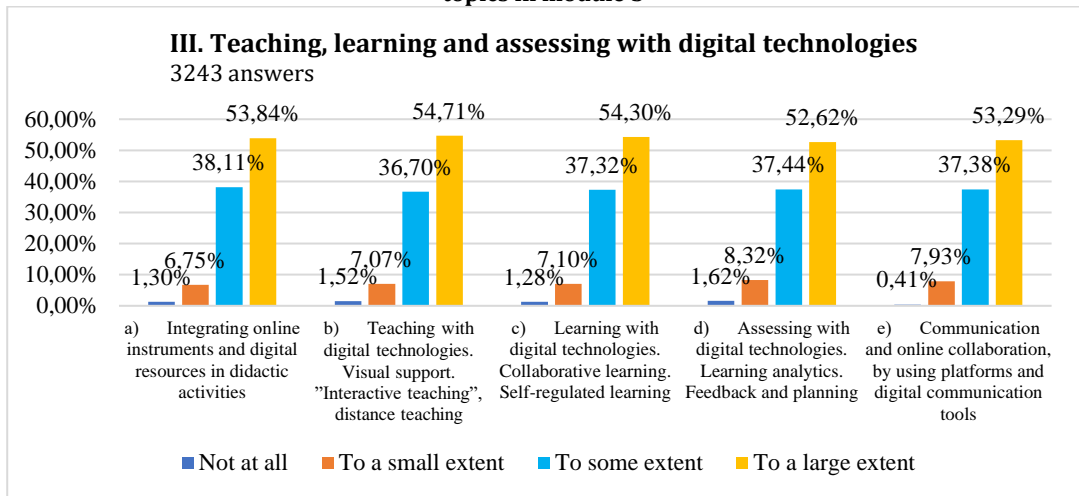
Thematic structure 2. Digital educational resources are of high interest among the surveyed teachers. For this item, the highest values were recorded for the "to a large extent" option (almost 60% for each of the topics in this module). The number of teachers who are not interested in the topics of this module is very small (around 1%) (figure 16).

**Figure 16: The subjects' opinion on the usefulness of digital competence development topics in module 2**



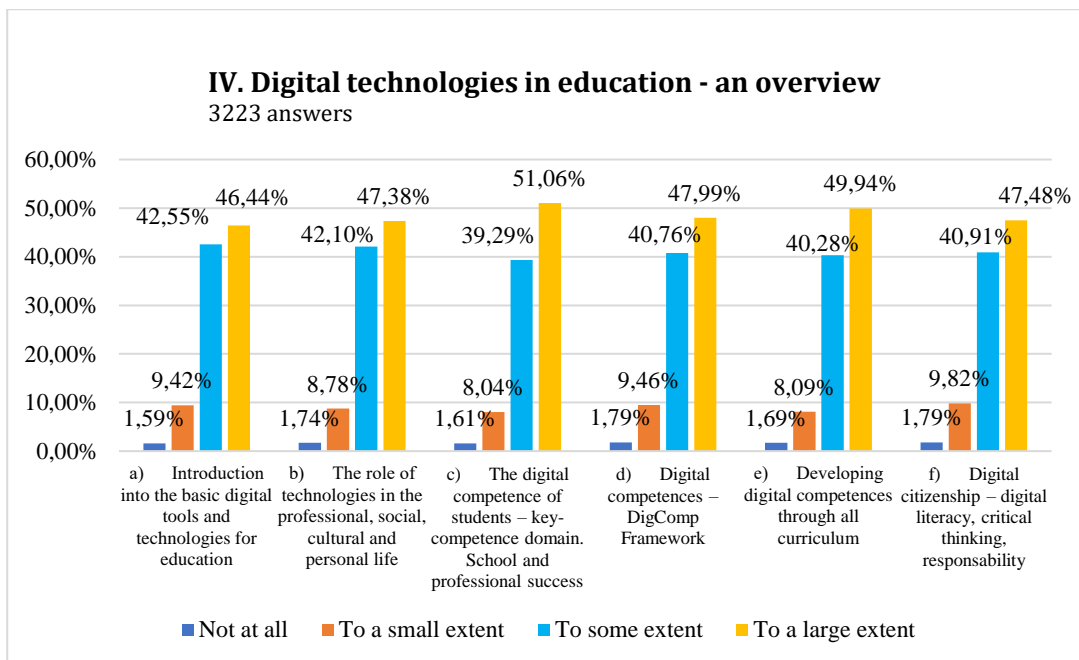
Approximately the same results were registered for the item related to module 3. Teaching, learning and assessing with digital technologies. For more than half of the teachers, all the topics of this module are of high interest. The integration of new digital technologies into fundamental teaching activities is an educational priority. The responses of the teachers who are not interested in these topics are very few (around 1%) (figure 17).

**Graph 17: The subjects' opinion on the usefulness of digital competence development topics in module 3**



The topics in module 4. Digital technologies in education – an overview were of less interest to teachers. Here, the answers were divided, mainly, into the options “to some extent” and “to a large extent”. The predominantly theoretical nature of this module may be an explanation for the way the teachers' answers were distributed. However, for the integration of new digital technologies in education, it is very important and necessary to clarify the concepts and essential theoretical aspects regarding it. Thus, topics related to the introduction of new technologies in education, students' digital competence, teachers' competences, digital citizenship are meant to provide the necessary basis for the practical applications. We are presenting the results recorded for this item in figure 18.

**Figure 18: The subjects' opinion on the usefulness of digital competence development topics in module 4**

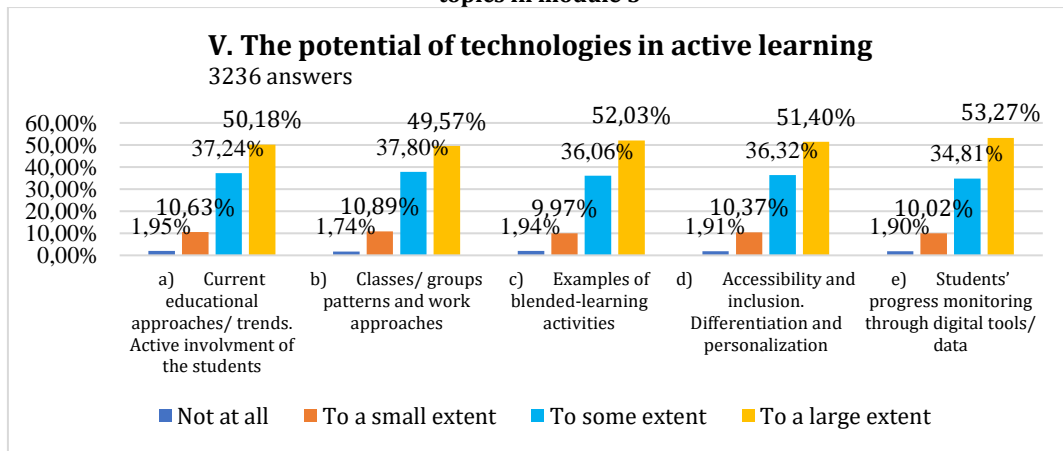


The topics in module V, The potential of technologies for active learning, are of interest to teachers, given that the concern for stimulating student activism has always represented a constant of the teacher's



activity, an always timely didactic principle. More than half of the subjects surveyed are very interested in these topics, as it can be seen in figure 19.

**Figure 19: The subjects' opinion on the usefulness of digital competence development topics in module 5**



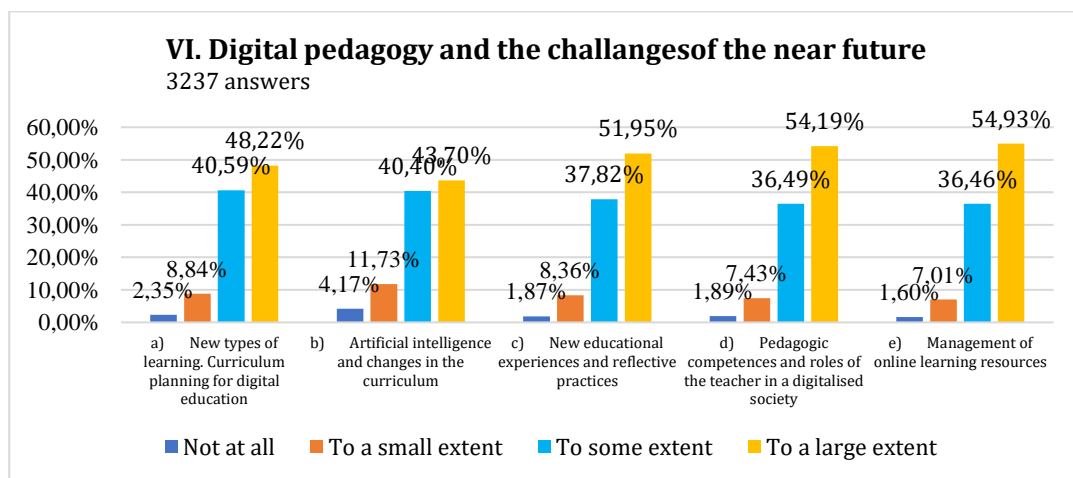
The teachers' responses to the last item of the questionnaire, which was about expressing their interest in the topics in module VI, Digital pedagogy and the challenges of the near future, fall within values similar to those recorded in the other items, completing a picture of the training needs of teachers, from the perspective of their thematic options.

A slight difference can be noted in the case of the topic related to artificial intelligence and changes in the curriculum. Although they recognize the importance and necessity of integrating new technologies in education, teachers are aware of the difficulty of reforming the curriculum from the perspective of artificial intelligence.

In contrast, the subjects surveyed are interested in the changes related to the new roles of the teacher in a digitalized society, this multiplication of roles representing an essential paradigm shift.

The results recorded for this item were centralized and are presented, in percentage form, in figure 20.

**Figure 20. The subjects' opinion on the usefulness of digital competence development topics in module 6**



#### 4. Conclusions

The items of the questionnaire applied to the teachers participating in the constative research pursued two essential variables: self-assessment of the level of development of teachers' digital competences; the inventory of the subjects' expectations and their curricular proposals, in order to design a professional development program. For the first of the variables, we referred to the digital competence framework of the professional educator - DigCompEdu, which organizes digital competences into six categories, and for the second variable, to the thematic recommendations in the Applicant's Guide *Digital Pedagogy for Teachers in Pre-university Education*, which also groups the topics into six categories, consistent with those of the DigCompEdu framework, so that the proposed topics ensure the development of all the skills provided for in the European framework.

Regarding the self-assessment of digital competences, most teachers declared that they had an average level for all the mentioned competences. Teachers showed a high interest in most of the proposed topics.

Following the proposals made by the subjects surveyed, through the questionnaire, we were able to synthesize the essential topics, which can constitute the curricular training offer, addressed to teachers in pre-university education.

The diagnostic research carried out also has a prognostic value, because it allowed the anticipation of possible directions of action in the field of continuous professional training of teachers.

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## SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INSTITUTIONALIZED PRESCHOOLERS

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**Abstract:** *In this article I intended to analyse the socio-emotional development of institutionalized preschoolers and to remark the influence that the residential type environment has on them. I chose to study this topic because institutionalized children have an underdeveloped social and emotional level. The main objective of the present paper is to reproduce the level of socio-emotional development of preschool children institutionalized in residential centres. The specific objectives are to compare the children's social age with their chronological age, as well as the interaction of preschool children with adults, to develop the skills of interaction with children of a similar age, to accept and respect diversity, to develop prosocial behaviours, as well as to measure the degrees of development of self-concept, emotional control and emotional expressiveness. Often enough, the institutionalization of children decisively influences their course and socio-emotional evolution. According to studies, all institutionalized preschoolers studied exhibit social and emotional gaps. But there are several factors that influence the intensity of the manifestation of these gaps in children's behaviours, which must be taken into account: the genetic inheritance, their environmental background and the traumatic scenes that children witnessed in the natural family and the institutional environment in which he develops at the time current.*

**Keywords:** institutionalization, development, preschooler, social, emotional

### 1. Conceptual delimitations

C. Levi-Strauss defines family as a social group that originates in marriage, consisting of a husband, a wife and children or other relatives, a group united by moral, legal, economic, religious and social rights and obligations (Iluț, 2005, p.65). Underlining the same idea, N. Damian refers to the family as a group of relatives by marriage, blood or adoption who live together, carry out a common economic-household activity, are linked by certain spiritual relationships, and under the conditions of the existence of the state and law, also through certain legal relationships (Damian, 1972, p.58). V. Stănoiu and M. Voinea also came to the conclusion that the family is a social group created through marriage, made up of people who live together, have a common household, are linked by certain natural-biological, psychological, moral and legal relationships and they answer for each other in front of society (Stănoiu&Voinea, 1983, p.16). Law 277/2010, in art. 2, considers family to be the social group formed by husband, wife and their dependent children, who live together, where the husband and wife are legally married. However, a family is still considered the social group formed by a single person and the children dependent on him or her who live with that single parent, hereinafter referred to as a single-parent family. Article 3 of the same law mentions that a single person means a person who is in one of the following situations: a) is unmarried; b) is a widow or widower; c) is divorced; d) has the spouse declared missing/disappeared by court decision; e) has the spouse under arrest for a period longer than 30 days or is serving a custodial sentence and does not participate in the maintenance of the children; f) has not reached the age of 18 and is in one of the situations provided for in letter a) - e); g) has been appointed guardian or has been entrusted or placed in foster care with one or more children and is in one of the situations provided for in letter a) - c). Also, the unmarried man and woman who live in cohabitation, with their children and those of the other partner, who live and keep a household together, are considered family (National Agency of Payments and Social Inspection).

In addition to the family environment, in Romania there are other institutions where children are placed and which take care of their growth and development. These institutions are divided into two categories.

Residential type centres – they have the role of ensuring the protection, upbringing and care of the child separated, temporarily or permanently, from his or her parents, as a result of the establishment, under the law, of the placement measure (ANPDC). This category includes foster care, family-type homes and emergency child reception centres. Foster care centres are centres whose beneficiaries are children who are in particularly difficult circumstances, called institutionalized children. In these centres, children and young people are provided access for a specified period to accommodation, family care, formal and informal education, emotional support, counselling, education for the development of independent life skills, as well as preparation for family reintegration or integration. Family-type homes are residential-

type units, with or without legal personality, which provide children/young people with personalized services, appropriate to the individual needs of each, namely: accommodation for an indefinite period, medical assistance and care, emotional support and, as the case may be, counselling psychological, education, socialization and leisure, family and community reintegration (Audit of social services for children in Romania).

Ad per Order 89 of 2004, emergency child reception centres are residential type centres where children are temporarily accommodated on the basis of a special protection measure in case the child is abused or neglected by the parents, as well as in the case of the child found or abandoned in health facilities (Ministry of Labour, 2004). Day care centres – they are centres for child protection, whose mission is to prevent the abandonment and institutionalization of children, by ensuring, during the day, certain activities of care, education, recreation-socialization, counselling, development of independent life skills, orientation school and professional for children, as well as support, counselling and education activities for parents (Audit of social services for children in Romania).

## **2. Social and emotional development of preschoolers in a favourable environment**

The quality of children's social environment and interactions with those who care for them, as well as the extent to which they will know how to satisfy their needs, will determine their personality, the condition of their social and emotional comfort. So, if we think that almost all the needs of the person are satisfied within the family, then the family is a system that must constantly offer love, attention, approval, respect at a certain level. Specialists also believe that the family is the child's first living environment and exerts a considerable influence on its development. Studies, but also reality itself, increasingly confirm the importance of this core of social life in individual development and social integration (Iluț, 2005, p.69). According to Field's theory, the most conducive environment for a child's social-emotional development is the united family. The united family is a model of balance. It is the family in which individual members are encouraged to develop and self-improve their own style, without feeling threatened by the differences between family members (Field, 1988, p.28). As far as marital relations are concerned, the emphasis is not on rights and the satisfaction of personal needs, but on responsibilities. John Coblentz claims that when each of the partners focuses on fulfilling personal responsibilities, the chances of collaboration increase, and they will be more concerned with meeting the needs of the other (Coblentz, 2006, p.138). There is harmony in the marital relationship, without conflict. At the same time, the roles and functions of parents are well defined. In this respect, based on specialized literature, experience and research, seven basic functions of parents were defined (Killén, 1998, p.144) that they perform. They are closely related and can overlap to a certain degree: the ability to perceive the child realistically, the ability to accept that it is the adults' responsibility to meet the child's needs and not the other way around, the ability to realistically expect the child's cooperation, the ability to positively engage in interaction with the child, the ability to empathize with the child, the capacity to prioritize meeting the child's basic needs, and the ability to manage one's own pain and frustration without taking it out on the child.

According to Ion Socoteanu, in the united family the roles of the parents are divided as follows: the mother influences children's moral character, their affective aspect, and the father deals with the doctrinal or teaching aspect (Socoteanu, 1991, pp. 111-115). The mother must be able to teach children to be expressive, to know how to associate emotions with real situations; to show an authentic spirituality, devoid of hypocrisy; inner trust, which refers to safety and trust; to show an unselfish love towards the partner and child, i.e. a love "undressed" by one's own ego; to have self-control, which refers to a balance between love and tenderness. As for the father's role, he is responsible for the education of the wife first, and then the two are responsible for the education of the children. From Charles R. Swindoll's point of view, however, the father's role is to strengthen the family. Thus, the male model must provide the home with the leadership and security it needs to survive. The father must be able to give the partner and children a warm love; a transparent life, from which children can learn the safety techniques they feel in the origin milieu; an unselfish diligence, from which children discover the meaning of diligence, devotion and dedication vis a vis a certain job or task; a spiritual authenticity, in which the father assumes the role of spiritual leader, living a life in a beautiful balance and from which the wife and children learn from the man's example what it means to truly love God; a positive influence (Swindoll, 1997, pp.29-69). This family, full of spiritual charge, equips its children with self-confidence, security and ability to relate to others.

## **3. The socio-emotional issues of institutionalized preschoolers**

According to the Social Assistance Treaty, the upbringing and socio-emotional development of preschool children in residential institutions have negative effects (Șițu, 2003, p.798). The preschool

children who benefit from these social programs or services are children who are either unable to receive upbringing in their own family, for different reasons, such as: loss or death of parents, separation in the context of an armed conflict, abandonment, rejection, child abuse, neglect, forfeiture of parental rights, breakdown of the relationship between the parents, or who come from family environments whose living conditions are precarious. It is desired that the services in the institutional environment are as close as possible to the family environment, striving to provide the necessary conditions for the normal development of children, but the results are different. Some children got lower results on intelligence tests with even manifestations of behavioural disorders (Yarrow, 1961, pp. 459-490), while others demonstrate an increased level from a socio-emotional point of view or an increase in the social level -emotional following the transition from an overcrowded residential type centre to another with children with slight intellectual deficiencies and behavioural disorders, but with a much larger and professional staff (Garvin&Sacks, 1963, pp.399-408). According to Howes, there are certain characteristics that the ideal residential type institution must have (Howes, 1997):

- Small number of children per adult: over 3 years – 10/1;
- Small groups of children: over 2 years: 15 – 20;
- Staff constancy;
- Clean, safe spaces (eliminating the danger of accidents by organizing and equipping areas accessible to children, but also carefully supervising them), brightly coloured, all equipment ergonomically adapted to the age of children, stimulating objects and arrangements;
- A daily schedule with at least a minimum structure, but avoiding the danger of "regimentation";
- Warm caregivers with a positive attitude, involved and responsible;
- Caregivers or educators must have minimal knowledge of the psychology of the age of the children they work with.

According to studies, the socio-emotional development of institutionalized children is distorted, however, the results suggest that it is not institutionalization itself that is responsible for the negative effects recorded, but other factors to a lesser or greater degree associated with this type of care (Dennis, 1960). The residential care system tries to respond to children's needs, and although most of the time the basic physiological needs (food, clothes, etc.) are met, the socio-emotional needs are neglected. The failure to respond to the needs of love and security has the effect of "maternal deprivation" syndrome, the child being predisposed to develop deviant behaviours, especially of a social type (Rutter, 1971). Children have limited access to unconditional love from the adult, and the need for emotional security is fulfilled by the child's attachment to another child, according to Anna Freud and Sophie Dann (Freud&all, 1951). Attachment to people who fulfill the role of the mother is more difficult, because they show less care, attention and respond late or not at all to the requests of children. Research shows that in the case of children institutionalized immediately after birth who remain in that environment, there are reduced chances of developing a secure attachment (Wolkind, 1974). At the same time, children who were institutionalized later, at the age of 6-7, have a very hard time developing a secure attachment, on the one hand, due to the separation from their parents, and on the other hand, because of the non-stimulating environment, lack of opportunities to spontaneous and loving interaction with adults, frequent change of staff and the wrong perspectives of staff who do not consider themselves committed to providing affection and personalized, close relationships with children. As such, most of the time children have no one to feel attached to, or there are too many people taking care of them in institutions, and then they react in different ways: they attempt to take care of themselves, become selfish, self-stimulate, have high irritability. These children begin to explore the environment, but because there is no one to encourage them, to praise them, they stop and do not continue these endeavours. They become impulsive, demand a lot from those around them, have a hard time controlling their fits of aggression and are concerned with their own interests. Other children become dependent on the people around them and attach themselves to any adult they encounter (Alexiu, 2010, pp. 176-177). Furthermore, the high number of children entrusted to the care of a single caregiver makes it difficult to create a closer relationship between adult and child. Hunt notes that the small number of children with a caregiver trained to interact adequately with children resulted in normal development of children in residential-type centres. The stimulation of children was done without bombarding them, without overburdening them, responding to the interests shown by them, which were in accordance with their stage of development. This experiment demonstrated that in the case of the abandoned child, an early and lasting intervention is necessary (Muntean, 2006, p.110).

The impossibility to live new experiences is found in the various forms of understimulation or sensory, social, emotional deprivation. Overstimulation also produces negative effects: hyperexcitement, restlessness, exhaustion and sleep disturbances. According to studies, few residential institutions can provide a wide range of opportunities for exploratory play and interaction with other children or adults. Sensory stimulation is very important for this age - touches, verbal interaction, access to toys of different shapes, colours and textures, aspects that are not found in most institutional environments (Șoitu, 2003,

p.816). The need to quickly and repeatedly adapt to ever-changing situations may lead to disorientation and distortion of reality, extreme anxiety and irritability, fatigue, apathy, and withdrawal. Children often provide information to each other about the type of behaviour that is most effective in different situations. Behavioural norms and standards are thus learned and reinforced in the group. Thus the group plays a very important role in children learning - from each other - a large number of social skills. Most of this learning is informal and implicit, rarely exceeding this level. It is difficult to find institutions that succeed entirely in providing individualized programs for the children in their care. In most institutions, children's needs are subordinated to the organization's need for routine, order, and uniformity. The "block" treatment is a common phenomenon that includes certain different elements of routine and rigidity: identical clothing, similar haircut, fixed bedtime and waking up schedule, meals at fixed times and in large groups, etc. Also, reports of physical, emotional or sexual abuse of children in institutions abound and are not just isolated cases. They are committed either by members of the care staff or by older children who have been abused in their turn. Cases of physical violence do not appear suddenly either, but as a result of a gradual passage through other forms of verbal violence and physical aggression. Abusive adults exhibit more negative behaviours than positive ones. So that institutionalization most of the time has repercussions on the socio-emotional development of children, not infrequently there are significant differences between their biological age and their social age as a result of the previously mentioned factors. Childhood is both a biological and a social phenomenon. These approaches to childhood and age highlight the dualistic way in which the "biological" and "social" aspects of the body are viewed (Halcrow & Tayles, 2008). Policies and decisions concerning children ultimately derive from conceptions of childhood. Those who make such decisions must present their premises regarding ideas about children's needs and capacities, how these change with age, what circumstances are good or bad for children, and where the line between childhood and adulthood should be drawn ( Skolnick, 1975) . In order to better understand these aspects regarding the biological age versus the social age of children institutionalized in residential centres, we have chosen as an example a study carried out on 16 minor subjects between the ages of 3 and 7, residents of a social centre in the North-West of Romania. For reasons of confidentiality and the agreements signed in this regard, identification data of the residential centre will not be disclosed.

Data on social age were noted following the application of the Portage scale, by the lead psychologist of the centre. Portage is a scale for evaluating children's development level between 0 and 7 years of age. The scale includes items that evaluate the skills, abilities and capacities of the child in several areas: self-service, cognitive development, motor development, language development and socialization. Overall, the scale exhibits the main behaviours, capacities and skills that a child should display or possess at a certain stage of development in their existence, in order to be able to fairly establish the existence of a match between their chronological age and their mental age. The results of the assessment of a certain area of development may be different from the chronological age of the child.

The subject may be developmentally delayed or may be at a higher level of development. Below we have presented the comparison table of the chronological age and the social age of the children participating in the survey.

**Table no.1 Comparison between chronological and social age**

Name	Chronological age	Social age
A. Si.	4 years and 10 months	3 years and 11 months
P.L.	5 years and 4 months	5 years and 1 month
A.S.	6 years and 11 months	6 years
G.C.	3 years and 9 months	3 years and 8 months
N.C.	3 years and 6 months	2 years and 3 months
S.D.	6 years and 3 months	5 years and 5 months
R.D.	5 years and 2 months	4 years and 8 months
F.V.	5 years and 5 months	5 years and 3 months
D.V.	3 years and 6 months	3 years
D.L.	4 years and 3 months	2 years and 6 months
F.F.	3 years and 4 months	2 years
C.V.	3 years and 2 months	3 years and 1 month
I.L.	3 years and 11 months	3 years and 4 months
A.M.	3 years and 3 months	2 years and 3 months
F.G.	2 years and 11 months	1 year and 8 months
S.S.	6 years and 8 months	6 years

Source : generated by author

The information obtained following the application of the tests by the psychologist of the institution was processed with the help of the SPSS.20 statistical program. We can see that there are significant differences between the real age and the expected social age of preschool children from the

mentioned residential centre. Thus, the Wilcoxon test ( $Z=-3.51$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) indicates a significant negative gap (negative ranks = 8.50) in all preschool children ( $n = 16$ ) institutionalized in the residential social centre.

In general, a child's social age reflects not only chronological age, but also maturity in managing relationships, emotions, and social norms. Support from parents and educators is essential in this development, support that is absent in institutionalized children.

#### 4. Conclusions and discussions

Failure to adequately respond to the need for love can lead to deviant behaviours. Institutionalized children often do not know how to control their emotions, and this lack will affect their social relationships. In the interaction with other children, they will manifest themselves either through aggressive reactions, or they will completely detach themselves from the environment, isolating themselves and living in a universe of their own. In both situations, children want the company of others, but do not know how to express this adequately. The need for stimulation is satisfied under limited conditions. In general, there are very few opportunities to explore the environment, and living new experiences outside the institutionalized environment is minimal. Under these circumstances, children must adapt to the rules imposed and to the routine that the residential centre provides. As such, the idea of learning standard behaviours is promoted. The way in which children perceive themselves is not as unique individuals, but as "uniformized" persons. The forms of punishment are then present and are varied: children are abused emotionally or even physically by the adult responsible for their care or they are isolated from other children. These behaviours led to feelings of anxiety and depression. Institutionalized children end up with a negative self-image, because of the negative feedback they receive. It was remarked that the confidence in themselves and in their own strength are uncertain and the expression of feelings and emotions is quite difficult. As for the need for accountability of institutionalized children, it was found that they receive, most of the times, the responsibility of taking care of younger children, without concretely explaining to them what this entails. This task falls mainly on 6-7 year old children. It is worth noting that preschoolers in foster care centres end up applying aggressive treatments to younger children, treatments that they themselves have suffered, being verbally, emotionally or physically assaulted by older children or by staff. According to studies, all institutionalized preschoolers studied show social and emotional gaps. But, there are several factors that influence the intensity of the manifestation of these gaps in children's behaviours, which must be taken into account: the genetic baggage, the environment from which they come and the traumatic scenes that children witnessed in the natural family and the institutional environment in which they are currently developing .

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