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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NEW TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL RETAIL: INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE GROWTH OF M-COMMERCE	9
IVANA ŠTULEC DORA NALETINA JOSIPA KNEŽEVIĆ	
THE IMPACT OF RISK TOLERANCE IN THE ALBANIAN INDIVIDUAL INVESTOR DECISION-MAKING DURING FINANCIAL ASSETS INVESTMENTS	23
THE AFTERMATH OF DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WHAT ARE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S MAJOR OBJECTIVES? - CASE STUDY: SAUDI ARABIA	43
GHET ANIS I. S.	
THE PRACTICE OF CAFÉ-PHILO: A PROPOSAL FOR TEACHING AND EVALUATING TRANSVERSAL SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.....	50
FRANCESCA PILEGGI	
EVALUATION OF MOTIVATION, EXPECTATION, AND PRESENT SITUATION IN 3RD YEAR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF GERMAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RIJKA, CROATIA	53
MANUELA SVOBODA	
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN KOSOVO DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.....	72
MERITA LIMANI MELI LIMANI	
EVALUATION OF ROAD TRANSPORT STUDIES WITH GOOGLE MAP TRAFFIC TECHNOLOGY AS A BASIS FOR MORE ACCURATE TRAFFIC FORECASTS.....	90
PËLLUMB ÇACAJ	
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-LEARNING, BASED ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS	103
RUDINA VRIONI	
NATURE REPRESENTATION IN AHMAD TOHARI'S WORKS OF FICTION.....	117
SUROSO HARTONO	

ELSE LILIANI

SOME REFLECTIONS ON REFERENCE IN THE TEACHING OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXT	131
--	------------

OLYMPIA TSAKNAKI

SUDANESE WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION	144
--	------------

NAGWA BABIKER ABDALLA YOUSIF

CAREER GUIDANCE IN SERVICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	151
--	------------

EDI PUKA

THE INFLUENCE OF THE AFRICAN RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONTEXT AND ITS IMPACT ON LUTHERANISM: THE CASE OF GREATER SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY	160
--	------------

MORAKENG EDWARD KENNETH LEBAKA

IDENTITY ISSUES - TURKISH-TATAR COMMUNITY IN DOBROGEA	181
--	------------

CRISTINA-MIHAELA ALEXE (EKSHIOGLU)

INSTRUMENTAL ROLE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN PUBLIC AND NON- PUBLIC PRE- UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ALBANIA	185
---	------------

VALBONA LOSHI SOFTA

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR AUTOMOTIVE SPECIALISTS AND CHANGE OF THEIR PROFILES ACCORDING TO THE TRENDS OF THE VEHICLE MARKET IN ALBANIA	197
--	------------

ELI VYSHKA

EXPLORING CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF INFORMATION SECURITY IN THE COVID-19 ERA	205
--	------------

XINRAN WANG

THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION AND E-MARKETING ON THE LABOR MARKET AFTER COVID - 19 PANDEMIC	221
---	------------

VAELD ZHEZHA

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN QATAR: MSHEIREB DOWNTOWN DOHA AS A CASE STUDY	235
--	------------

MARIAM I AL-HAMMADI

AN UNPLANNED SHIFT TO ONLINE LEARNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, ADMINISTRATORS	236
--	------------

PETRA A. ROBINSON
MAJA STOJANOVĆ
ZACHARY Z. ROBINSON

DEVELOPING SKILLS REGARDING THE EMPOWERMENT CONCEPT AS THE BASIS FOR ASSISTING SOCIALLY EXCLUDED PEOPLE 237

KATARZYNA BORZUCKA-SITKIEWICZ
LIEVE GEERTS
KATARZYNA KOWALCZEWSKA-GRABOWSKA
ROLAND POLLEFAIT

PORTRAITS OF WOMEN FOUNDERS AND LEADERS OF FAMILY FIRMS IN THE NORTH OF PORTUGAL 238

ANA PAULA MARQUES

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEMS: TOWARDS A MORE ENGAGED POLITICAL YOUTH 239

JAROSLAV MIHÁLIK

FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE AND PRICING STRATEGIES OF CAR SHARING COMPANY SERVICES IN SMART CITY 240

YELENA POPOVA
ALEXANDRA FESYUK

PERIPHERAL MODERNISMS. THE INTERWAR TRANSLATION OF EAST-CENTRAL EUROPEAN NOVEL IN ROMANIAN LITERATURE 242

COSMIN BORZA

ORAL SURGERY DURING COVID-19 EPIDEMIC – ALBANIAN EXPERIENCE FOR PATIENT MANAGEMENT ATTENDING EMERGENCY DENTAL SERVICES 243

MERITA BARDHOSHI

MEDIATION IN LABOR AND WORKPLACE DISPUTES 244

FATIME DËRMAKU

CIVIL-MILITARY COLLABORATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK : A CASE STUDY IN SWEDISH CONTEXT 245

ERIK HEDLUND

**HEALTH ANXIETY AMONG THE NORMAL POPULATION AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN A
HIGHLY DISADVANTAGED REGION DURING THREE WAVES OF THE COVID-19 246**

CSILLA LAKATOS
ANDREA RUCSKA

**A GUIDE TO CONDUCTING A COLLEGE-WIDE NEEDS ANALYSIS: THE PROCESS AND KEY
OUTCOMES 247**

PETRA A. ROBINSON
ROLAND W. MITCHELL
MAJA STOJANOVIĆ

**INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES TEACHERS AT SECONDARY LEVEL: THE
IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER COORDINATION 248**

JUAN GARCÍA RUBIO

**TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY IN SEMI-PERIPHERAL LITERATURES: THE ROMANIAN
CASE 249**

ALEX GOLDIŞ
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, PHD, VICE DEAN,
FACULTY OF LETTERS BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, CLUJ-NAPOCA

**CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AFTER THE FIRST WAVE OF COVID-
19 251**

CRISTINA VILAPLANA-PRIETO

SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS: A CASE STUDY FROM PORTUGAL 252

VALENTINA CHKONIYA

**SOCIAL AND PRAGMATIC COMMUNICATION DISORDERS IN CHILDREN AGED 6-11 YEARS AND
THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE THERAPY 253**

FLORA LAMÇJA (ZEQAJ)

SMART EDUCATION AND SOCIOLOGY 254

SANDRO SERPA

New Trends in International Retail: Influence of Social Media on the Growth of M-Commerce

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Abstract

The paper studies the influence of social media on the growth of m-commerce. Social networks and social media in general, although appeared about twenty years ago, present an inevitable part of our everyday life. Data show that an average Internet user spends 2 to 3 hours a day using social media. The original purpose of social networks as a medium of communication with distant friends and family and estranged acquaintances quickly evolved into platform that allows easy, prompt and inexpensive visibility gain and target audience reach. Businesses worldwide, international retailers in particular, soon recognized the benefits of social media utilizing them first as a form of advertising, promotion and communication by establishing official company profiles. More recent trends in international retail include engaging influencers to endorse a brand, omnichannel retail and s-commerce. S-commerce leverages the power of social media in order to sell, using the power of social influence, referrals and recommendations of social network peers. With social interactions and contributions to assist online buying and selling of goods and services, s-commerce eases the transition from multichannel to omnichannel retail. Majority of social purchases are made via mobile devices. User-generated content on social media favourably influences purchasing behaviour in form of purchase intentions especially among young consumers. The research aim is to further assess the interconnectivity between social media and m-commerce by providing insights into factors that drive young consumers to purchase via mobile devices and idiosyncratic features of social media that positively affect purchasing decisions. An online

questionnaire among Croatian young consumers was conducted. Study findings offer valuable practical implications regarding strategic retail management in both domestic and international markets.

Keywords: international retail, social media, m-commerce, s-commerce, shopping applications, young consumers, purchasing behaviour, omnichannel retail

1. Introduction

Fourth industrial revolution combined with lock-down effect of COVID-19 crisis brought retail to new levels of digitalization. Technology development introduced consumers to electronic commerce (e-commerce) in late 1980s followed by mobile commerce (m-commerce) as Internet broadband extended in range and smartphones reached commercially acceptable prices. With web advancement into web 2.0 allowing thus interaction between Internet users and publishing user-generated content, social media gained new dimension thus enabling the emergence of social commerce or s-commerce. Web 2.0 enabled e-commerce to be done through social media creating thus new retail trend.

Social media refer to online tools and platforms that people use to share opinions and experiences including photos, videos, music, insights and perceptions with each other (Turban, King & Lang, 2010). The main power of social media is that they enable users to create personalized online pages, communicate with their friends and share user-generated content. Social networking is not a new phenomenon, as it was always in human nature to socialize with one another, but omnipresence and enhancement of Internet changed the way people interact with one another, as well as the speed and reach of content dissemination (Duffet, 2017). The majority of social media users is young population known as Generation Y or Millennials (born in 1980s and early 1990s) and Generation Z (born in mid-1990s and early 2000s). These generations have been born and/or raised in the digital era and so-called screen society. Young consumers use social media first and foremost for online socializing as well to assist them with purchasing decision process. S-commerce goes hand in hand with m-commerce since 86% of young consumers own a smartphone (eMarketer.com, 2015) and more than 57% of them approach social networks via their smartphones (Duffet, 2017).

The original purpose of social networks as a medium of communication with distant friends and family and estranged acquaintances quickly evolved into platform that allows easy, prompt and inexpensive visibility gain and target audience reach. Businesses worldwide, international retailers in particular, soon recognized the benefits of social media. The basic ways retailers can utilize social media are by rising brand awareness through fun pages on social media, interactive online marketing communication, creating and managing word-of-mouth and ultimately sale of their

products and services (Štulec, Petljak & Naletina, 2018). More recent social media trends in international retail include engaging influencers to endorse a retail brand, enabling transition from multichannel to omnichannel retail and new form of electronic commerce: s-commerce.

The purpose of the paper is to present social media as a driver of m-commerce growth and to research interconnectivity between social media and m-commerce. The aim of the study is to provide insights into factors that drive young consumers to purchase via mobile devices and idiosyncratic features of social media that positively affect purchasing decisions. Instrument of research was an online questionnaire conducted among young consumers in Croatia. This study contributes to rather scarce knowledge of social commerce in emerging markets. Study findings offer better understanding of social buying behaviour of young consumers and valuable practical implications regarding strategic retail management in both domestic and international markets.

Paper outline is as following. After introduction, literature review on s-commerce and social media in retailing are presented. Third section describes research design and demographic characteristics of the sample. Fourth section outlines research findings as well as discussion and implication of the results. Final section summarizes major theoretical and empirical conclusions of the paper.

2. Literature review on social media in retailing

The power of social network has stimulated businesses to use social media platforms to conduct e-commerce. S-commerce is a subset of e-commerce that involves the use of social media with social interactions and contributions to assist online buying and selling of goods and services (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). S-commerce is growing rapidly worldwide, and it can be observed in the form of flash sales, group buying, social shopping, purchase sharing and personal shoppers. Examples of s-commerce include customer ratings and reviews, user recommendations and referrals, social shopping tools (sharing the act of shopping online), forums and communities, social media optimization, social applications and social advertising (Kim, 2011). S-commerce has become a broad term that encompasses both onsite and offsite s-commerce activities. Onsite s-commerce includes incorporating social sharing and other social functions into retailers' websites. Offsite s-commerce refers to s-commerce that occurs on social media platforms (Samuel et al, 2013). In order to facilitate s-commerce, Facebook introduced Marketplace which connects local sellers and buyers, Instagram offers “Buy now” button and Pinterest has buyable Pins that allow direct purchase of viewed items.

The most popular social networks worldwide ranked by number of monthly active users are Facebook (2.91 bn), YouTube (2.56 bn), WhatsApp (2.0 bn) and Instagram (1.48 bn) (Statista.com, 2022a). More than half of world population (4.62 bn, 58.4%) now use social media with the average daily time spent using social media of 2h 27m

(SmartInsights.com, 2022). Research results show that individuals who spend longer periods of time on social media (two or more hours a day) and who update their profile more regularly (daily and several times a week) show favorable attitude toward online marketing communication (Duffet, 2017).

Regarding their social capital, users can be categorized as patricians (who have real and actual influence over their peers), parvenus (who thrive on social connection and interaction), poseurs (who lack social capital and may not be popular in real life) and proletarian (who do not care much about making their virtual presence felt) (Wang, 2012). In order to generate maximum benefit from social media engagement, retailers should target patricians and parvenus. Patricians can serve as the retail brand ambassadors and parvenus make susceptible market segment. Customers' ability to rate and review different content over social media platforms often encourages other customers to conduct social commerce over different social media platforms (Algharabat & Rana, 2021). Rather same results are found by Murphy (2014) who shares that user-generated content on social media favorably influences purchasing behaviour in form of purchase intentions among young consumers. Furthermore, customers tend to give higher credibility to user-generated content than company-generated content, even when users merely share content and posts created by companies (Duffet, 2017).

SmartInsight report shows that almost 55% of online shoppers conducted their shopping via one of three main social commerce platforms i.e. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and 30% of consumers would make their purchase decisions directly via social commerce platforms Social media sites are now predominantly mobile-first, and users expect an experience that enables them to browse and buy on their mobile devices (SmartInsights.com, 2019). Small entrepreneurs find Instagram more convenient for business purposes, whereas Facebook preserves its function as primary source of marketing communication (Genc & Oskuz, 2015). Major powers of Instagram lie in its open structure that allows communication not only with acquaintances but also with unrelated public peers and its “hash tagging” feature.

Social media have found their role in marketing and are used for web promotion and advertising, which is considered socially responsible and environmentally friendly because it does not consume paper or pollute nature with waste (Grbavac & Grbavac, 2014). Some of benefits of advertising on social media are cost affordability compared to traditional advertising, easy targeting of consumer segments, worldwide brand visibility, raising brand awareness, social and brand engagement (Cyberclick.net, 2021).

S-commerce activities are vast and differ in penetration rate between age groups as presented by Table 1. It can be generally stated that the younger the age group the higher the penetration rate of any given s-commerce activity. As most popular s-commerce activities among young consumers (age groups 16-24 and 25-34)

following emerge: researching products online via social networks and discovering brands/products via ads on social media.

Table 1. Social commerce activities according to consumer age (1st quarter 2019)

Social commerce activities	16-24	25-34	35-44	44-54	55-64
Discover brands/products via ads on social media	32%	30%	27%	23%	19%
Discover brands/products via recommendations on social media	28%	27%	25%	21%	17%
Research products online via social networks	51%	46%	40%	32%	26%
Post with lots of likes would increase likelihood of purchasing a product online	27%	25%	21%	17%	14%
A 'buy button' would increase likelihood of purchasing a product online	14%	14%	12%	8%	6%

Source: Statista.com (2022b)

Intention to engage in s-commerce activities and buy through social media platforms are affected by several factors. Ko (2018) finds that social and commercial desire of users have positive impact on their social buying intention. Aladwani (2018) shows that perceived quality of social support as well as perceived social commerce quality favourably influence purchase intentions in s-commerce. A number of studies consider the issue of trust in s-commerce. Cheng, Gu & Shen (2019) study social shopping intention from the trust perspective. Ventre & Kolbe (2020) and Al-Tit, Omri & Hadj (2020) find that trust is an important factor in s-commerce adoption behavior.

3. Research design and sample characteristics

Research study was conducted during September 2021 using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended and open-ended questions and five-point Likert-scale statements. Research sample consisted of young consumers (age 17 to 34) from Croatia. A total of 132 valid answers were collected. Table 2 shows demographic characteristic of the respondents. It can be seen that vast majority of respondents are females (83.3%), age of 23 to 28 (60.6%) and students (56.8%).

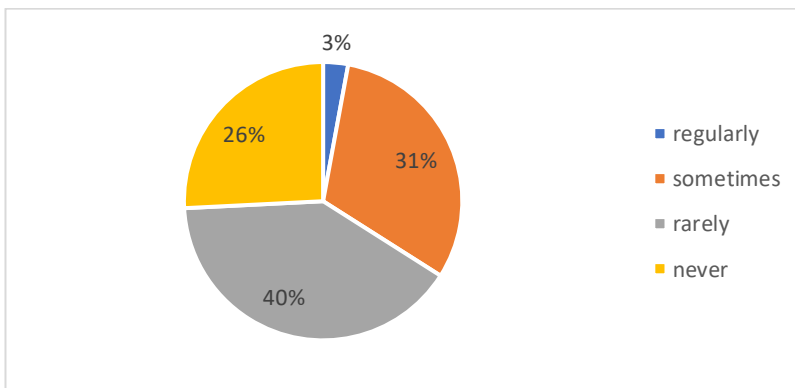
Table 2. Sample characteristics

Gender	%
Male	16.7
Female	83.3
Age	%
17-22	33.3
23-28	60.6
29-34	6.1
Working status	%
Employed	37.1
Unemployed	6.1
Student	56.8

4. Research findings, discussion and implications

Respondents were asked to choose one social media platform that they use most frequently. Research findings show that Instagram, Facebook and Youtube are most popular social media among young Croatian consumers with rates of 65.9%, 19.7% and 9.1% respectively. As primary purpose of social media usage respondents state entertainment (67.4%), communication (20.5%) and information gathering (11.4%). Although none of the respondents state purchasing as primary purpose of their engagement in social media, vast majority (74%) do engage in s-commerce. As Figure 1 shows majority of purchases are of rather irregular frequency.

Figure 1. Frequency of purchase via social media

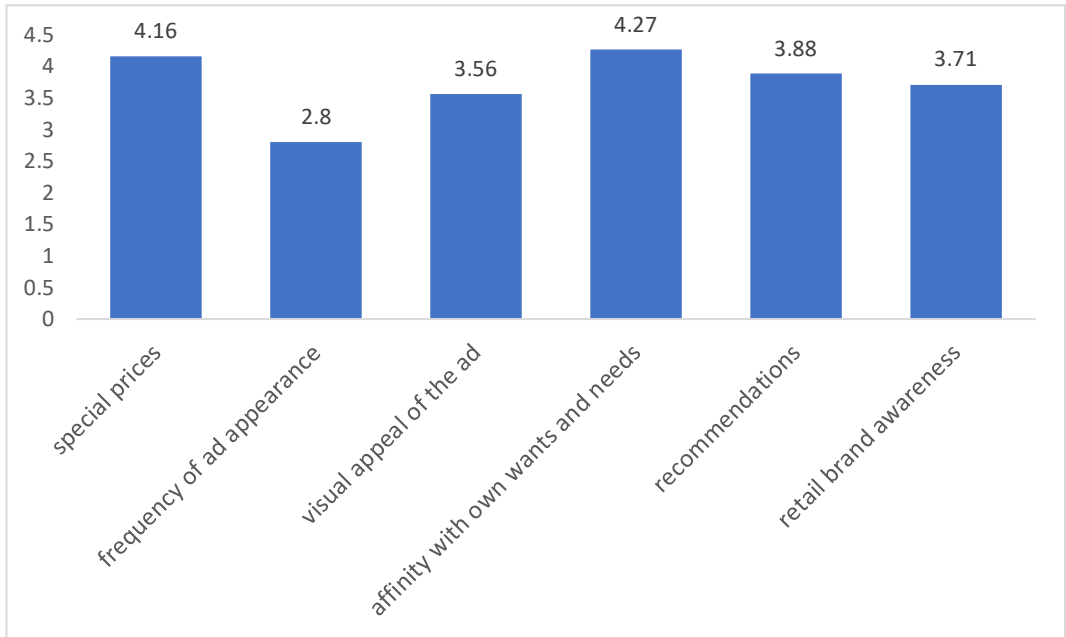


Regarding the security issues considered with purchase via social media, almost half of respondents (45.8%) do not consider themselves knowledgeable enough to judge security issues whereas 32.1% find s-commerce safe. Remaining 22.1% of respondents find it unsafe. Security issues associated with e-commerce in general stem from lack of trust.

What comes as a highly important finding is that 88.5% of respondents have been spurred by social media posts and/or advertisements to make a subsequent purchase. Facebook takes a lead with 52.3%, followed by Instagram with 40.2% and YouTube with only 6.0%. It can be hypothesized that further investment in promotion on social media will increase retail sales. Such argument can be additionally corroborated with the research finding that 93.1% of respondents think that retailers should open and maintain company profiles on social media.

Next, respondents were asked to assess the importance of given decision factors (on a scale 1 to 5) when considering visiting web shop or shopping application of a retailer that runs promotional advertisements on social media. Since five-point scale was used it can be argued that all factors with mean assessment of 3.0 and higher can be considered important decision factors. As Figure 2 shows all factors except for “frequency of ad appearance” ($m=2.8$), are important decision factors. As the most important factors “affinity with own wants and needs” ($m=4.27$) and “special prices” ($m=4.16$) stand out. Such results imply that young consumers in emerging market are rather utilitarian-minded and price sensitive. If they do not have a need for a certain product they will not buy it no matter how many times they see the ad. On the other hand, “visual ad appeal” is important ($m=3.56$) but young consumers will give higher weight to “recommendations” of friends and family ($m=3.88$) and their “own retail brand awareness” ($m=3.71$) when making decision whether to visit the retailer. Results regarding recommendations and referrals and their influence on social commerce are in line with those of Algharabat & Rana (2021) which can be reasoned by the fact that both studies were conducted in emerging markets.

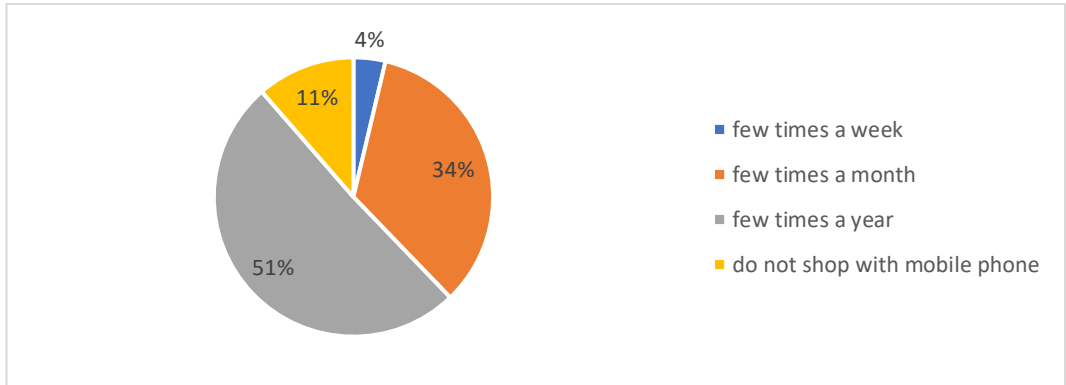
Figure 2. Importance of decision factors when considering visiting web shop or shopping application of retailers that run ads on social media



Former studies imply that majority of social purchases are made via mobile devices (eMarketer.com, 2015; Duffet, 2017; SmartInsights.com, 2019). Furthermore, our research findings show that social media are largely used as an information source both before and during purchase as 52.3% of respondents approach social media via mobile phone pre and during purchase on a regular basis and 35.6% occasionally. It can be concluded that mobile phones can be used as effective digital assistants in physical retail, and because of their Internet connectivity can ease transition between online and offline channel making thus transition to omnichannel retail seamless.

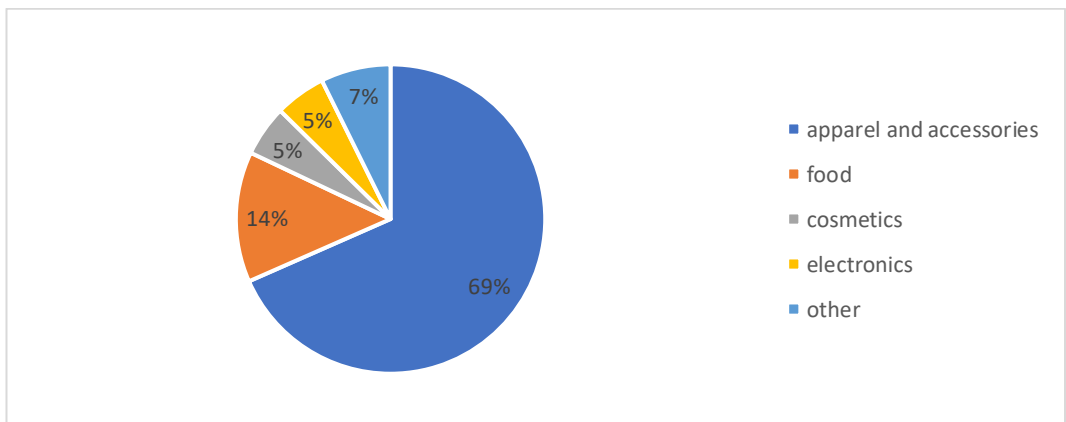
Likewise, vast majority of respondents use their mobile phones to carry out purchase (88.5%). Regarding frequency of purchases via mobile devices, about half of respondents (50.8%) buy several times a year (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Frequency of purchases via mobile devices



When it comes to product category most frequently purchased in m-commerce, findings show that apparel and accessories are the most popular category among young consumers with 68.2% of respondents buying them (Figure 4). Second most popular product category is food (13.6%) followed by cosmetics (5.3%) and electronics (5.3%). The remainder is somewhat evenly distributed among household goods and appliances, books and sports equipment.

Figure 4. Most frequently purchased product categories via mobile devices

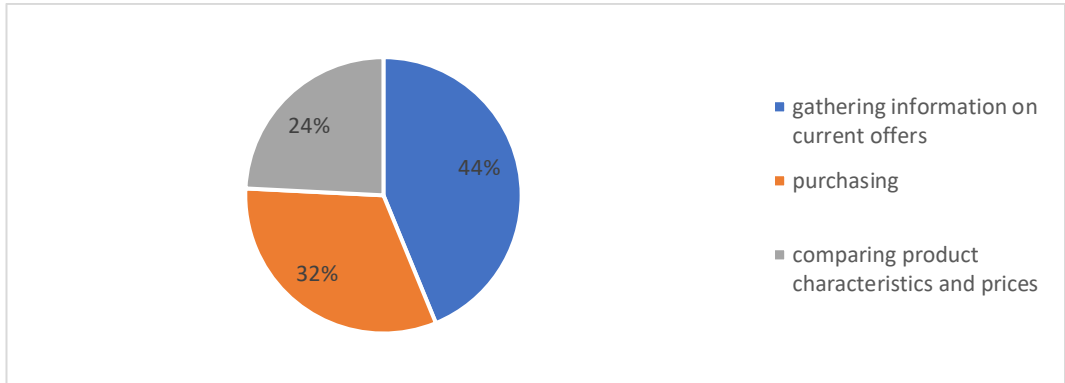


What comes as a surprise is a finding that majority of respondents are not influenced by posts and recommendations of celebrities, influencers and public figures in general, for only 34.1% of respondents take their posts into consideration when making purchases via mobile devices. It is implied that collaboration with influencers offer benefits in form of increased sales, however it is not the primary reason that young consumers consider when making purchasing decision. Given such results, retailers should still predominantly invest in the traditional form of building brand awareness and achieving and retaining customer loyalty.

81.8% of respondents use shopping applications for smart phones. As most popular applications following are mentioned: Glovo and Wolt (food delivery, 56%), About you (online multibrand fashion retailer, 53%), Zara (single brand fashion retailer, 46%), Asos (online multibrand fashion retailer, 38%) and AliExpress (low price online multistore retail platform, 33%). Figure 5 shows for which purposes young consumers use shopping applications. It can be seen that the primary reason is to gather information on current offers and new trends (43.8%). Second most important reason to use shopping applications by young consumers is to conduct an actual purchase (32%) and third is to compare product characteristic and prices (24.2%). Such findings confirm that mobile phones are dominantly used among young consumers as a mean of shopping assistance and only then as a mean of purchase itself. Such results imply that majority of purchases still occur offline in brick-and-mortar stores.

Implications can be drawn that retailers could enhance customer experience and increase customer satisfaction by combining in-store mobile phone assistance with unsurpassed advantage of offline over online shopping i.e. the ability to see and inspect product in-person. The new retail format that combines advantages of physical stores with efficiency benefits offered by digital (online) shopping is trending under the name of phygital stores. More and more international retailers are embracing this retail form, however it is still not present in Croatia. Main advantage of phygital format is real time assistance at the point of sale, which results in time efficiency and offers a seamless gathaway to omnichannel retailing. Omnichannel retailing is defined as “a set of integrated processes and decisions that support a unified view of a brand from product purchase, return, and exchange standpoint irrespective of the channel (in-store, online, mobile, call center, or social)” (Shi et al, 2020). Spurred by recent epidemiological measures, many retailers have initiated online channel parallel to existing offline channel. However, not many offer fluid and consistent cross-channel shopping which is main benefit of omnichannel commerce for consumers. Retailers, on the other hand, benefit from increased sales as omnichannel buyers prove to be more loyal, buy more frequently and spend more money in single shopping visit (Sopadjieva, Dholakia & Benjamin, 2017). COVID-19 has pushed the retail industry to new ways to fulfill consumer needs through omnichannel strategies, making retailers more dependent on technology to engage and serve consumers (Gerea, Gonzalez-Lopez & Herskovic, 2021).

Figure 5. Main reasons for using shopping applications among young consumers



Further on, respondents were asked to assess their level of agreement regarding their attitude toward m-commerce and shopping applications. A five-point Likert scale was used. Mean assessments are shown in Figure 6. It can be seen that young consumers in Croatia find time efficiency ($m=4.6$) as noticeably more important benefit of m-commerce than opportunity to shop 24/7 ($m=3.7$). M-commerce is highly acknowledged as increasingly important current retail trend ($m=4.5$), however young consumers still prefer to shop in brick-and-mortar stores than via mobile devices ($m=2.8$, reverse scale).

Figure 6. Mean assessment of young consumers' attitudes toward m-commerce and shopping applications



Vast majority of respondents think that retailers in Croatia who offer online channel dominantly focus on web-shops (72.7%) as opposed to mobile applications (27.3%). Given such findings it can be argued that retailers in Croatia have not yet recognized the benefits of m-commerce over e-commerce when it comes to young consumers. Young consumers identified as generation Y and Z are technologically savvy population who prove to appreciate time efficiency provided by practicality of mobile devices and smartphone applications. Majority of shopping applications in Croatia are

offered by international retailers present only online or both online and offline in Croatia. It can be assumed that further adoption of shopping applications among Croatian retailers will follow quickly as domestically based retailers become aware of their benefits.

Croatia has a very high Internet penetration rate of 91.5% of total population (data for December 2020) and almost one in two Internet users has a Facebook profile. Penetration rate of Facebook in Croatia is 47.5% of total number of Internet users, which is slightly higher than the European average of 46.9% (internetworldstats.com, 2020). Such data offer valid ground and justifiable reason to further invest in social media marketing and s-commerce.

5. Conclusion

Social media have an important influence on today's purchasing behaviour, especially when considering young consumers. In order to gain an extensive insight into interconnectivity between social media and m-commerce, a primary research was conducted among young consumers in Croatia. Findings show that young generations use social media primarily to interact with peers but vast majority engage in s-commerce as well. Social media posts and advertisements prove to encourage subsequent purchases, where Facebook takes a position of a leading social media platform, followed by Instagram and YouTube. Results show that young consumers in emerging markets are rather utilitarian-minded and price sensitive. If they do not have a need for a certain product they will not buy it no matter how many times they see the ad. Stemming from high favourable impact of social media ads, it can be concluded that further investment in promotion on social media will increase retail sales. Visual appeal of ads ranks important, but inferior in significance to recommendations and referrals of friends and family. It is clear that social media are engaged in all phases of purchasing process.

Given that young generations heavily use mobile device to approach social media, s-commerce goes hand in hand with m-commerce. Furthermore, mobile devices can be used as a digital shopping assistants in physical retail, and because of their Internet connectivity can ease transition between online and offline channel making thus transition to omnichannel retail seamless. From consumers' standpoint, shopping applications for smart phones offer greater benefits compared to web-shops with time efficiency being the most important benefit.

Spurred by recent epidemiological measures, many retailers have initiated online channel parallel to existing offline channel. However, not many offer fluid and consistent cross-channel shopping which is the main benefit of omnichannel commerce for consumers. Research findings offer valuable conclusions and implications regarding incorporating s-commerce and m-commerce in omnichannel retailing building thus customers' satisfaction and retail sales.

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The Impact of Risk Tolerance in the Albanian Individual Investor Decision-Making during Financial Assets Investments

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Abstract

The study attempts to explore whether the level of risk tolerance of the albanian individual investors affects their behaviour while they decide to invest in financial assets. Using Grable and Lytton Risk Measurement Scale, we find that Albanian investors show low - risk tolerance when investing in financial assets. They focus on relatively safe forms of investment alternatives. This low risk tolerance profile of the albanian individual investor, is a result of various significant factors such as: Albania's being an ex-communist country with a centralised economy for more than fifty years, the over-two-decade long transition of the country accompanied by various financial crises, the current underdeveloped and not consolidated financial market etc. We apply the concepts of regression and correlation to analyze the relationship between risk tolerance and the variables of financial decision making. There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between risk tolerance and investor's time horizon. The same relationship is found between investor risk tolerance and the amount of money invested in the financial asset.

Keywords: Risk Tolerance, Risk Tolerance Measurement Scale, Albanian Individual Investor Decision Making, Financial Asset

Introduction

Risk is always present whenever we act based on the decisions we take. It influences individual financial decisions as well. Financial investments involve decisions about the future in which it is necessary to predict uncertain expected cash flows. Investor risk tolerance affects financial decision-making. Individuals with low-risk tolerance are expected to be more conservative in choosing the type of financial asset they invest in. The paper tries to study this relationship by raising the following research question: Does risk tolerance affect the decision of the individual investor to invest in financial assets in Albania?

Descriptive statistics and regression analysis are used to answer the research question. The Grable and Lytton test will be used as Measurement Scale to determine Risk Tolerance. The test has been widely used by financial advisors and individuals

for almost 20 years and aims to collect data through 12 closed questions. Financial advisors use it as a measure to understand their clients' attitudes toward risk in order to allocate their clients' assets as effectively as possible. Individuals use the Measurement Scale to understand their willingness to take financial risks and to analyze their risk preferences (Kuzniak et al., 2015).

The study is organized further as follows: At first, we present a short literature review on financial risk tolerance and its relation to financial decisions. We use descriptive analysis, correlation, and regression to present the results and to further interpret them. Finally, we analyze the conclusions and reach recommendations.

Literature Review

Risk tolerance - Roszkowski and Davey define risk tolerance as "the amount of risk an individual is willing to accept in pursuit of a goal". It can also be described as "the maximum amount of uncertainty one is willing to accept when making a financial decision", (Ricciardi 2008). Risk perception and risk tolerance are two interrelated concepts that can often be confused with each other but can also independently influence risk behavior (Roszkowski and Davey, 2010). Individuals are not always aware of their real level of risk tolerance or about the factors influencing their perception of how risky a situation is (Ricciardi 2008)".

Financial risk tolerance – It expresses the willingness of individuals to engage in risky financial behavior, that is to accept to make financial decisions in situations of uncertainty. According to Grable and Lytton (1998), people with high-risk tolerance prefer being in uncertain situations while those with low financial risk tolerance prefer safer ones. According to the same authors, tolerance for financial risk is related to the willingness of the individual to accept negative changes in the value of the investment or an opposite result to the expected one (Kanadhasan 2015).

Above average and under average risk-tolerant investors are driven by emotional biases in their decision-making, while investors between these two extremes are driven by cognitive biases. (Pompian 2012).

Financial risk tolerance has a strong impact on investing and financial decisions of the individual investors such as wealth increase, retirement, portfolio composition, etc. (Kanadhasan 2015). Misdiagnosis of financial risk tolerance can lead to poor investment decisions. Underestimating risk tolerance, for example, can cause the investor to choose a less aggressive portfolio not compatible with his realistic preferences.

Financial risk tolerance is influenced by environmental, psychological, and social factors (Kanadhasan 2015). Thus after the occurrence of economic and financial crises, people might become more sensitive and their level of risk tolerance might change, making it necessary for risk tolerance to be remeasured.

Methodology and Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics on risk tolerance

The Measurement Scale consists of 12 questions, where each question contains four alternatives, which starting from the first to the fourth, show an increasing attitude toward risk tolerance. From the observation of simple frequencies and percentages (See Annex C, Table C.1.1.1: Risk Tolerance Measurement Scale), for each of the questions, we notice that the dominant part of the respondents has chosen the first two alternatives of each question, thus expressing low-risk tolerance.

Descriptive statistics for investment decision making in financial assets¹

Results for the variable 'type of investment': This section of the questionnaire lists a number of investment alternatives available in Albania where the interviewed investors have to choose the types of financial assets in which they have invested. It results that most of the respondents own investments in the Investment Fund in Albanian Leks, in deposits, in the Investment Fund in Euro, in government bonds and treasury bills respectively in descending order.

Results for the variable 'time horizon': The mean of the variable 'time horizon' in the above types of assets, results around the value of 3.8, the respective minimum and maximum are 0.08 and 10. The first and third quarters result respectively 2 and 5. The median turns out to be 4, a slightly higher value than the mean, a sign of slight asymmetry in the distribution. The lower and upper limits of the confidence interval for the mean are 3.6 and 4.1, respectively. The asymmetry index is slightly positive, there is a slight asymmetry in the distribution. The 'kurtosis' index is significantly different from three, so the distribution is not normal. The 'Boxplot' and the histogram of the variable confirm a slight asymmetry in the distribution of the variable (See Annex C, Graph C 1.2.1: 'Time horizon').

Results for the variable 'amount of money invested': Around 36% of the investors answered the question 'What is the amount of money invested in the financial asset?', with values less than 1mil ALL, 27% of the investors answered with values between 1mil - 3mil ALL, while the other investors answered almost equally with values 3mil - 5mil ALL and more than 5 mil ALL.

Results for the variable 'perceived certainty': The mean is about 3.5, and the corresponding minimum and maximum are approximately 3 and 5. The first and third quarters are 3 and 4. The median is 3, a value different from the mean showing presence of asymmetry in the distribution. The lower and upper confidence interval limits for the mean are 3.4 and 3.6, respectively. The asymmetry index is positive, thus there is an asymmetry in the distribution, like the median and mean shown. The 'kurtosis' index is significantly different from three, thus the distribution is not

¹ Annex A, table A.1 Investment decision-making in financial assets

normal. The ‘Boxplot’ and the variable histogram confirm the above results: strong asymmetry in the corresponding distribution (Annex C, Graph B 1.2.3: Perceived certainty about the investment made in financial asset’).

Results for the variable ‘level of satisfaction from the decision you made regarding the type of financial asset’: The mean is about 3.6, and the corresponding minimum and maximum are approximately 3 and 5. The first and third quarters are 3 and 4, respectively, the median is approximately 4, a value different from the mean, showing the presence of asymmetry in the distribution. The lower and upper confidence interval limits for the mean are 3.5 and 3.7, respectively. The asymmetry index is positive, thus there is an asymmetry in the distribution. The ‘kurtosis’ index is significantly different from three, so our distribution is not normal. The ‘Boxplot’ and the histogram of the variable confirm the above results: significant asymmetry in the respective distribution (Annex C, Graph C 1.2.3: How much satisfied are you with the decision you made regarding the type of financial asset?).

Results for the variable ‘Satisfaction from the decision you made regarding your time horizon’’: The mean is about 3.7, and the minimum and maximum are 3 and 5. The first and third quarters are 3 and 4. The median is 4, a value different from the mean, showing the presence of asymmetry in the distribution. The lower and upper limits of the confidence interval for the mean are 3.6 and 3.8, respectively. The asymmetry index is positive, thus there is a positive asymmetry in the distribution. The ‘kurtosis’ index is significantly different from three, so our distribution is not normal. The ‘Boxplot’ and the histogram of the variable confirm the above results: significant asymmetry in the respective distribution (Annex CB, Graph C 1.2.4: How much satisfied are you with the decision you made regarding your time horizon?).

Results for the variable ‘Satisfaction from the decision you made regarding the amount of money invested in the financial asset’: The mean is about 3.6, and the minimum and maximum are 3 and 5. The first and third quarters are 3 and 4. The median is 4, a value different from the mean, a sign of asymmetry in the distribution. The lower and upper limits of the confidence interval for the mean are 3.6 and 3.7, respectively. The asymmetry index is positive, thus there is a positive asymmetry in the distribution. The ‘kurtosis’ index is significantly different from the three, thus the distribution is not normal. The ‘Boxplot’ and the histogram of the variable confirm the above results: pronounced asymmetry in the respective distribution (Annex C, Graph C 1.2.5: How much satisfied are you with the decision you made regarding the amount of money invested in the financial asset?).

Methodology

The following table shows variables’ labels useful for inferential analysis. The variable ‘risk_tol’ is defined as the weighted average of the questions in the relevant section.

Table I Variables’ labels as a function of inferential analysis.

1: "time horizon" "amount invested" "perceived certainty" "type of asset_satisfaction" "time horizon_satisfaction" "amount invested_satisfaction"

2: "tol_risk"

We apply the concepts of regression and correlation to analyze the relationship between the variables in this part of the paper. Correlation is not an indicator of the direction of impact from one variable to another. To show this impact it is necessary to estimate a statistical model, with one dependent variable and one or several independent variables. We must first define the covariance between the two variables, x , and y , to define the correlation according to Pearson (one of the standard versions also implemented in the R program).

$$\text{COV}(x, y) = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{n}$$

Let us also recall the corresponding formula for variance:

$$S_x^2 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}{n}$$

Covariance is positive if the relationship between the two variables is right and vice versa. In case we do not have a constant relationship between the variables, the corresponding covariance is zero. The problem, in this case, lies in the unlimited values that covariance can take, on the axis of real numbers. We standardize this indicator in order to perform a more intuitive interpretation. The correlation coefficient r , according to Pearson, is given by:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{nS_xS_y}$$

or

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\text{COV}(x, y)}{S_xS_y} \rightarrow r_{xy} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n Z_{x_i} * Z_{y_i}}{n}$$

This coefficient can vary from -1 to 1 and the distance from zero indicates its strength. A value equal to 1 indicates that we can predict one variable from another. In our case, the evaluation of the indicator will also be accompanied by the evaluation of a

statistical test with a 'zero hypotheses: the true correlation coefficient is equal to zero'. So, this hypothesis serves to confirm, not only the value but also the statistical significance of the correlation coefficient in each case. If the p-value of the statistical test is greater than the default standard value (usually alpha = 5% or 10%), then we accept the null hypothesis, i.e. the correlation coefficient is not statistically significant or there is no proven correlation between the two variables. If the p-value of the statistical test is less than the default standard value (alpha = 5% or 10%), then we reject the null hypothesis, so the correlation coefficient is statistically significant, there is a proven correlation between the two variables, positive or negative, as the case may be.

The estimation technique applied in this part of the paper is GLM¹, a broad class of models that includes regression and variance analysis (Agresti, 2003), not only for continuous variables but also for categorical ones. We have three components in these types of models:

- Random component
- Systematic component
- Connecting component

The random component relates to the probabilistic distribution of the dependent variable Y. We observe independent random variables Y₁, Y₂, . . . , Y_N who may have normal, Bernulian or Poissonian distributions. In the case of the systematic component, the random variables Y_i, I = 1, 2, . . . , N, have expected values μ_i , I = 1, 2, . . . , N. The systematic component includes explanatory variables x₁, x₂, . . . , x_k as linear predictors: $\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_k x_k$. The third component involves the connection between systematic and random components. Specifically, it shows how the mean E(Y) is related to the explanatory variables by means of a function g(μ). We have:

$$g(\mu) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_k x_k.$$

Results of inferential analysis

We define the variable 'risk_tol'² as a quantitative variable. The higher the *risk_tol* value, the more an individual is prone to risk. We estimate the Pearson correlation coefficients (estimating the statistical significance test as well) between the variable defined above and each of the decision-making variables: "time horizon", "amount invested", "perceived certainty", "type of asset_satisfaction", "time horizon _satisfaction", "amount invested_satisfaction". The following table presents the relevant results. We focus in each case on the value and the sign of the coefficient and on the p-value related to its statistical significance. Let us consider a predetermined alpha equal to 10%. We notice positive and statistically significant relationships

¹Generalized Linear Model

² It is calculated as the weighted average of the questions in section 4 of the questionnaire

between 'risk_tol' and the variables: "time horizon", and "amount invested". In the other cases, there is no proof of a symmetrical relationship between the tested variables.

Table 2 Results of the model regarding risk tolerance

```
> cor.test(risk_tol, time horizon)
      Pearson's      product-moment
      correlation
data: risk_tol and time
t = 2.0882, df = 178, p-value = 0.0382
alternative hypothesis: true
correlation is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
 0.008565733 0.294243585
sample estimates:
      cor
0.1546353
```

```
> cor.test(risk_tol, perceived certainty)
      Pearson's      product-moment
      correlation
data: risk_tol and certainty
t = 0.4406, df = 178, p-value = 0.66
alternative hypothesis: true correlation
is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
-0.1138063 0.1784084
sample estimates:
      cor
0.03300638
```

```
> cor.test(risk_tol, amount invested)
      Pearson's      product-moment
      correlation
data: risk_tol and value
t = 1.7883, df = 178, p-value = 0.07544
alternative hypothesis: true
correlation is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
-0.0136821 0.2737905
sample estimates:
      cor
0.1328471
```

The analysis shows that the investor risk tolerance affects investment decision-making in terms of time horizon and the amount of money invested in financial assets.

Conclusions of the analysis

Descriptive Statistics - Risk Tolerance Measurement Scale

The results of the analysis show that investors in financial assets in Albania show a low level of risk tolerance, preferring to focus on relatively safe forms of investment which are accompanied by relatively low returns (Annex C, Table C 1.1.1).

Interpretation of the Risk Tolerance Measurement Scale

From the statistical analysis of the presented results we reach the following conclusions:

Investors surveyed in the sample who have not expressed low tolerance to risk, have invested in 7-year government bonds, and have preferred to stay in investment funds since their first opening in 2012.

We notice a positive and statistically significant relationship between the investor risk tolerance and the amount invested in the financial asset. The amount invested depends on risk tolerance: the higher the risk tolerance, the more the investor is willing to invest a higher value in financial assets. Specifically, the surveyed investors in the sample who did not present low - risk tolerance, investing in financial assets of higher values.

The analysis shows that investor risk tolerance affects individual investment decision-making in financial assets.

Investment decision making in financial assets

Descriptive statistics - Investment decision making in financial assets

Most of the respondents are participants of the Raiffeisen Prestige Investment Fund in ALL, but they can also possess other financial assets outside the Fund, as well. The weights of the financial investments in the sample consist of the following, respectively in descending order: shares in the Investment Fund in ALL, time deposits, shares in the Investment fund in Euros, Albanian government bonds, treasury bills (Annex C, Table C 1.2.1: Investment Decision Making). The time horizon of these investments varies from one to ten years, having a mean of about 4 years (Annex C, Table C 1.2.2. Most investors (about 36%) state they have invested less than 1 million ALL in each type of investment they have made, 27% from 1mil - 3mil and the remaining percentage almost equally divided respectively 3mil - 5 mil and more than 5 million ALL (Annex C, Table C 1.2.1: Investor decision-making). Regarding the level of certainty or uncertainty they perceive for their investments, Likert scale responses with values of mean 3.5, values of minimum 3, and values of maximum 5¹,

¹ Annex C, Table C 1.2.3: *Perceived certainty about the investment made in financial asset*

show that investors in the sample feel relatively safe and do not consider the financial assets they own as risky ones¹.

Conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions are based on the primary and secondary data gathered to write this paper:

There is an intolerant attitude towards financial risk in Albania. This holds true for some identified motives:

Albanian investors, on the one hand, are used to relatively safe investments, such as bank deposits or treasury bills.

On the other hand, they were once 'punished' by the desire for high and fast profits as a result of high - risk tolerance, as happened during the pyramid schemes crisis, which caused long-term consequences in the country's economy².

This attitude of Albanian investors towards risk was proved by most of the respondents who clearly expressed low - risk tolerance. Although our sample consists of investors who meet certain criteria that may not be met by most of the individuals in the country outside the sample, still they are careful not to take too much risk as the Albanian investor is an investor used to investing mainly in traditional assets.

The level of risk tolerance depends on the time horizon and the amount invested. Regarding these two variables, we conclude that:

There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between risk tolerance and an investor's time horizon. The higher the risk tolerance, the longer the time horizon of the investor.

There is a positive relationship between investor risk tolerance and the amount of money invested in a financial asset. The higher the investor's risk tolerance, the greater the value of the investment he is willing to make.

Individual investors in Albania are generally satisfied with the investments made and prefer not to quit them. Their investment decision-making is limited to a few alternatives, investment funds, government securities, or time deposits, characterized as well by relatively low change dynamics.

¹ Actually financial assets offered in the country have a low degree of risk as a country with non developed financial markets (sophisticated financial products are not traded in these markets).

² People were unconscious about the presence of their high risk tolerance, we could better describe it as risk *ignorance*.

Recommendations

The greatest financial crisis that occurred in the Albanian financial system was a consequence of the Ponzi Schemes applied in the first years of the democratic system. The traces it left behind in the Albanian economy are still present even to the current investors of the financial market. This experience makes them behave cautiously and relatively less active in the market without giving impetus to market expansion. In this context, taking into consideration the current situation in which the Investment Funds are developing and a new private stock exchange has recently begun to work, it is necessary to increase the participation of middle and high-income savers as purchasers of financial assets in the financial market. This requires that supervisory institutions such as BoA[7] and AFSA[8], and also the other relevant stakeholders play an active role in reducing the risk perceived by investors in Albania. Some of the activities in which they may engage are undertaking informational campaigns regarding financial investment, the benefits and real risks relating to it, contributing thus to increasing financial literacy. At the same time, it is necessary to expand the range of financial assets offered in the country in order to better meet the requirements of the Albanian investor and thus attract an increasing number of medium and large savers.

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‘Web’ sources about R software and the respective packages/commands:

- [7] <https://www.r-project.org/>
- [8] <https://www.rstudio.com/>
- [9] <https://r-posts.com/>
- [10] <http://promptcloud.com/>
- [11] www.rdocumentation.org

Anexes

Annex a: Questionnaire About Investment Decision Making in Financial Assets

Table A1.1 Types of financial assets where you have invested:

Type of investment (financial asset)	Time horizon (months/years)	Amount of money invested in financial asset a.< 1.000.000 ALL b.1mil - 3mil ALL c.3mil - 5 mil ALL d. > 5 milion ALL	Fom 1-5, where 1-Feeling of uncertainty and 5- Feeling of certainty, how much safe do you feel about your investment?
a. Saving deposit			1 2 3 4 5
b. treasury bills			1 2 3 4 5
c.treasury bonds			1 2 3 4 5
d. pension fund			1 2 3 4 5
e.Prestige mutual fund (ALL)			1 2 3 4 5
f. Invest mutual fund (€)			1 2 3 4 5
g. Vision mutual fund (ALL)			1 2 3 4 5

Table A1.1 From 1-5, where 1-not at all and 5- completely, are you satisfied with the investment decisions you have made, regarding:

Choice of type of financial asset	1	2	3	4	5
Time horizon in financial asset	1	2	3	4	5
Amount of money invested in financial asset	2	3	4	5	

ANNEX B: RISK TOLERANCE SCALE

1. In general, how would your best friend describe you as a risk taker?
 - a. A real gambler
 - b. Willing to take risks after completing adequate research
 - c. Cautious
 - d. A real risk avoider

2. You are on a TV game show and can choose one of the following. Which would you take?
 - a. \$1,000 in cash
 - b. A 50% chance at winning \$5,000
 - c. A 25% chance at winning \$10,000
 - d. A 5% chance at winning \$100,000

3. You have just finished saving for a “once-in-a-lifetime” vacation. Three weeks before you plan to leave, you lose your job. You would:
 - a. Cancel the vacation
 - b. Take a much more modest vacation
 - c. Go as scheduled, reasoning that you need the time to prepare for a job search
 - d. Extend your vacation, because this might be your last chance to go first-class

4. If you unexpectedly received \$20,000 to invest, what would you do?
 - a. Deposit it in a bank account, money market account, or an insured CD
 - b. Invest it in safe high-quality bonds or bond mutual funds
 - c. Invest it in stocks or stock mutual funds

5. In terms of experience, how comfortable are you investing in stocks or stock mutual funds?
 - a. Not at all comfortable
 - b. Somewhat comfortable
 - c. Very comfortable

6. When you think of the word "risk", which of the following words comes to mind first?

- a. Loss
- b. Uncertainty
- c. Opportunity
- d. Thrill

7. Some experts are predicting prices of assets such as gold, jewels, collectibles, and real estate (hard assets) to increase in value. bond prices may fall; however, experts tend to agree that government bonds are relatively safe. Most of your investment assets are now in high-interest government bonds. What would you do?

- a. Hold the bonds
- b. Sell the bonds, put half the proceeds into money market accounts, and the other half into hard assets
- c. Sell the bonds and put the total proceeds into hard assets
- d. Sell the bonds, put all the money into hard assets, and borrow additional money to buy more

8. Given the best and worst case returns of the four investment choices below, which would you prefer?

- a. \$200 gain best case; \$0 gain/loss worst case
- b. \$800 gain best case; \$200 loss worst case
- c. \$2,600 gain best case; \$800 loss worst case
- d. \$4,800 gain best case; \$2,400 loss worst case

9. In addition to whatever you own, you have been given \$1,000. You are now asked to choose between:

- a. A sure gain of \$500
- b. A 50% chance to gain \$1,000 and a 50% chance to gain nothing

10. In addition to whatever you own, you have been given \$2,000. You are now asked to choose between:

- a. A sure loss of \$500
- b. A 50% chance to lose \$1,000 and a 50% chance to lose nothing

11. Suppose a relative left you an inheritance of \$100,000, stipulating in the will that you invest ALL the money in ONE of the following choices. Which one would you select?

- a. A savings account or money market mutual fund
- b. A mutual fund that owns stocks and bonds
- c. A portfolio of 15 common stocks

- d. Commodities like gold, silver, and oil Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning Volume 21, Issue 2 2010 53

12. If you had to invest \$20,000, which of the following investment choices would you find most appealing?

- a. 60% in low-risk investments, 30% in medium-risk investments, 10% in high-risk investments
- b. 30% in low-risk investments, 40% in medium-risk investments, 30% in high-risk investments
- c. 10% in low-risk investments, 40% in medium-risk investments, 50% in high-risk investments

13. Your trusted friend and neighbor, an experienced geologist, is putting together a group of investors to fund an exploratory gold mining venture. The venture could pay back 50 to 100 times the investment if successful. If the mine is a bust, the entire investment is worthless. Your friend estimates the chance of success is only 20%. If you had the money, how much would you invest?

- a. Nothing
- b. One month’s salary
- c. Three month’s salary
- d. Six month’s salary

Annex C. Statistical Tests of Variables

C.1 Variable Descriptive Statisticals

C.1.1- Risk Tolerance Measurement Scale

Table C 1.1.1: Risk tolerance Measurement Scale

Simple frequencies					Percentages			
Question	A	B	c	d	a	b	C	D
1	73	68	33	6	40.5556	37.7778	18.3333	3.3333
2	66	71	34	9	39.4444	36.6667	18.8889	5.0000
3	78	60	33	9	43.3333	33.3333	18.3333	5.0000
4	63	69	41	7	38.3333	35.0000	22.7778	3.8889
5	76	58	32	14	42.2222	32.2222	17.7778	7.7778
6	59	60	40	21	33.3333	32.7778	22.2222	11.667
7	68	56	45	11	37.7778	31.1111	25.0000	6.1111

8	64	59	34	23	35.5556	32.7778	18.8889	12.778
9	68	61	38	13	37.7778	33.8889	21.1111	7.2222
10	77	58	34	11	42.7778	32.2222	18.8889	6.1111
11	65	64	30	21	36.1111	35.5556	16.6667	11.667
12	70	62	33	15	38.889	34.444	18.3333	8.3333

C.1.2 – Investor decision making

Table C 1.2.1: Investor decision making

Variable		Simple frequencies	Percentages
Type of investment in financial asset	Saving Deposit	68	27.09163
	T Bills	10	3.98406
	Government Bonds	14	5.57768
	Pension Fund	6	2.39044
	Investment Fund <i>Prestige</i> (L)	100	39.84064
	Investment Fund <i>Invest</i> (€)	42	16.73307
	Investment Fund <i>Vision</i>	11	4.38247
Amount invested in financial asset	< 1 mil L	91	36.32479
	1mil - 3mil	70	27.77778
	3mil - 5 mil	45	17.94872
	> 5 milion L	45	17.94872

Table C 1.2.2: Time horizon

> basicStats(time)	
nobs	251.000000
NAs	18.000000
Minimum	0.080000
Maximum	10.000000
1. Quartile	2.000000
3. Quartile	5.000000
Mean	3.808498
Median	4.000000
Sum	887.380000
SE Mean	0.130085
LCL Mean	3.552200
UCL Mean	4.064796
Variance	3.942826
Stdev	1.985655
Skewness	0.084248
Kurtosis	-0.684940

Graph C1.2.1: Time horizon

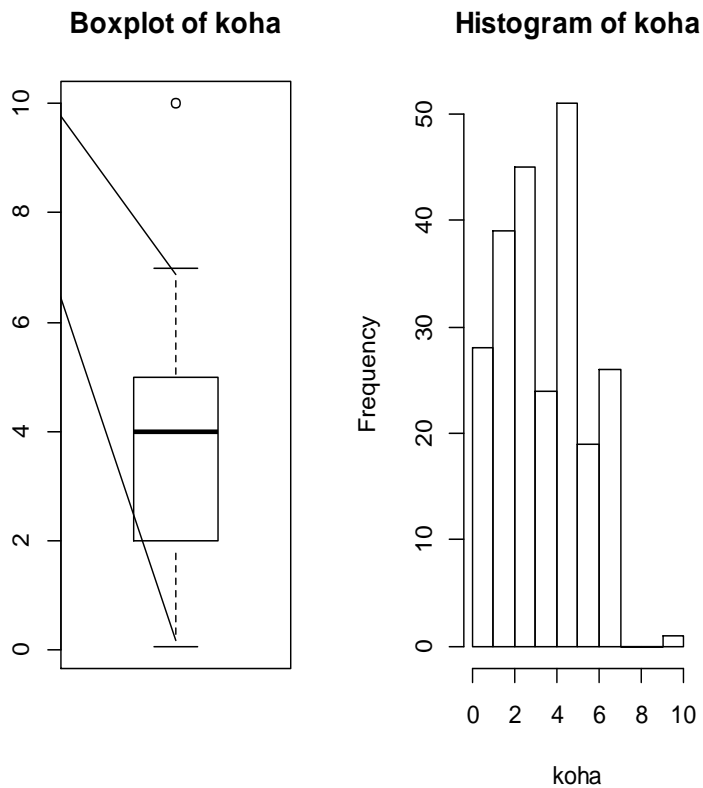


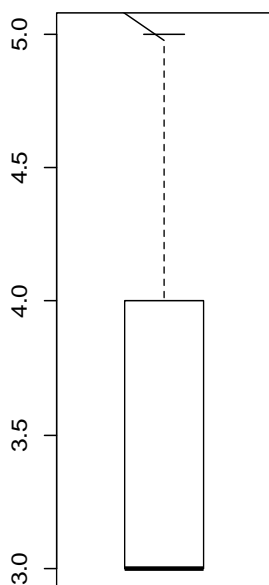
Table C 1.2.3: Perceived certainty about the investment made in financial asset

<code>> basicStats(certainty)</code>	
nobs	251.000000
NAs	28.000000
Minimum	3.000000
Maximum	5.000000
1. Quartile	3.000000
3. Quartile	4.000000
Mean	3.511211
Median	3.000000

Sum	783.000000
SE Mean	0.045329
LCL Mean	3.421880
UCL Mean	3.600541
Variance	0.458207
Stdev	0.676910
Skewness	0.957158
Kurtosis	-0.311130

Graph C 1.2.2: *Perceived certainty about the investment made in financial asset*

Boxplot of siguria



Histogram of siguria

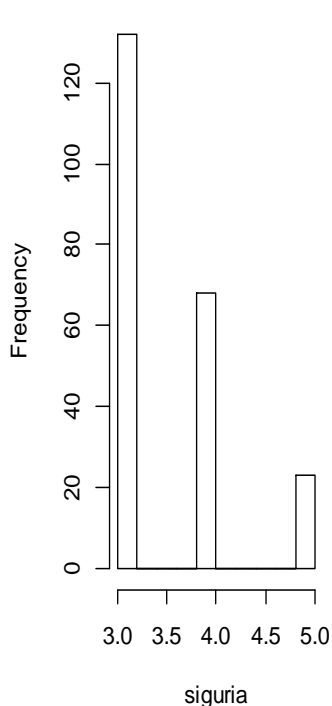
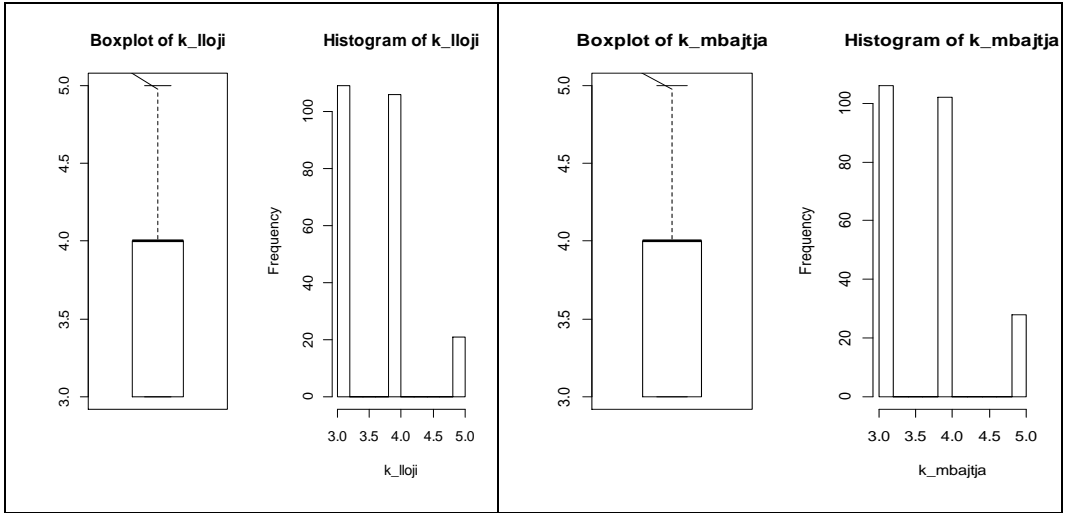


Table C 1.2.4: What is your level of satisfaction?

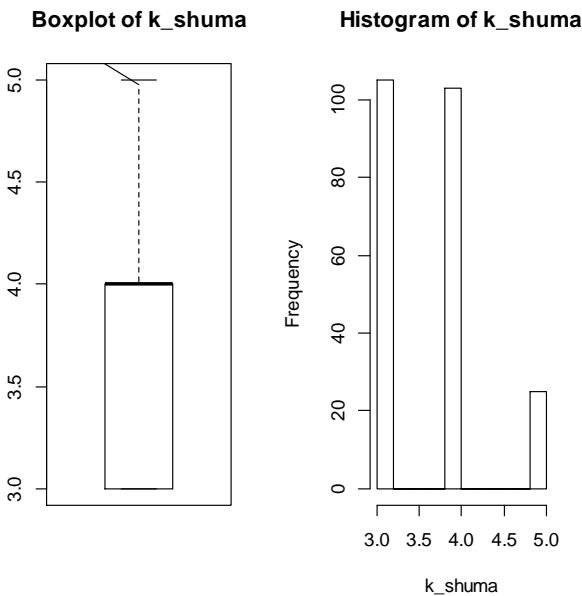
Descriptive Statistics	What is your level of satisfaction?		
	Type of investment	Time horizon	Amount invested in financial asset
	> basicStats(k_type)	>basicStats(k_length)	>basicStats(k_amount)
nobs	251.000000	251.000000	251.000000
NAs	15.000000	15.000000	18.000000
Minimum	3.000000	3.000000	3.000000
Maximum	5.000000	5.000000	5.000000
1. Quartile	3.000000	3.000000	3.000000
3. Quartile	4.000000	4.000000	4.000000
Mean	3.627119	3.669492	3.656652
Median	4.000000	4.000000	4.000000
Sum	856.000000	866.000000	852.000000
SE Mean	0.041861	0.044174	0.043552
LCL Mean	3.544647	3.582464	3.570844
UCL Mean	3.709590	3.756519	3.742460
Variance	0.413559	0.460512	0.441949
Stdev	0.643086	0.678610	0.664793
Skewness	0.525014	0.512849	0.511910
Kurtosis	-0.683294	-0.796976	-0.750643

Graph C1.2.3: What is your level of satisfaction regarding the type of investment?

Graph C1.2.4: What is your level of satisfaction regarding the time horizon?



Graph C1.2.5: What is your level of satisfaction regarding the amount invested in the financial asset?



The Aftermath of Donald Trump's Foreign Policy in the Middle East. What Are the New Administration's Major Objectives? - Case Study: Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Over the decades, US-Saudi cooperation established a unique nature-based on common international interests, particularly in the Middle East, culminating in the historic deal reached in 1974 to guarantee Saudi oil in exchange for American security commitments. The bilateral relationship has continued in this direction for nearly sixty years, but it appears that this friendship is heading down a tense path as a consequence of the policies pursued by the previous US administration headed by Donald Trump, who has stated from the start of his presidency that Saudi Arabia and other allied countries must pay in exchange for US protection. Another perspective is that the new US administration is progressively forsaking Saudi security interests in terms of security. For example, the White House halted a planned deal to sell arms to Riyadh, removed the Houthis from the list of terrorist groups, and lifted US support for the Arab coalition's operations in Yemen without announcing a transition in US focus away from the Middle East region and toward Asia and the extension of Chinese hegemony in the South China Sea. This paper summarizes the variations in the relationship between the two countries, beginning with former President Donald Trump and the obstacles he left behind and evolving to the current policy during President Joe Biden's time in office. Furthermore, it formulates an analytical view that allows us to understand the upcoming challenges, including the Yemeni file, the Iranian nuclear agreement, the shape of the forces, and the influence affecting the region.

Keywords: USA, Saudi Arabia, Middle East, Donald Trump, Joe Biden

Introduction

Relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States refers to bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States of America originally began in 1933 with the establishment of full diplomatic relations and were formalized in the 1951 Mutual Assistance Agreement. Two countries were allies: an ultra-conservative Islamic absolute monarchy and a secular constitutional republic. Former Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama were close to prominent members of the Saudi Royal Family. (*U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Saudi Arabia*)

Since the start of the contemporary US-Saudi alliance in 1945, the US has been willing to overlook many of the kingdom's most contentious issues in exchange for sustained oil production and support for US national security policy. (*Saudi-US Relations*) Since World War II, the two nations have worked together to combat Communism, promoting stable oil prices, oil field and oil transportation stability in the Persian Gulf, and economic stability in Western countries where the Saudis have invested. The two nations were particularly close partners against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and in the 1991 expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have a similar interest in sustaining the Gulf region's stability, security, and prosperity, and they work closely on a wide variety of regional and global problems. Saudi Arabia plays an essential role in ensuring the region's peace and prosperity, and it is a significant partner in security and counterterrorism operations, as well as military, diplomatic, and financial cooperation. Its soldiers collaborate closely with US military and law enforcement to protect both nations' national security interests. The United States and Saudi Arabia also have strong cultural and educational links, with tens of thousands of Saudi students studying at American colleges and universities each year, as well as multitudes of educational and cultural exchange visits. Through the International Visitor Leadership Program and other exchange programs, the United States also provides bright young and emerging Saudi leaders with the chance to see the United States and its institutions. (*U.S. Relations With Saudi Arabia, 2022*).

The United States and Saudi Arabia have a long history of security cooperation. With more than \$100 billion in current FMS cases, Saudi Arabia is the United States' largest foreign military sales (FMS) customer (*U.S. Relations With Saudi Arabia, 2022*). The US has funded three important security assistance institutions in Saudi Arabia through FMS: the Ministry of Defense, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Interior. The US Army Corps of Engineers has also played an important role in military and civilian building in Saudi Arabia since the 1950s.

Additional initiatives promote stronger cultural, educational, and institutional linkages between the US and Saudi Arabia. The connection between the United States and Saudi Arabia is built over more than seven decades of strong friendship and collaboration, strengthened by exchange opportunities that are critical to the

promotion of mutual understanding and the long-term growth of links between their two peoples. The United States offers technical assistance in sectors such as education, commerce, and economic development in collaboration with the Saudi government.

The US and Saudi Arabia have a strong economic relationship. Saudi Arabia's second largest trading partner is the United States, and Saudi Arabia is one of the United States' largest commercial partners in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is the third largest supplier of imported oil for the United States, supplying around 500,000 barrels per day to the American market. A Trade Investment Framework Agreement has been struck between the United States and Saudi Arabia. In April 2016, Saudi Arabia unveiled its Vision 2030 initiative, outlining aims to diversify the economy, including more trade and investment with the United States and other nations.

Literature review

The theoretical framework is multidisciplinary, consisting of bibliographic references for instance International Relations, which contain topics related to the concept of power in International Relations, balance of power, national interest, security, which are deeply implemented in US foreign policy, in a relatively new and well-defined geostrategic context, being a right-wing branch of American liberalism that emerged largely as a result of the Cold War. Concurrently, this paper aims to integrate articles or posts on online platforms, particularly in the case of former president Trump and Joe Biden, in order to conduct a thorough examination of their involvement in the observed region.

Methodology

The methods and techniques used aim at data collection, processing and analysis, but the main method used is content analysis. For this method, the press articles will be monitored, a content analysis will be performed and the speeches of the political characters relevant to the subject will be analyzed. The impact of the media is important, as the propaganda of US political campaigns is very much based on the information distributed by the media, a tool on which both Donald Trump and Joe Biden relied.

The present research is based on a critical analysis of the statements and press articles that outline both presidents' decisions regarding the situation in the Middle East, especially the evolution of the conflict in the region in relation to the decisions of Joe Biden and his predecessor, Donald J. Trump, from the presidential campaigns to the present, both politically, economically, militarily, security and socially.

The Trump's Middle East legacy

The press conference between US President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) on March 21, 2018 must rank among the most bizarre

encounters between two world leaders, and it did little to dispel the notion that Trump is a transactional president who has little regard for diplomatic formalities.

Saudi officials have celebrated the birth of a bilateral relationship that deteriorated significantly during the Obama administration, with Arab News headlined their coverage of the White House visit with the phrase "United States" (just as the crown prince's earlier March visit to London was tagged "United Kingdom"). In the same manner, Arab News editor Faisal Abbas cited "The Art of the Deal" and claimed that Saudi investment and backing were critical to President Trump's "America First" agenda and the development of new skilled employment for American workers. While these arguments have weight, President Trump's behavior and tone during the public portion of his meeting with MBS looked to suggest that he regarded his Saudi guests as solely a source of money and opportunity (*Ulrichsen K. C.*, 2018).

For decades, the foundation of the United States' connections with its Gulf political and security allies has grown well beyond the simplistic "oil-for-security" equation that the media occasionally reduces it to. The framework for bilateral connections with all six Gulf states has been institutionalized since the 1980s, and the Obama Administration did more than its predecessors to augment bilateral US links with individual Gulf states with greater US ties to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a bloc. The Obama Administration established a GCC-US Strategic Cooperation Forum in March 2012, and at its 2013 ministerial conference, it established a joint US-GCC Security Committee to handle problems of mutual concern such as counterterrorism.

Trump has nurtured Saudi Arabia and placed it at the core of his Middle East foreign policy since his inauguration, praising Riyadh's stance against Iran and thirst for American-made weaponry.

Trump and his advisers have characterized the strategy as a course correction following former President Barack Obama's diplomatic overtures to Iran and other tactics that they claim alienated Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab allies. Trump chooses Riyadh for his first trip abroad since taking office in May 2017, an extraordinary step for a newly elected president. The Saudis greet him royally, presenting him with a medal, revealing plans for armaments and commercial agreements, and inviting him to participate in a traditional sword dance. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt implement a restriction on Qatar immediately after Trump's departure to Riyadh.

In June 2017, the Trump administration informs Congress that it intends to resume supplies of precision-guided bombs to Saudi Arabia, which were halted by Obama due to concerns over civilian casualties from Saudi-led coalition bombings in Yemen. In December 2018, the Trump administration threatened to veto a resolution sponsored by the United Kingdom seeking justice for war crimes committed during the Yemen conflict and for Saudi Arabia and other governments to allow unhindered access for food and medication shipments to Yemeni ports. Finally, a resolution with watered-

down language is passed. Trump vetoes a bipartisan House resolution demanding an end to US military backing for the Saudi-led war in Yemen on April 16 (*Windrem R., De Luce D.*, 2019).

Relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia have always been focused on economic and transactional concerns, which have heightened with the election of US President Donald Trump, as described in the following: "After the United States, Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producing nation in the world. They have worked closely with us and have been very responsive to my requests to keeping oil prices at reasonable levels – so important for the world. As President of the United States I intend to ensure that, in a very dangerous world, America is pursuing its national interests and vigorously contesting countries that wish to do us harm. Very simply it is called America First!" (*Statement from President Donald J. Trump on Standing with Saudi Arabia*, 2018).

Biden's challenges regarding the US – Saudi partnership

In 2021, the Biden team worked hard to distinguish itself from Donald Trump's government, with a significant emphasis on re-establishing a cordial engagement with US friends throughout the world. President Biden inherited a complicated legacy in the Middle East from his two predecessors; the Obama administration repositioned the country away from the Bush administration's "War on Terror," issuing a 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance that committed the military to cutting spending and gradually disengaging from Middle Eastern conflicts. Tensions increased even higher when Donald Trump returned to the White House in 2016 with a more assertive foreign policy.

Nevertheless, Gulf governments remain concerned of the United States' internal move away from military intervention in the area. Requests to do so have been a running theme in the presidential campaigns of Obama, Trump, and Biden. Once in office, however, US presidents of both parties have encountered significant challenges in translating their campaign pledges into long-term, real programs. Ambitious goals, spurred by strategic realignment or public sentiment against century -long wars," have collided with the realities of the region's crises, as well as the entrenched interests of the United States military and its industrial allies in maintaining sustainable defense expenditures (*Mazzuco L., Alexander K.*, 2022).

With the Biden administration, the arms sales cycle continues uninterrupted, as multi-million-dollar weapon contracts successfully traverse maneuvers in Congress. State officials in Riyadh, though, remain skeptical of Washington's willingness to take the long view in the region, particularly in instances where its assistance is most needed. The question of replenishing depleted Saudi interceptor missile stocks is a significant case in point. In August 2021, Saudi Arabia signed a military cooperation pact with Russia, while the UAE acquired 80 Rafale fighter planes from France in

December 2021 and negotiated a \$3.5 billion contract with South Korea in mid-January 2022 to buy surface-to-air missiles (*Mazzuco L., Alexander K., 2022*).

It would be too premature to pass judgment on President Biden's foreign policy, but his remarks and policies throughout his first year allow us to outline the contours of a "Biden Doctrine." Though the government takes a more diplomatic tone than Trump, its goals nonetheless fall under the "America first" umbrella. The goal appears to be to reestablish trust in the US, acquire power on the world arena, and achieve its objectives by dialogue rather than unilateral action.

Beyond the boundaries of Biden's July 2022 travel to Saudi Arabia, it is in both nations' long-term interests for Saudi Arabia to eventually join the Abraham Accords. This is a goal that Biden should pursue, and a more stable bilateral relationship should allow him to do so in the last years of his first term. Growing Israeli-Saudi military and intelligence partnership raises the possibility of further commercial, technological, and individual interaction, as well as complete bilateral ties in the future. Normalization can aid to strengthen a partnership of moderate nations in the region, develop Saudi modernization, advancement, and industrialization goals, and offer the Palestinians a path to participate in normalization that improves, rather than hinders, prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

Biden's trip might involve a signal of what is achievable, such as resolving the status of Saudi islands in the Red Sea while maintaining Israeli ships' freedom of navigation, or expanding Israeli civilian overflights over Saudi territory. Extending the present UN-brokered truce in Yemen will also contribute to the normalization of US-Saudi relations, while leaving the door open for a more permanent solution (*Shapiro D., Dubowitz M., 2022*).

The common interests served by this partnership's stabilization should encourage Biden and the Saudi leadership to accept a framework for recognizing and advancing their respective basic strategic objectives. This strategy will also assist to guarantee that the US-Saudi cooperation does not experience extreme swings with each change in US government. Biden has always been critical of the Saudis, even before he termed them a "social outcast" during the 2020 presidential campaign. For this reason, he is well-positioned to enhance bipartisan congressional support and among the American people for the concept that this delicate, yet crucial, connection is worth preserving. That is an aim that Biden, the Saudis, and the majority of Americans embrace.

Epilogue

When Trump got elected, he swiftly welcomed Saudi Arabia as a significant ally and customer of US military equipment and services. His first journey overseas as president began with a long stay in Riyadh, where he promoted various contracts that he said had delivered extraordinary profits to US firms and jobs to US people. During

Trump’s first term, existing tensions between Democrats and Saudi Arabia grew fast, in part because Washington and Riyadh went to such efforts to underline their strategic convergence. Throughout, the Trump administration tended to support Riyadh.

Donald Trump has adopted a different approach, as he pledged throughout the 2016 campaign. There are undoubtedly concerns of continuity. The president urged partners to shoulder more of the regional security burden, resisted the temptation to send significant numbers of troops to Syria and other hotspots, and allowed Saudi Arabia’s participation in Yemen, as did Obama. From a critical standpoint, he deviated from his predecessor’s policies. Relations with Riyadh have improved dramatically since the Obama administration, when the US and Saudi administrations were uncertain.

During this trip to Saudi Arabia next month, President Joe Biden will attempt to repair relations with the country and its de-facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, reversing his commitment to label the state a “pariah” for its human-rights record. The Saudi destination, on the other hand, is set to be the main event as Biden attempts to motivate and encourage an increase in oil production, lower record-high gasoline prices. Biden’s determination to visit the kingdom demonstrates how his aspirations to reduce gasoline costs and further alienate Russia over its invasion of Ukraine have outweighed his means to pursue a tougher stance against Riyadh.

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The Practice of Café-Philo: A Proposal for Teaching and Evaluating Transversal Skills in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Internationally, it is essential to identify, plan and implement the training practices, inside the school, which deal with the personal growth of the individual in the wholeness of their personality and nature. For such reason, the teaching of transversal skills has become a widespread proposal, and also in Italy a bill was passed, which has raised two fundamental issues: how to develop the acquisition of these skills and how to develop an efficient evaluating criterion. This contribution aims at presenting the practice of café-philo as a possible methodology to build skills in secondary school students. Even if its theorisation and diffusion is quite recent, it is extremely interesting and promising, as it provides numerous benefits to the development of skills which can be identified in three macro-areas: reflective, communicative and ethic-value. Accordingly to the rules of café-philo you can evaluate the process of acquisition of the skills because, involving dialogic practice, sharing one own's experience and welcoming other people's ideas, it puts into a play all non-cognitive skills which otherwise would be difficult to evaluate. This practice is quite engaging and could help the scholastic institutions turn into a real fertile soil for the education of individuals that can act concretely, apply an independent critical thinking and their own various skills that would help them to stand out and find their way around in today's society. Moreover, in response to the legislative proposal it would also contrast the early school leaving consolidating the affection of students towards school itself.

Keywords: transversal skills, secondary school, café-philo, educational practice, critical thinking, debate

Introduction

Internationally, it is more and more essential to identify, plan and implement the training practices, inside the school, which deal with the personal growth of the individual in the wholeness of their personality and nature. For such reason, the proposal to introduce the teaching of transversal skills which are classified into three different categories has been consolidated. The first one includes the *Skills for life*

(Heckman et al., 2016), whose urgency had already been pointed out by OMS in 1992, which concern a number of strategies aimed at knowing how to steer autonomously, responsibly and critically with regard to daily decisions and situations, with positive consequences even on interpersonal relationships.

The second group concerns the *Soft skills*, presented by *World Economic Forum* in 2020 which defined them “as a combination of interpersonal and social skills” (Levasseur, 2013). The third one identifies the *Character skills*, which can be placed in the five big dimensions of extroversion, amicability, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience (Heckman & Kautz, 2016), and which are to be practised from an early age.

In accordance with this reliable international context which exhorts each nation to work on introducing transversal skills, Italy in considering this very topical proposal. In fact in the last few months in Italy a bill was proposed, Lupi et alii A.C. 273, passed by the Chamber and currently debated as Bill S. 2493 by the Senate, which involves the introduction of transversal skills in the didactics of schools at all levels through a three-years’ experimentation. Such a proposal has raised a lively debate about the configuration of the teaching methods of such skills and on the possible evaluating criterion to be used to evaluate the level of their acquisition by the students.

Entering the current debate and aiming to contribute to define efficient training practices, this contribution aims at presenting the practice of *café-philo*¹ as a possible methodology to build skills in secondary school students. Even if its theorisation and diffusion is quite recent, it is - as stated by the educator and moderator of *Socrates Café* Christopher Phillips (2001) and the philosopher Michel Tozzi (2002) - extremely interesting and promising, as it provides numerous benefits to the development of skills which can be identified in three macro-areas: reflective, communicative and ethic-value. It is a dialogic practice which involves sharing one own’s experience and welcoming other people’s ideas and, hence, all non-cognitive skills are in play so that, in progression, you can evaluate the process of acquisition of the skills accordingly to the rules of *café-philo*. This practice is quite engaging and could help the scholastic institutions turn into a real fertile soil for the education of individuals that can act concretely, apply an independent critical thinking and their own various skills that would help them to stand out and find their way around in today’s society. It would also consolidate the affection of students towards school itself, as opposed to the crisis affecting today’s school, which students perceive as a place opposed to life, ruled by boredom and the art of getting. In this way, such practices would also comply with the objective of the Bill to address, the phenomenon of early school leaving.

This article, therefore, starting from the current international scenario about the practice of transversal skills, will explain the reasons why the *café-philo* can be an

¹ The philosopher Marc Sautet held the first *café-philo* in July 1992 at Café des Phares in Paris.

efficient teaching practice in secondary school and it will clarify the learning objective which it is contributing to promote.

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Evaluation of Motivation, Expectation, and Present Situation in 3rd Year Undergraduate Students of German Language and Literature at the University of Rijeka, Croatia

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Abstract

In this article a closer look will be taken on motivation, expectation, and present situation of third year undergraduate students of German studies in Croatia at the University of Rijeka. Due to the author's extensive experience in teaching translation classes from Croatian to German for undergraduate students in the third year, it is noticeable that most students have problems in certain areas, i.e. they are not able to correctly translate short Croatian texts into German in terms of correct grammar and syntax, even when words were explained in advance to facilitate the process of translation and upon extensive grammar practice in the first and second year of undergraduate studies. As studying a language also requires a lot of self-study and interest in the language being studied, it is certainly not enough just to sit in the courses at the university and do only the most necessary things to somehow pass the exams. It is essential to be engaged intensively with the country, the culture, and the people, to take part in exchange programmes, travel as often as possible to the country whose language you are about to learn, take the opportunity to communicate with native speakers, watch films or TV shows, read books or magazines in the target language etc. Thanks to the new technologies, nowadays one has almost endless possibilities to be exposed to the target language, even if one does not have the opportunity to travel to the destination country. But to what extent do students use what is available to them and are they at all motivated for the necessary effort of self-study? To answer these questions, a questionnaire was prepared to gain a deeper insight into the students' motivation to enrol German language and literature at the university, their expectations of what the language study would be like and the present situation in their third year of undergraduate studies. The evaluation of the questionnaire should provide information on the extent to which the students were familiar with what to expect from their studies, how they deal with the requirements and challenges, to what extent they are willing and prepared to do something outside of the courses to improve their

language proficiency autonomously, what the study of German studies should serve them in the future and if self-study has a visible impact on their language proficiency, i.e. if students who do a certain amount of self-study do have better results.

Keywords: German as a foreign language, foreign language acquisition, German studies, self-study, self-assessment

Introduction

Learning and studying a foreign language is a lengthy process that requires a lot of motivation and work. Unlike learning the mother tongue, it is not driven by an inner need that is present in young children because they need to communicate with the outside world. Moreover, up to a certain age, children learn a language intuitively by imitating what they hear from the adults around them. Foreign languages are usually learned at a later age, at school or in language courses. Nowadays, in most European countries EFL is learned at preschool age because it is the lingua franca and English must be spoken in all professions. However, other foreign languages such as German are not taught at such an early age.

In Croatia, German is taught less and less in elementary and secondary schools and is usually taught as a second or third foreign language, so the language skills of students starting German studies are not at a high level. In previous years, a minimum level of B1 according to the CEFR was required to begin studying German, but for the past three years there have been no requirements regarding language proficiency, so students who have never learned German before can enrol in German studies, making it more difficult and requiring much more motivation for extra work and self-study to achieve an adequate level of proficiency.

The program is divided into three sections: linguistics, literature, and language practice. Students are required to take language tutorials in which they learn grammar and writing skills and expand their vocabulary. In the first two years, the focus is on grammar and writing skills; in the third year, they read short German and Croatian texts on various topics, familiarize themselves with terminology, and then translate short texts on similar topics into German and vice versa.

Especially those students who did not learn German in elementary or secondary school need to deepen their language skills, which requires a certain motivation to learn and self-study. Another factor is the expectations with which they enter German studies. Do they know what is expected of them, and are they enrolled for the right reason? What do they want to do after they graduate? And to what extent have they chosen the right course of study for them? Sometimes you get the impression that they have a completely wrong idea of what it means to study a language. Most of the time, they expect something like a language course and are then overwhelmed by

what is demanded of them: a lot of reading and getting to know German authors and literary epochs, morphology, syntax, semantics and, on top of that, good language skills.

Foreign language acquisition

Foreign language acquisition has been studied over a long period of time and one of the factors involved in foreign language acquisition is the age of the learner. According to Apeltauer (1987), it is assumed that children have a natural aptitude for learning (foreign) languages, so that they can acquire them more easily than adults. It was even assumed that this ability is lost with puberty and that it is very difficult to learn further languages after that. Further research found that learners master different areas faster depending on their age because they have different areas of focus.

There are several hypotheses about how a foreign language is learned:

The *contrastive hypothesis* is based on contrastive linguistics and behaviourist learning theories. The framework is provided by contrastive analyses of linguistic and communicative units; semantic, lexical, and grammatical structures of two or more languages are compared. The *contrastive hypothesis* was coined by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957). The comparison of two languages is used to predict interference and transfer and thus to support foreign language learning and teaching. The focus is on sentence and phonetic structure and distributional differences between the native and foreign languages, while lexical and semantic aspects are ignored and no pragmatic comparisons are made. Problems in the comparison of two languages occur when certain units are missing in one language, e.g. the absence of articles in Russian or Croatian. This leads to various difficulties in learning a foreign language, depending on the native language of the learner.

The *identity hypothesis* assumes that the acquisition of the first and second languages is identical. The basis of this theory is nativism, i.e. Chomsky's hypothesis, in which he assumes an innate language acquisition mechanism, which he calls LAD (Language Acquisition Device). In this context, the development of linguistic competence in the second language depends on the skills acquired in the first language and on when one starts learning the second language. This theory states that second language acquisition follows the same principles as first language acquisition and uses the same linguistic structures. Thus, in both first and second language acquisition, the learner uses innate potentials and cognitive processes from first language acquisition to acquire the second language in the same pattern, i.e., in the same order, as he or she once acquired the first language.

The *interlanguage hypothesis* builds on the behaviourist learning theory of Skinner and the nativist learning theory of Chomsky. This hypothesis assumes that a foreign language is learned by first creating an intermediate language (interlanguage) or learner language in learners. The interlanguage hypothesis was first coined by

Reinecke (1935) and later further developed and introduced into foreign language acquisition research by Selinker (1969), who also coined the term interlanguage (abbr.: IL). Basically, this interlanguage is assumed to contain various elements that include features of both the first and second language, but also to have independent features that cannot be derived from either the first or second language. Interlanguage is subject to constant change and rapid evolution as the learner is constantly confronted with the language being learned and receives new input.

The *interdependence hypothesis* can be traced back to Cummins (1984). His interdependence or iceberg hypothesis describes the relationship between first language and learning another language. He assumes that the degree of literalness of the native language is responsible for the success of second language acquisition. Cummins sees the interdependence between the native language and the second language in the cognitive-academic language domain, that is, in the mastery of morphology, grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Cummins developed the iceberg model, according to which there is a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) beneath the surface of the L1 and the L2, i.e., a common literality of languages that is responsible for the learning of both languages. According to Cummins, each language has certain surface features, but beneath this surface are the literalities that are common to all languages.

In the *interaction hypothesis*, the competence of a language is assumed to be acquired through a particular form of interaction, the negotiation of meaning. The negotiation of meaning is nothing more than a conversation based on an emergent problem. The problem is solved by discussing it with an interlocutor and following this interaction the speaker may change his problematic statement. This type of interaction sets in motion cognitive processes that are characteristic of the onset of skill building in a language. In the interaction hypothesis, Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis and Swain's (1985) output hypothesis are combined in the form of interaction. Successful language acquisition requires not only comprehensible input but also comprehensible output.

In the 1990s, it was recognised that there were not only qualitative but also quantitative differences between first language acquisition and the acquisition of other languages, thus several new models were developed to describe multiple language learning. Concepts of multilingualism, learning strategies, and learning approaches have been developed. In addition, concepts such as learner autonomy and learner consciousness are appearing, indicating that the learner is now becoming the focus, as there are individual differences in foreign language acquisition that are not considered in the older theories.

The *Dynamic Model of Multilingualism* (DMM) focuses on a dynamic development of individual learning processes, the multilingual speaker is seen as a complex psycholinguistic system combining individual language systems from the L1, the L2

and the L3. Here, the theory assumes that all languages that exist in this multilingual system have an impact on the overall system. One focus of DMM is to study the dynamics and change of the individual language system as it evolves due to biological factors and the behaviour of living organisms. The second focus is on creating a model of multilingualism that accurately describes the dependent and independent variables and makes predictions about how the multilingual system will evolve.

Like the DMM, the *language-switching model* of Williams and Hammarberg (1998) is a socio- and psycholinguistic model that examines the dynamic development of individual learning processes. In the language switching model, the language under study is considered L3, regardless of how many languages are learned. All languages learned prior to the language under study are referred to as L2s and thus take on different roles and functions, regardless of how the L3 relates to them chronologically or structurally. Switching between languages, code-switching, does not occur unintentionally; rather, the learner consciously decides at which moment to use which language. Basically, the language-switching model assumes that the learner can distinguish well between the languages already learned and those yet to be learned, but that there is mixing or interference between those languages. It also assumes that literality in the different languages is usually at the same level.

Hufeisen's (2003) *factor model* is linguistically oriented, where the L2 has a very large impact on the learning of other foreign languages, as it is the cornerstone for learning other foreign languages. In the acquisition of the L2, competencies are acquired that are not present in the acquisition of the L1 or at the beginning of learning the L2. Hufeisen divides the factors for learning a foreign language into learner-internal and learner-external factors. In this context, Hufeisen attaches great importance to interlanguage and sees motivation as another important factor in foreign language acquisition. Motivation occurs only when learning an L2, since it is not motivation that is responsible for the acquisition of the L1, but an inner need for communication (intrinsic motivation). The situation is different with the L2, since the learner has to put in some effort when acquiring the L2, the natural need for communication is no longer sufficient and motivation is the most important factor. Thus, L1, L2 and further foreign languages are not all acquired in the same way, but differ in their linguistic, internal and external conditions.

Aronin and O'Laoire's (2003) *ecological model of multilingualism* is sociolinguistically oriented and views language as an important factor in an individual's identity construction. The term "ecological" refers to the cultural contexts in which multilingualism is studied. At EMM, multilingualism is understood as a collective state in which multiple individuals are multilingual and multiple languages are in contact with each other. It focusses on the language systems and language codes that an individual uses, whereas multilingualism refers to a single individual and the total number of languages he or she uses, which also includes other factors such as meta-linguistic knowledge, social influences, emotions, personal attitudes, and cognitive

aspects, i.e., individual abilities and resources, but which reflect basic features of multilingualism. It can be concluded that each person carries a very complex form of multilingualism, which speaks for a very individual language acquisition and makes it very difficult to predict the course of the language acquisition process.

Groseva (1998) postulates in her *foreign language acquisition model* that the learner draws on source language knowledge and formulates hypotheses in a meta- or target language, which he then verifies and corrects through feedback from his interlocutor. It assumes that exclusively learner-internal factors are responsible for foreign language acquisition and attributes great importance to the L1 and the L2 for the acquisition of other foreign languages. Groseva assumes that L3 acquisition does not begin until adolescence, so that linguistic experience in L1 and L2 can already be assumed. Therefore, according to Groseva, L3 acquisition is more conscious and intensive than L2 acquisition, which raises the question of how the L2 influences further language acquisition processes.

Objective and Starting Position of the Study

According to Hufeisen's factor model, there are certain factors in the acquisition of an L2 or L3, one of which is motivation, since an internal need for communication, as is present in learning the L1, is not found in learning an L2 or L3. Motivation seems to be an important factor in learning a foreign language that makes the learner engage with the foreign language, expose himself to the foreign language, and learn by himself to the required extent. Groseva also points to the motivational factor for learning a foreign language and assumes that learner-internal factors predominate in language acquisition.

The starting point of the study was the author's impression that students lack motivation for study and self-study and exposure to the target language. The student groups in German Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka are not homogeneous, because some students have learned German as a first foreign language, others as a second foreign language at school, and recently even students who have not learned German at all can enrol in German Studies. As a result, students have to spend more or less time on self-study and language improvement. At the beginning of German studies teachers always point out that it is very important to invest some effort in self-study, to take advantage of student exchange programmes such as Erasmus, or to watch German TV and read German books or magazines that interest them in order to get in touch with the target language.

According to the authors mentioned above, it is inevitable to expose oneself to the target language and interact as much as possible with native speakers in order to acquire as much knowledge as possible. Most students do not feel the need to use the target language, even in class, because they can communicate with their peers and the teacher in their native language.

The aim of this study is to gain a deeper insight into the students' self-assessment, their motivation, their views on self-study, their expectations of German studies and their fulfilment and, in a final step, to show a correlation between expectation, effort invested and language competence.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative research. The aim of this research is to investigate third-year German language students' self-assessment of language proficiency and motivation for self-study and their interest in the country and people of the target language. In addition, the relationship between invested effort and final language proficiency is investigated. Data collection and analysis were based on a questionnaire with a total of 10 questions, which was prepared by the author herself in view of the objectives of the study.

The questionnaire contained open-ended questions, except for the question on self-assessment of the level according to the CEFR and a question on the evaluation of interest from 1-10. It was anonymous and was given to 26 students 3rd year students at the end of their undergraduate studies in the last session of the translation course.

Analysis and interpretation of findings

The first question of the questionnaire was a self-assessment of language proficiency to find out how students evaluate their own abilities. Students were asked to assess their language level according to the CEFR from A1 to C2. Some students were not familiar with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, so the author had to explain which level corresponds to which language skills.

The result of the first question was that one out of 26 students assigned their language skills to level B1, two students assessed their skills to level B1/B2, 14 students assessed their skills to level B2, two students assessed their skills to level B2/C1, and six students assessed their skills to level C1 as shown in the diagram below. The answers to the first question show that students mostly consider themselves to be at the B2 level, followed by C1, and a few think they are at the B1 level. Two students were not quite sure if they were at a particular level, so they wrote B1/B2 or B2/C1. In summary, the students seem quite aware of their level of knowledge and assess it realistically.

In the chart, the undecided students who assessed their language proficiency between two levels, i.e. B1/B2 and B2/C1, were added to both categories:

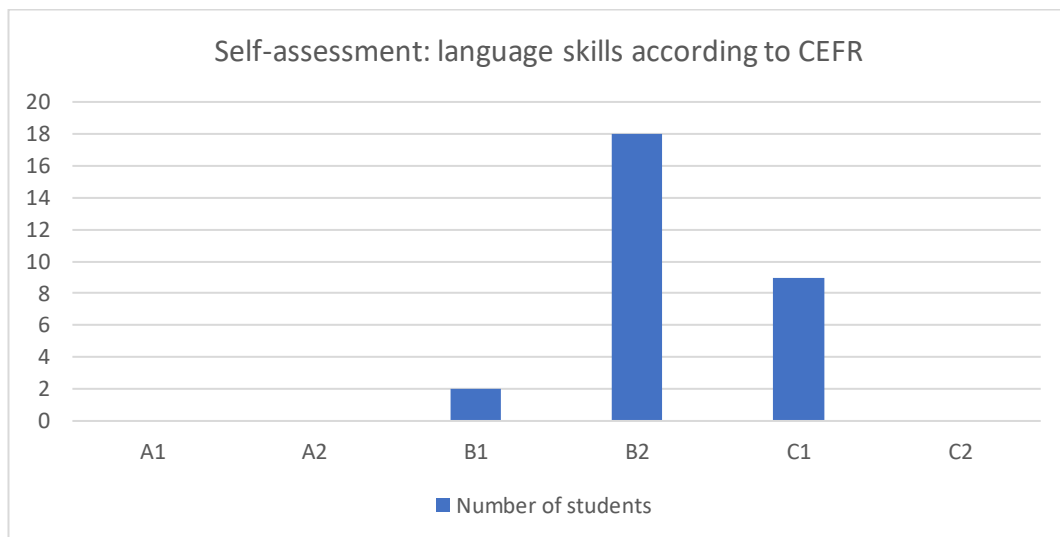


Chart 1: Self-assessment: language skills according to CEFR

The second question was divided into (a), (b), (c), and (d) because self-study was asked in specific areas: under a) they were asked how often they read books, magazines or newspapers that are not required within their German studies at the university, under b) how often they watch German movies, series or similar, under c) how often they have gone/go abroad (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) or have participated in a student exchange and under d) how often they talk to a native speaker (incl. chats on the Internet, personal communication, communication with tourists or similar).

The results were the following:

a) 11 students answered that they read rarely or too little, i.e. once in a while (newspapers or books), 3 students answered that they read German texts very often or often, 3 students read German texts at least once a week, 2 students answered that they never read German texts (neither books nor articles nor newspapers), 1 probably reads an hour a week (poems or articles), 1 student stated exactly that he/she reads a book within ten days and reads newspapers or articles a few times per week, 1 student stated that he/she reads two to three times a week, 1 student reads texts in German almost every day, 1 student wrote that he/she reads at least one text in German per day, 1 student answered that he/she sometimes reads some articles but always reads Wikipedia in German and 1 student answered that he/she reads 4-5 hours once a week.

According to the responses, students do not make much use of available written resources, as 11 students read books, magazines or newspapers rarely or not often enough, even though everything is available online nowadays, 2 students even stated

that they never read anything in German other than required for class. The range stated is from daily to sometimes. It is interesting to note that only one student reads German texts almost every day, all others do so only rarely, because reading once a week or a few times a month cannot be considered regular reading and intensive self-study.

b) 5 students watch German¹ series or videos on YouTube or TV daily or almost daily, 10 students watch German movies/series etc. sometimes or very rarely, 4 students watch them often or very often, 1 student watches 2-3 German movies a month, 1 student watches German movies or series once a week, 3 students watch them two-three times a month, 1 student watches them a few times a week, 1 student does not watch German movies or series at all.

Although media is almost inexhaustible nowadays and there are numerous providers like Netflix, YouTube, iptv etc. where you can watch movies, series, documentaries and everything your heart desires, only 5 students watch German series or videos almost every day, while 10 students watch them sometimes or very rarely. Again, one student does not watch German media at all and all others fall into the category of "once a week" or "a few times a month", which again cannot be considered regular exposure to German-language media and intensive self-study.

c) 1 student has been abroad ten times (concerts, trips or sporting events), but never as part of a student exchange, 3 students have been abroad once (day trip), 4 students have been abroad a few times (short trips), 3 students have been abroad twice, 8 students are abroad frequently (every year, once or twice a year), 3 students have never been abroad, 1 student has been abroad on a scholarship for one month, 1 student has been to Germany in secondary school as part of Erasmus (duration not specified), 2 students have been abroad 4 or 5 times.

One way to improve language skills is certainly to study abroad, whether through Erasmus or other scholarships, through a simple holiday abroad or a student job, because according to the *interaction hypothesis*, it is necessary to negotiate meaning, which is only possible when there is communication with an interlocutor. If the learner does not produce language, successful language acquisition cannot occur. For this reason, the university offers a wide range of scholarship programmes like Erasmus or others, and the Department of German also has collaborations, such as internships in Germany, but students rarely or never take advantage of these opportunities. As can be seen from the questionnaire, only one student has been abroad as part of Erasmus (in secondary school), 8 students are frequently abroad due to family connections, but most have rarely or never been abroad, which again

¹ German here refers not only to German productions but also to dubbed productions from other countries.

indicates a lack of interest in traveling to the country of the target language and communicating with native speakers.

d) Since Croatia is a tourist destination and many German-speaking tourists visit Croatia every year, various student jobs are offered, whether as waiters, animators, guides, work-placements in tourist offices, etc. As a result, there are opportunities to use the German language at home if one cannot or does not want to go abroad. Nevertheless, 16 students out of 26 state that they rarely or never communicate in German outside of the university, only 6 students state that they communicate frequently in German (especially during the tourist season), 4 students range from a few times a month to only when abroad, which is very rarely considering the previous question. Based on these results in the second question, students seem to lack general interest or motivation to take advantage of opportunities offered to them to improve their language skills outside the university in their home country or even within the university (e.g., scholarships).

The third question was aimed at the students' opinion whether they think it is necessary to learn by themselves during their German studies and to justify their opinion.

24 out of 26 students answered that it is necessary to learn by themselves during German studies. The reasons they gave varied: because lectures only give guidelines on what to learn, because languages are dynamic and constantly changing, because a language cannot be learned only at school or university, because one has to start thinking in the foreign language in order to understand the language better, because studies do not offer enough to expand vocabulary besides theory, because lectures are of no use if you do not consolidate the learning material at home, you have to expose yourself to the language constantly and as often as possible, because you know yourself where you can improve your knowledge, because additional exercises help us to improve our knowledge, only lectures in German are not enough to learn the language properly. 1 student thinks it is not necessary, but it would be good if they learn by himself and 1 student thinks that self-study is not necessary at all.

Considering the fact that there are different ways of self-study, as indicated in the second question, and the students obviously do not make much use of it, it is interesting to see that a large majority of them, 24 out of 26, answered the third question with the necessity of self-study during the study of German, and they also give good reasons for it, as mentioned above, which leaves open the question why they do not do it, although they consider it necessary?

As mentioned above, the author believes that motivation is one of the most important factors for learning a language, and it is also the driving force for self-study. The fourth question refers exactly to this: what motivates students to self-study? This was the question with the most nuanced responses. Almost every student had a different idea of what would likely motivate him/her to (continue) self-study:

3 students answered that they can only motivate themselves, 3 students answered that he/she does not know, 3 students answered that if learning materials were more interesting and readily available, 5 students answered that a reward in form of a financial benefit, more free time, a study group or trips to German cities, would motivate them, 2 students answered that motivation would be if some courses required the acquisition of something not learned in the course, 2 students answered that living and working abroad would motivate him/her, 1 student answered that success at university and better communication with native German speakers, 1 student answered that less pressure at university, 1 student answered, that probably an interesting application for subjects he/she is interested in would motivate him/her, 1 student did not answer this question, 1 student answered that nothing could motivate him/her, 1 student answered that having German speaking friends outside the university would motivate him/her, 1 student answered that more free time and interesting topics would motivate him/her, 1 student answered that if they could learn all the things that interest them, e.g. watching movies, series etc. in German language, would motivate them:

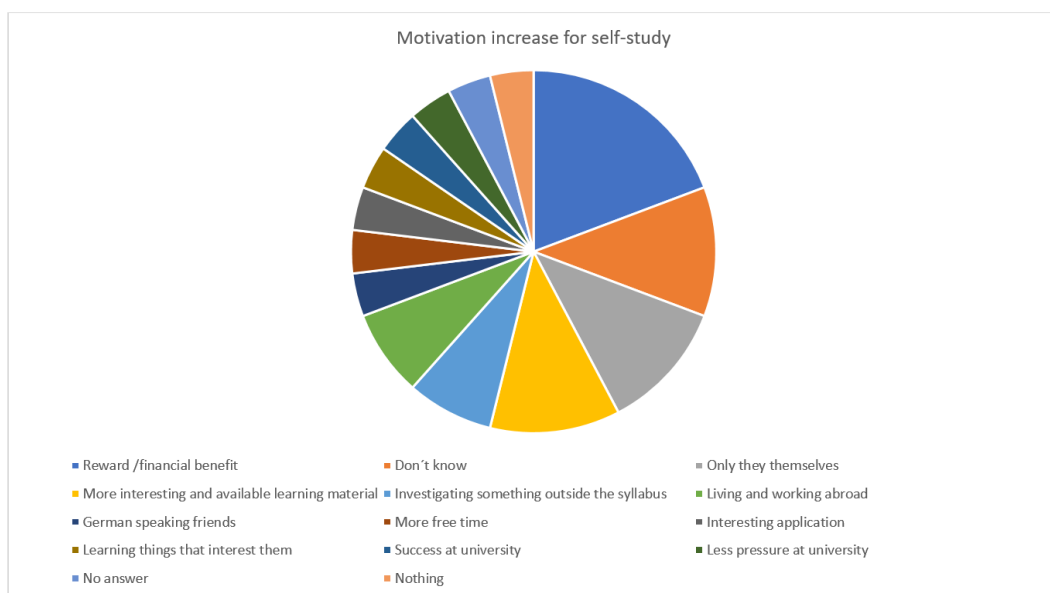


Chart 2: Motivation increase for self-study

An interesting finding is that the most frequently mentioned answer is a reward, either in the form of a financial benefit or in the form of travel or free time, followed by more interesting and available learning material, do not know, and that they can only motivated themselves. In the questionnaires, the financial advantage refers to working for money, i.e. take on jobs, i.e. translations that they would like to do during their studies and get paid for it. This is indeed an interesting point of view, because

for translating and interpreting the language skills must be at a very high level, which they have not yet reached.

Since the second question was about how much they learn themselves in terms of watching German movies, series, etc., it is somewhat surprising that one student answered that "if they could learn everything they were interested in, e.g., watching movies, series, etc. in German." Obviously, the expectation here is that movies, series, etc. will be watched in classes at the university.

It is to be expected or suspected that someone who enrolls in language study is also interested in the country and its people. If the interest is there, then that in turn can be a motivation to look more closely at languages and regional studies outside of the courses at the university. The fifth question was designed to determine, on a scale of 1-10, how interested the students are in Germany and Germans (politics, economics, lifestyle, etc.).

For 7 students the interest in Germany on the scale of 1-10 is an 8, for 6 students a 7 and also for 6 students a 9. For 3 students the interest is a 6, for another 2 students a 5 and 1 student each indicated the interest with a 10 and a 4. As a conclusion it can be said that interest in Germany and the Germans varies on a scale of 1-10 between 4 and 10:

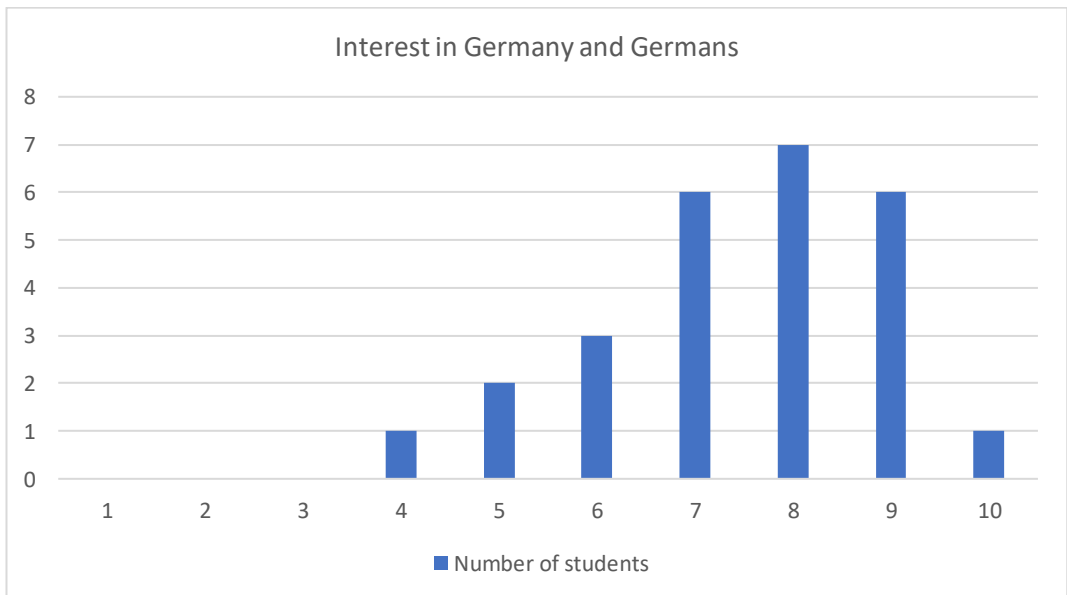


Chart 3: Interest in Germany and Germans

The sixth question aimed at how much the students know about Germany and its inhabitants (customs, way of life, mentality, etc.):

8 students answered that they know at least something about German customs, etc. know, 4 students think they know enough, 4 students answered that they know a lot through German studies, the Internet, TV and German YouTuber, 3 students answered that their knowledge is average, 2 students know a lot, 1 student thinks he/she knows a lot and is happy to gain more knowledge every day, 1 student says he/she was born in Germany, has German relatives and learned a lot about the people through his/her work as a waiter during semester breaks, 1 student answered that he/she knows a lot because he/she watches documentaries and uses other media to get to know the culture better, 2 students did not answer the question correctly.

So this question mirrors the previous question: if there is a lack of interest in the land and its inhabitants, there cannot be much knowledge about them. Nevertheless, students say they know a lot, enough, or at least something about Germans and their customs, whether through their German studies, TV or YouTuber, or German relatives. It is interesting that even stereotypes about Germans were mentioned in the answers as knowledge about the country and its people.

The motive for taking up a course of study in German can provide information about how much motivation is to be expected from students. If someone enrolls in a course of study only because they do not know what else to do or because they have unrealistic expectations, it will be difficult to follow the classes and motivate themselves to work hard and make an effort, so the seventh question aimed to investigate which motives for taking up German studies are predominant among students.

7 students enrolled in German studies because they like the language and/or hope to improve their language skills, 7 students were good at German in secondary school and therefore enrolled in German studies, 4 students like the dynamics of the language and/or hope to get a better job if they speak the language, 1 student answered that it is the only language he/she knows besides English, 1 student enrolled in German studies as he/she has relatives in Germany/Austria and likes the culture, 1 student thinks that German is the most useful language in Europe next to English and French since Croatia joined the EU, 2 students have studied German for a long time and like the language/literature, 1 student feels connected to the language because he/she watched the German TV for many years, 1 student said he/she has no motive but only an impulse because he/she was good at German in secondary school and it would probably look good in his/her resume, 1 student calls Germany his/her second home and loves the country, the people and the language.

It is encouraging that more than half of the students chose the program because they like the language and want to expand their language skills, like the country and the people. Other motives that come up are better job opportunities if you know German and the opinion that German is one of the most important official languages in the EU so it would be good to speak it. One answer was somewhat provocative or

inappropriate, because one should not study a language because it might look good on a resume.

As mentioned earlier, expectations and their fulfilment can also play a role in motivating students to study and self-study. If students have unrealistic or completely different expectations before enrolling in a course of study, it is difficult to manage the workload and put in extra effort to achieve good results and learn something that was probably not expected, so the eighth question was aimed at what students expected from studying German before enrolling.

8 students expected an improvement in language skills, 2 students expected exactly the courses offered in German studies, 2 students expected many grammar and literature courses, 1 student expected much more creativity in literature, 1 student expected to learn more about German language, culture and literature, 1 student expected interesting topics, much communication, travel to Germany, many professors who are native speakers, 1 student expected much more, i.e. less learning because less is remembered when there is a lot to learn, 1 student expected more communication and writing, less reading, 1 student expected to learn more about culture and literature, 1 student expected a lot of work and active communication, 1 student expected many translations and less work, 1 student expected at least one field trip to a German speaking country, 1 student expected what he/she has seen in movies, 1 student did not know what to expect, 1 student expected professors to be more interested in their lectures, 1 student expected it to be difficult and challenging, 1 student did not answer the question.

In general, the majority of students expected to improve their language skills, but in the area of vocabulary and communication, grammar was the most criticised for being difficult and unnecessary. Comparing this to the career aspirations in the last question, how do they expect to work as a teacher or translator if they do not know German grammar at a high level?

The ninth question aimed to find out if students' expectations were met and what was different than expected.

8 students answered that their expectations were partially met, 8 students answered that they were satisfied with the study programme and it met their expectations, 3 students expected to learn more about German culture by travelling to German speaking countries as part of the study programme, 2 students expected more vocabulary work and/or felt that more grammar exercises were covered, 2 students felt that too much study material was covered, 2 students on the other hand felt that not enough was covered in depth, 1 student simply answered "no". Regarding the fulfilment of their expectations, more than half of the students indicated that their expectations were met or somewhat met.

The last question aimed to find out if students know what they want to do professionally after graduating from German studies. As mentioned earlier, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka offers a general undergraduate programme and two postgraduate programmes (teacher training and translation studies) in languages. Students can work in tourism, broadcasting, newspapers, offices, etc. after completing their undergraduate studies, but they can also continue their studies to become teachers or translators.

The evaluation of the questionnaire showed that 8 students want to become teachers of German, 5 students want to become translators/interpreters, 5 students do not know yet what they want to do professionally, 4 students want to combine teaching and translating, 2 students want to combine teaching and a job in tourism (e.g. tourist guide), 1 student wants to do something not related to the German language, 1 student wants to work at a helpdesk where German language is required.

As a result, it can be stated that most students want to become teachers or translators, or they aspire to a combination of both, or they want to become teachers and work in tourism. It is interesting to note that five students do not know what they want to do professionally at the end of their studies. One student obviously chose the wrong course of study because he/she does not want anything to do with his/her field, i.e. the German language, while another might have taken a language course because he/she wants to work at a help desk and look after German-speaking customers:

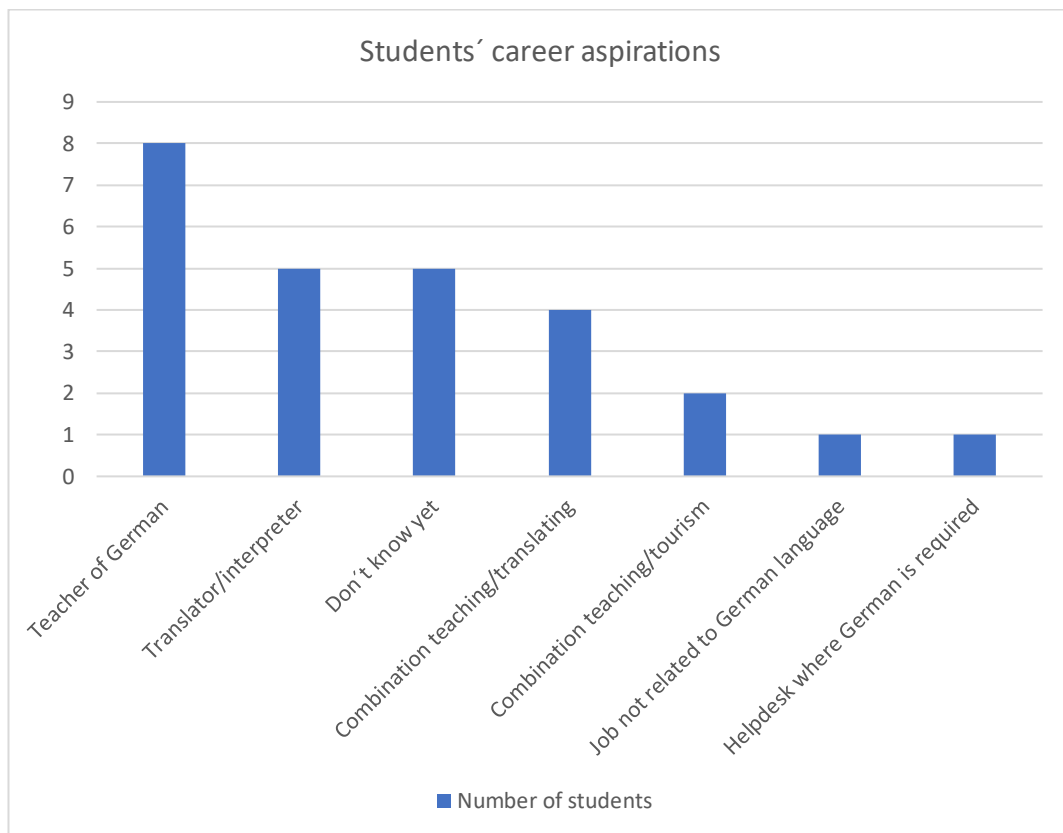


Chart 4: Students' career aspirations

In a final step, the answers were compared with the language level to which the students had assigned themselves. Most of the students who assigned themselves to language level C1 are frequent self-learners, read German texts, watch German movies, series, etc., and have visited a German-speaking country, some even for a longer period of time, except for three students who have never been abroad. They are also the ones who are more interested in German people and culture and find it necessary to do a lot of self-study.

The students who assigned themselves to C1 level are also the ones who see working for money as motivation for (continued) self-study. Presumably, they have more confidence in the language and think that their language skills are good enough to place them already on the market. Interestingly, the expectations of this group of students were only partially met and they were able to name which expectations were not met and what should be improved.

The students who assigned their language skills to B1 or B2 level mostly do not self-study a lot, do not read German texts or watch German movies, series etc. They also

have not been to German speaking countries, except for three students who stated that they have been abroad (short trips, one student exchange).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that students' motivation for self-study or study at all is related to their language skills, expectations, and fulfilment of expectations from the university. In addition, the motivations for enrolling in the programme are crucial. If a student has the impression that studying German is just a language course, the demands and tasks at the university will seem unfulfilling and difficult to master. As the analysis and interpretation of findings show, most students have rated their language level at B2 or C1 at the end of the undergraduate programme. In the degree programme, language proficiency at the C1 level according to the CEFR is required after completion of the undergraduate degree. Only half of the students consider themselves to be at this level.

On the one hand, almost all of them answered that self-study is very important during their studies, but when asked if they learn by themselves, e.g., by reading or watching TV in German, staying abroad etc. most of them gave a negative answer, i.e., they do not perform these activities often enough. According to Sheela and Rakumar (2016), these are exactly the activities that are fun and should be practised in foreign language learning (here EFL):

“Watching sitcoms in English, reading magazines and surfing the Net are considered fun by many teachers and students and not perceived as activities that can do good to students' language proficiency. Yet these resources can considerably increase learners' general and cultural awareness and should be interwoven into studying routines, because background knowledge is a tremendous facilitator of comprehension.” (Sheela, Rakumar, p. 4463)

This allows students to improve their knowledge of the country and its people as well as their language skills. Since the syllabus at the university is very extensive and includes many subfields in which insights into theoretical background are also taught, such activities can only take place in the form of extracurricular events, such as movie nights, but it is certainly a good and entertaining way to practise at home.

The students themselves are not quite sure what would motivate them to (continue) self-study. Some feel overwhelmed with the subject matter in the course and do not have time for self-study, others do not think it is necessary, while some of them have recognised the need and do a great deal of self-study. As mentioned before, German studies students are not homogeneous, as they start with different language skills and different expectations, but on the other hand, no class is homogeneous either. There are always students who learn quickly, while others need more time to complete their assignments. But whatever their starting point:

“Interest and motivation are essential factors when it comes to language learning, but one should distinguish between reward and work when bringing different types of media in the classroom. Learners recognize when they are being taught when they are at school, and they may concentrate on what the teacher is presenting. But when they sit on their computers at home, watching a film or playing a game, they might learn words and phrases and use them in real life situations.” (Yin, p. 153)

According to the students' responses, they expect the university and professors to organise field trips and watch movies and series in German with them in class. Although, there are many offers for scholarships and stays abroad within the framework of Erasmus or other organisations, very few students accept these offers.

Nearly half of them lack the motivation for study and self-study and don't exactly know what would motivate them, while the other half sees the need and does extra work for their own good, what is evident in their self-assessment of language skills.¹

In general, it seems that students who rate their language skills at a higher level are more motivated to study and self-study, have more realistic expectations of German studies, and are more interested in the country and its people, travel abroad, and report having more knowledge of the culture of the country whose language they are studying. There is also a relationship between the motive for enrolling in the study programme and the motivation for studying. Students who love the language and want to improve their language skills do more extra work and rate themselves at a higher language level. The lack of motivation is probably due to the fact that there is no inner need (intrinsic motivation) to learn L2 as there is in learning L1. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could be examined more closely in another study, as some students reported extrinsic motivation, such as rewards or financial benefits, as a factor in their motivation. It would also be interesting to further investigate language proficiency in the native language to compare whether there is a relationship between proficiency in L1 and L2/L3, as some authors of language acquisition models (e.g., Chomsky, Cummins) claim.

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¹ The students' self-assessment cannot be compared to the teacher's assessment because the questionnaires are anonymous. It could be that some students overestimated themselves while others underestimated themselves.

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Charts

- [1] Chart 1: Self-assessment: language skills according to CEFR
- [2] Chart 2: Motivation increase for self-study
- [3] Chart 3: Interest in Germany and Germans
- [4] Chart 4: Students’ career aspirations

Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID-19 has exacerbated health inequalities around the world. Kosovo has so far experienced four waves of the pandemic with a fatality rate of 2.6 registered deaths per 100 cases which is higher than some comparable countries in the region. Women have been disproportionately affected in many spheres of life including their safety and security at home. While Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has been one of the major concerns for women’s safety over the years, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation. Drawing on the theory of GBV and intersectionality and using a mixed-method approach, this study examines whether GBV cases have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and whether government policies and responses during the COVID-19 pandemic have considered GBV implications. This study yields three main findings: First, the institutional data on reported cases show that GBV has increased significantly between 2010 to 2021. Similar trends of increase were observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, the COVID-19 institutional actions towards the pandemic disproportionately considered the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups of the population including women. Third, violence against women is treated within the domestic violence domain which does not address entirely the nature of the gender-based violence in the country.

Keywords: Gender-based violence (GBV), COVID-19, Women, Kosovo

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work, and relate to one another. It has led to an increase in social inequalities in countries around the world and has impacted the physical, mental health, and well-being of all groups within society. It has been shown that infectious diseases disproportionately affect people based on gender (Morgan et al., 2021). Early evidence on COVID-19 suggested that men are more likely than women to die from the virus, whereas women have been

impacted more than men in employment, health and wellbeing, and safety and security (Bozkurt et al., 2021). Measures taken by countries to control the spread of the virus, while necessary to protect the health of the population, have in many instances led to negative impacts on social and economic activities within society (Buheji et al., 2020). The quarantine and stay-at-home measures have put pressure on women by increasing their workload around household duties and childcare (Fuller et al., 2021). It has also shut down the familial and institutional support systems that aid women in physical and emotional security leading to increased domestic and GBV globally (Usher et al., 2010, Murhala et al., 2021). However, GBV has been an epidemic even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide about 770 million women experience violence from their partners or former partners every year. About 30% of couples worldwide and about 22% of couples in Western Europe have experienced GBV. About 20% of women over 18 years old have experienced physical violence, 43% experienced psychological violence, and 7% suffered sexual violence. It is also estimated that worldwide about 35% of women have been victims of GBV at some point in their life (Acosta, 2020).

Kosovo like other countries worldwide has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been four waves of pandemics with over 228,000 people infected, causing 3,000 deaths. The fatality rate in Kosovo has been about 2.6 registered deaths per 100 cases which are higher than some comparable countries in the region (WHO, 2022). Kosovo has also experienced an economic contraction of 6.9% because of a decline in diaspora tourism and consumption but a deep recession was halted due to Government support and a surge in remittance receipts and exports. The pre-existing vulnerabilities in Kosovo, among others, the relatively low spending on healthcare with 2.5% of GDP compared to 12.6% in OECD countries, the high poverty rate with 24.4% of the population compared to 2.9% in OECD countries, the high unemployment rate with 25.7% compared to 5.8% in OECD countries and low spending for social protection with 6.5% of GDP compared to 20.1% in OECD countries has made navigation through pandemic challenging in many aspects (OECD, 2022). As a result, COVID-19 has widened the gap of health, social and economical inequalities with many people not being able to afford social distancing, take a leave from work when ill, or afford health treatment. Women have been one of the most hard-hit groups within the population considering they are more likely to be unemployed or employed in precarious jobs – making up most frontline workers in healthcare, spending more time on unpaid domestic work thus taking over most of the workload in the family caring for children and elderly.

Literature Considerations on Gender-Based Violence and Intersectionality

The violence against women has begun to receive the deserved attention in the seventies, due to an increase in sensitivity in public opinion towards violence in general influenced by protests in Western Europe, the War in Southeast Asia, and Feminist Movements (Toffanin, 2012). During this time, the feminist theorists

expanded the sociological research on power, violence, and bodies to include masculine power and violence. The landscape of research began to include both structural features of the society such as violence amongst couples, families, and the practices within various institutional settings such as schools, governmental agencies, media, and religious institutions (Toffanin, 2012). The patriarchal feminism untangled violence against women from family and domestic violence and brought focus on gender asymmetries acknowledging that historically men have been violent toward women (Toffanin, 2012). With this, a definition of patriarchalism became more obvious mainly highlighting the power relationships by which men dominate women (Beechey, 1979). Studies raised the critical need to study violence against women as a structured power within the patriarchal social order (Hester et al., 1996). They also raised the importance of investigating how violence and patriarchal social order affects women even when violence is not present because power can be multidimensional, it can alter other people's behavior even when it was not directly exercised (Lukes, 1974). What women wear, how they act, and what they can do and not do in their everyday lives, should conform to the social order in patriarchal societies. Within this order, sometimes the expectation is that women should avoid violence thus they are often accused of provoking violence. Therefore, recognizing other dimensions of power and patriarchal social order, studies have focused not only on events when violence is exercised but also on the dynamic of how violence is developed (Dobash et al., 1992). Some studies have also focused on how societies normalize gender-based violence and how women are expected to avoid violence (McKie, 2006).

In Kosovo, gender-based violence is studied mainly in the context of domestic violence. Authors Gollopeni and Kamberi (2021) researched indicators of domestic violence in Kosovo during COVID-19 and quarantine. Through a survey with 908 respondents conducted between July 27 to August 23, 2020, they found that the leading causes of domestic violence during pandemics were stress (18.9%), socio-economic insecurity (11.4%), and the limited physical space for quarantine in the house/apartment (4.4%). Moreover, the research also analyses the statistical data provided by Kosovo police noting an increase in cases of domestic violence by 19.75% during the quarantine period between March-June 2020 in Kosovo (Gallopeni et al., 2020). Kosumi (2021) researched the legal and other mechanisms that enable protection from domestic violence in Kosovo. The scope of analysis includes Laws that protect from domestic violence, courts, and prosecutorial mechanisms to investigate and prosecute domestic violence. The findings show that legislation in Kosovo that protects from domestic violence is advanced, however, its implementation is challenged due to cultural barriers that keep issues of domestic violence as a private matter for families, and therefore legal remedies are often far to reach for the victims (Kosumi, 2021). Similarly, Macastena (2019) has researched the laws in Kosovo and indicated that the laws that protect against domestic violence have improved over the years and flag the persisting influence of customary law on the attitudes of the legal

practitioners when addressing gender-based violence leading to gender bias in the court proceedings. The study also discussed the concepts of gender and violence arguing that such concepts are embedded in the laws and well defined, however, the society has a different understanding of these concepts depending on their socio-demographic circumstances and levels of education (Macastena, 2019).

Kelmendi and Baumgartner (2017) research show that there are gender differences in intimate partner violence in Kosovo, where men reported high levels of perpetrated violence towards their partner 43.4%, as opposed to females 40.6% (Kelmendi et al., 2017). Moreover, men that were more exposed to violence in their families during childhood had larger correlations with their tolerant attitudes towards exercising intimate partner violence in their relationships. Whereas women are found to cause minor acts of violence and could have been perpetrated in a distinctive context (as opposed to men) and supposedly in self-defense. Altogether, the authors note that the findings of this study reflect the cultural context of patriarchal structure, gender inequality, and rigid gender roles that continue to strongly influence males' tolerant attitudes towards violence against women (Kelmendi et al., 2017). Similarly, a survey from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the safety and well-being of women in Kosovo finds that 64% of women surveyed think violence exercised by partners, acquaintances, or strangers toward women is common. When asked about the forms of violence the respondent women have experienced, more than a half 54% said to have experienced psychological, physical, or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner since the age of 15, and nearly 29% said that they have experienced sexual harassment (OSCE, 2019). Similarly, a survey by Kosovo Women's Network in 2015 found that about 21% of respondents believe that is acceptable for a husband to sometimes hit his wife, and 32% think that when couples have disagreements, it is natural that sometimes physical violence occurs (Farnsworth et al., 2015). This shows that violence against women is somehow normalized in Kosovo society.

Arenliu, et al. (2019) studied the societal norms that influence individuals to have tolerant attitudes toward intimate partner violence against women in Kosovo. The study applied quantitative research utilizing the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) conducted by UNICEF to find that families in Kosovo continue to be heavily influenced by patriarchal family structures that impose traditional social norms and cultural attitudes affecting more tolerant approaches to violence against women. More specifically, the research results show that also women expressed tolerant attitudes towards intimate partner violence against women, especially the ones associated with the factors of living in rural areas, lower education and incomes, and less access to media. Also, younger men expressed more tolerant attitudes toward intimate partner violence against women as opposed to the elderly, indicating that youngers are becoming more conservative towards gender equality in Kosovo society. The authors argue that dominance of patriarchal values or limited socio-

economic opportunities for women preserve traditional gender role restrictions thus tolerating attitudes to violence against women in situations when women do not perform in their expected roles. This argument is further strengthened when considering the findings that women with lower education and incomes embrace similar values toward intimate partner violence since they are more likely to be subordinate, powerless, and economically dependent on men (Arëliu et al., 2019).

Moreover, the roots of gender-based violence originate from the culture of patriarchy that continues to be dominant in Kosovo society (AGE, 2020). These patriarchal values favor the dominant male’s role in the family and public life, whereas women are expected to perform in traditional roles of taking care of children and households. As a result, women’s labor force participation is relatively low, at only 12.7%, and with an economic inactivity rate of 80% (GAP, 2017). Women are also limited in property ownership, with only 20% of immovable properties registered in women’s names, which restricts women from options to get out of abusive relationships (Limani et al., 2018). These factors have indirect effects on women’s abilities to influence political decisions that will help improve the position of women in society. And even when women aspire and engage in politics or hold political positions, they are challenged with stigma and public intimidation (Limani, 2019). This diminishes women’s interest to hold public decision-making posts, where only 11.9% of women in Kosovo held an important public decision-making role in 2018 (BGRG, 2019).

Some women are more likely to experience violence because their gender intersects with other social factors such as age, class, race, disability, religion, and sexual orientation to put them more at risk for violence. In this context, intersectionality theory studies how identity influences one’s experiences with violence. Marginalized groups within society may experience violence differently even when encountered with the same system of violence. In this regard, Crenshaw (1991) introduced the intersectionality approach to examine how race and gender interact in making women of color have different experiences when faced with a system of oppression in the United States. As a result, race and gender interact to create multiple aspects of identity in relevance to the constructed social world (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality can also be applied to policy making in considering how government actions and inactions can impact people disproportionately. A study conducted by Lombardo et al. 2016, argues that European policies on gender-based violence in the period 2000–2014 would enhance substantially the inclusiveness and gender equality should intersectionality had been taken into consideration (p.8). Therefore, even though limited, intersectionality studies on gender-based violence in the Western Balkan Region region show that Roma women continue to experience discrimination and social exclusion because of their ethnicity, race, gender, class, and education (Milenković, 2018).

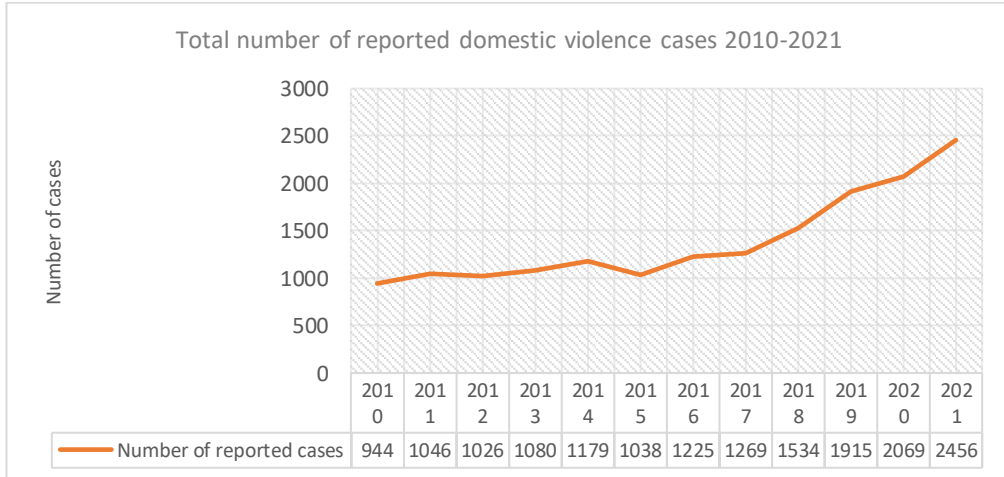
Methodology

In this study, we use a mixed-methods approach, utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Quantitative methods include statistical data on domestic violence from Kosovo Police. These data provide information on the number of domestic violence cases reported from 2006-2021. We use these data to measure the trends of domestic and gender-based violence before and during COVID-19. The qualitative methods are used in analyzing the government measures related to COVID-19 and policies on gender-based violence. To provide contextual information, we also include reports from various local and international organizations. Using an intersectional approach, we pay special attention to cases and experiences of women from minority communities whose multidimensional identities make them more prone to discrimination.

Analyses and Discussion

Institutional Data on Domestic Violence

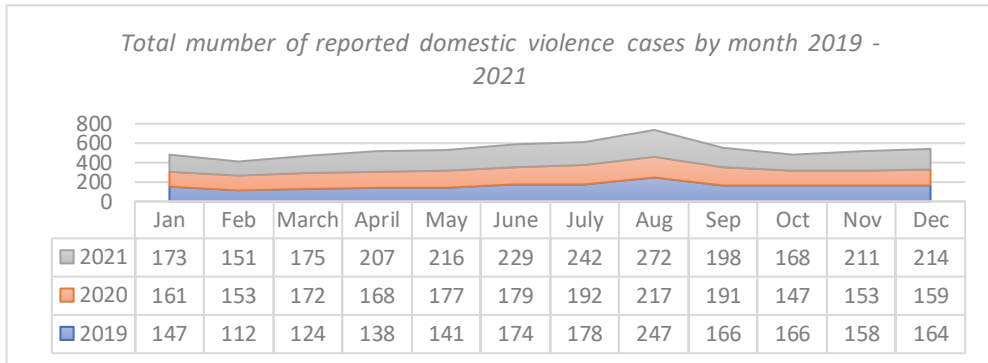
The epidemic of domestic violence¹ in Kosovo has been widespread for many years. The institutional data on reported cases show that domestic violence has had a drastic increase between 2010 and 2021. In terms of percentage, this increase is 147% in reported domestic violence cases between 2010 and 2021.



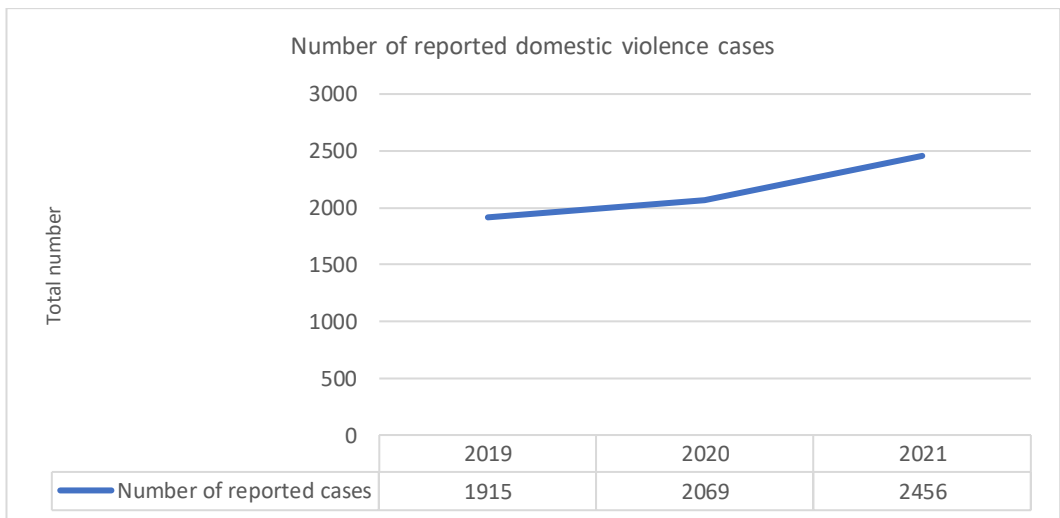
Domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemics has continued to increase. The Kosovo Police data shows that in the first seven months of the pandemic, or between March 2020 to September 2020, the reported cases of domestic violence increased by

¹ Domestic Violence, among others, includes also acts of physical, sexual, and other forms of violence perpetrated against women. Kosovo institutions and laws capture data within the terminology of domestic violence, therefore the data analysis in this research will use similar terminology.

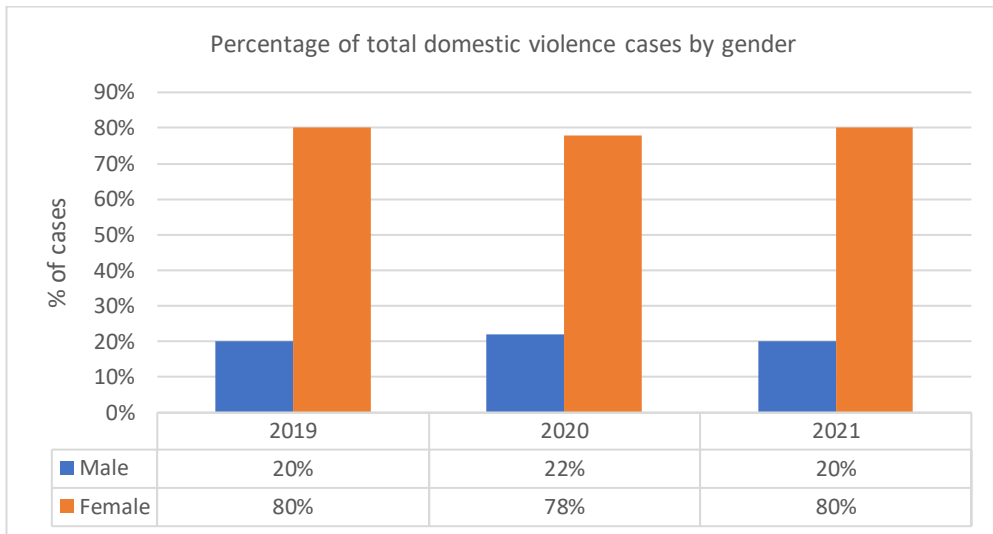
about 11%, when compared to the similar period of the previous year in 2019. Moreover, the increase seems to follow similar trends in 2021.



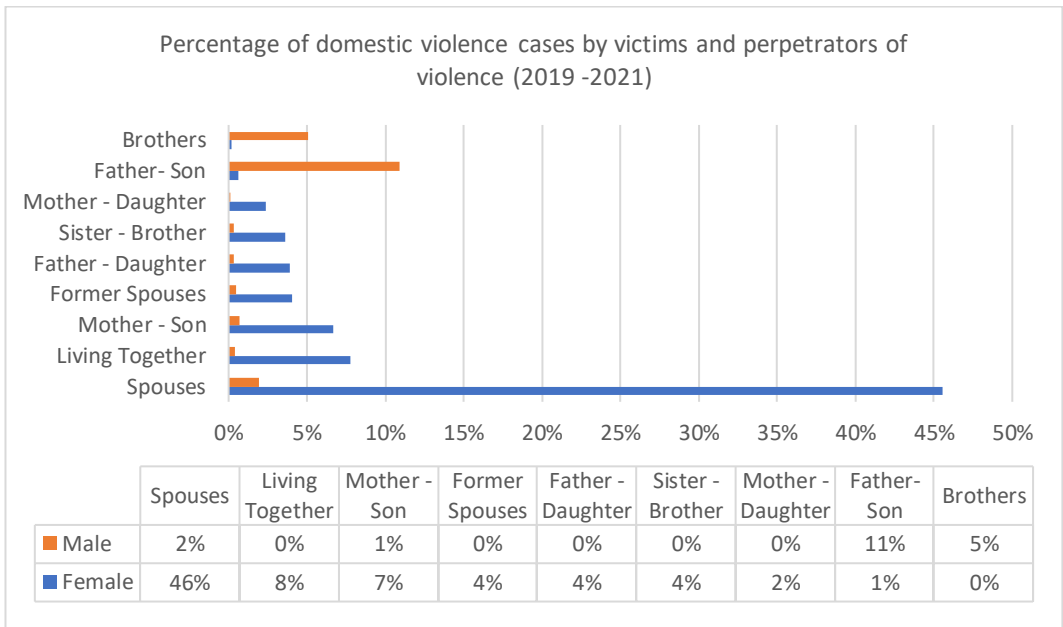
However, the total number of reported cases in pandemic years in 2020 and 2021 increased by 28% compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2019.



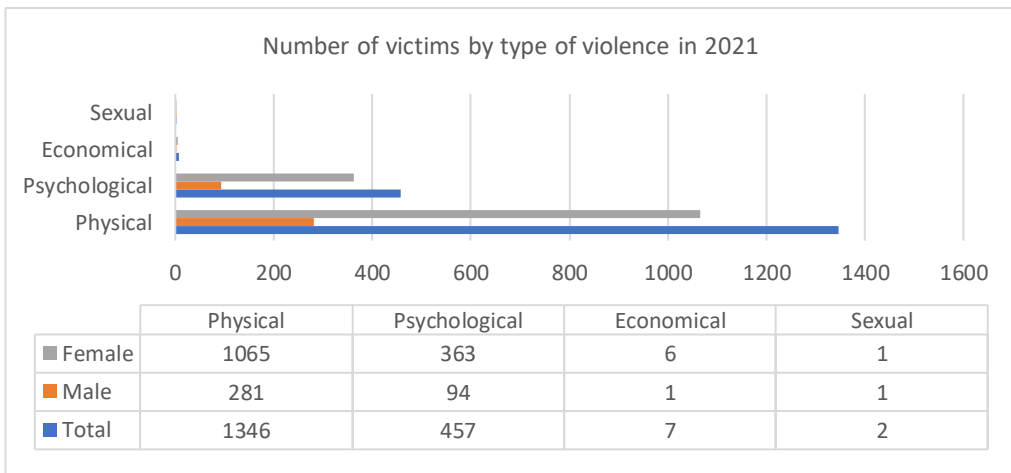
Women remain disproportionately affected by violence. Of the total domestic violence cases reported in 2021, 80% of victims were women. In 2020 there was a slight decrease in this percentage, where women made up about 78% of victims, whereas, in 2019, women made up 80% of victims of domestic violence in Kosovo.



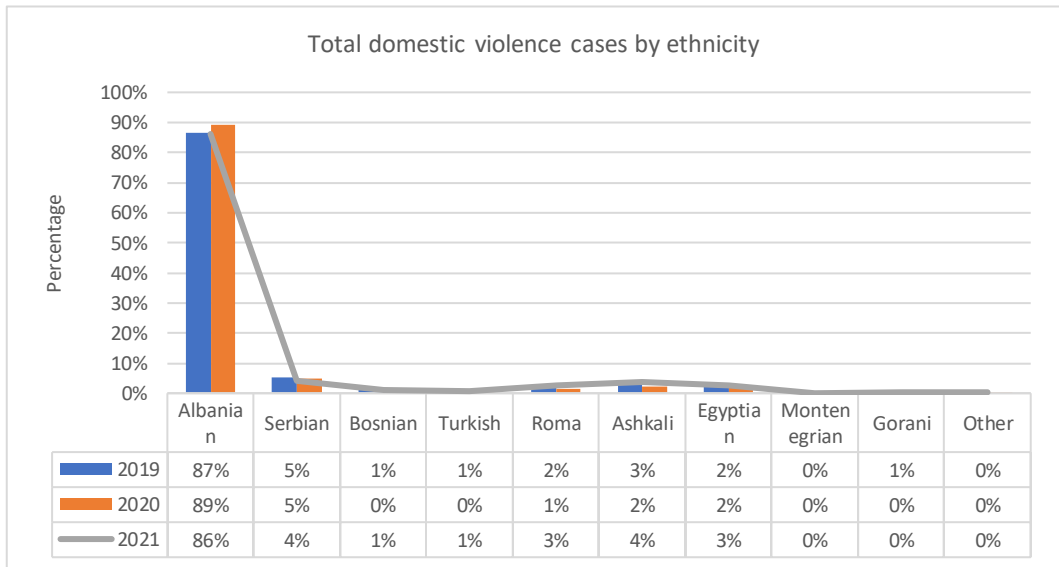
When looking at the perpetrators of violence based on the reported cases between 2019-2021, in most cases the violence is exercised by men. For example, 46% of reported cases are from women who experienced violence from their spouse, compared to 2% of cases reported where the victims are men. Women who live together with their partners are victims in 8% of cases compared to 0% of men. Former spouses also engage in violence towards their former wives, where women make up 4% of reported cases of domestic violence compared to 0% of men. The violence is common in other relationships within the family, for example, mothers experienced violence from their sons in 7% of reported cases, and daughters experienced violence from their fathers and brothers in 4% of reported cases. Violence between men within the family is also common. For example, violence among fathers and sons makes up to 11% of reported cases, and violence amongst brothers makes up to 5% of reported cases.



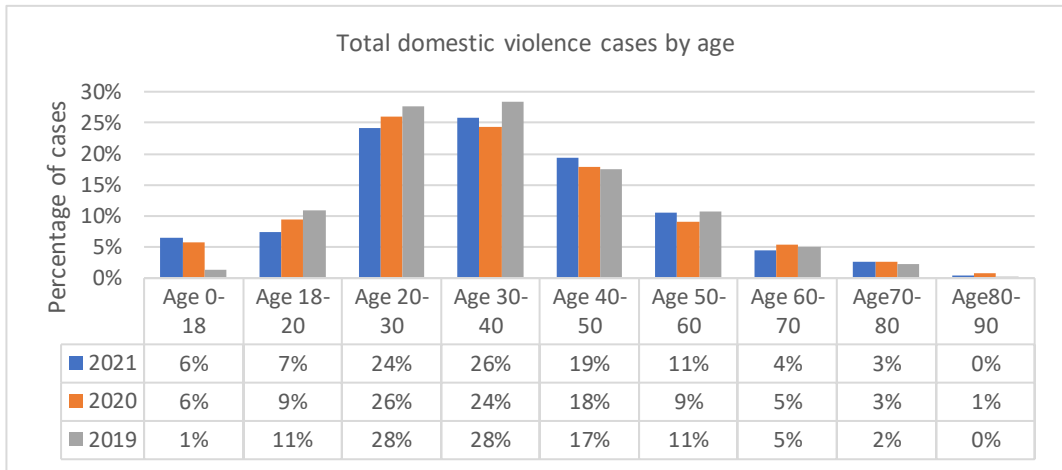
The most common type of violence is physical and psychological violence within families. From all the reported cases in 2021, about 1065 women have experienced physical violence compared to 281 men. Women also experience more psychological violence whereas in 2021 about 363 women reported psychological violence compared to 94 men. Economical and sexual violence is less common compared to physical and psychological violence.



When data analyses are performed by ethnicity, Albanians make up the biggest share of domestic violence cases or 87%, 89%, and 86% of cases between 2019-2021, followed by Serbians with around 4%- 5%, Ashkali between 2% to 4%, Roma and Egyptians between 2% to 3%, Bosnians, Turkish and Gorani show between zero to 1% of reported cases of domestic violence.



Domestic violence in Kosovo affects all ages but some are affected more severely. The most affected group are those between the ages 20 to 30 and 30 to 40 years old. However, during the pandemic years in 2020 and 2021, there has also been an increase in violence against children, aged 0-18 and elderly over 70 years old. The effects of pandemics in closing services for children and elderly (daily care centers and other elderly services), as well as other economic and social stressors within families, could explain this increased violence against children and the elderly. This is an important area to examine by scholars in the future, to untangle more thoroughly the causes of exacerbated violence against children and the elderly during COVID-19 pandemics.



Institutional Measures during the COVID-19 pandemic

The challenges of crisis-management during COVID-19 from the Kosovo government and the attention given to intersectionality issues were overshadowed by the political instability that led to two changes of governments during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The falling of the government on March 25th, 2020 complicated Kosovo’s initial response to the health emergency that was declared on March 11th, leading to overall weak coordination of the crisis management and overlooking of citizens’ needs in various sectors due to shifted attention toward new elections and forming of a government (Gerguri, 2021; Distler, 2020).

The Kosovo institutions undertook several measures to prevent the spread of the virus during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state of health emergency was declared on March 11th, the day when the first case of COVID-19 was declared in Kosovo. Strict measures were enforced to shut down all public and private institutions, retail businesses, restaurants, and service industry, cancelations of flights, closure of all land borders, and the restriction for movement of citizens and private cars within specific short-term timeframes only, mainly for essential or emergency needs (Government of Kosovo, 2020). Many countries globally have been comforting the COVID-19 spread through emergency measures; however, these measures did not always consider the different needs of women and men and vulnerable groups of the society (Wenham et al., 2020). This was true for Kosovo as well, since the government measures to prevent the spread of the virus were mainly one size fits all and lacked gender-based analysis, and often overlooked the needs of the most vulnerable groups (KWN, 2020).

One of the vulnerable groups affected negatively by the COVID-19 measures in Kosovo were the victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence. The isolation and

quarantine at home increased the risks of exposure to violence, particularly for women and children, as they were trapped with the abusive perpetrators at home (CoE, 2020A; SGG, 2020). Additionally, COVID-19 measures affected services for victims such as shelters for victims of violence against women leading to decreased ability to shelter victims due to capacity, distance requirements, and quarantine requirements. For many shelters of violence against women in Kosovo, these measures were impossible to implement in a short time and the offering of services from shelter workers became problematic due to their fear of infection (KWN, 2020). As a result, the Ministry of Health which was leading the works and decisions on the management of public health emergency in Kosovo took a decision that the stay-at-home orders and strict curfews did not apply to citizens that are experiencing violence and decided to provide temporary shelter for all victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence in student dormitories in Pristina (Ministry of Health, 2020). The later measure aimed to prevent the risks of the COVID-19 virus spread in the shelters of violence against women, therefore the victims of domestic and gender-based violence were quarantined in student dormitories for 14 days and then transferred to specialized shelters. With this action, the Ministry of Health guaranteed a temporary quarantine location and security for victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence, however, this location of quarantine did not offer additional specialized services that are most needed and mandatory such as psychological support and support from trained social workers. Victims of domestic and gender-based violence experience trauma and support from specialized service providers is of utmost importance to ensure their health and wellbeing.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Health shared information about this temporary shelter decision with various institutions and organizations publicly, which increased the vulnerability of victims as disclosing their sheltering location could expose the victims to additional threats and risks. The non-disclosing of the shelter locations of victims of gender-based violence is recommended by international conventions, to ensure the safety and security of the victims (CoE, 2021).

Gender-based violence within the domestic violence domain

Gender-based violence and violence against women in Kosovo continue to be treated within the domestic violence domain, leading to concerns that it does not address entirely the nature of the gender-based violence or violence against women in the country. The current law on Protection against Domestic Violence in Kosovo (Law No.03/L -182) sets rights and institutional mechanisms to prevent and combat domestic violence. It covers all forms of domestic violence occurring within the family nucleus, in the framework of coexistence between the members. As such, it does not include provisions of protection against gender-based violence which would recognize the aspects of violence perpetrated against women for the mere fact of being one (KWN, 2021). The statistical reports on total cases of domestic violence indicate the gravity of gender-based violence, showing that women made up 80% of

the victims in the total of the reported cases in 2021 (Kosovo Police, 2021). Also, Kosovars continue to consider violence, particularly domestic violence, a private matter, and as such gender-based violence often continues to be hidden, without ever being reported (OSCE, 2019). Moreover, cases of gender-based violence occurring outside the family nucleus, as they may occur in other countless settings become difficult to be treated within the justice system when the law focuses solely on domestic violence.

Moreover, the National Strategy on Protection from Domestic Violence and its Action Plan 2016-2020 is well developed and includes objectives with estimated costing and financing sources (Ministry of Justice, 2016). However, by definition, this strategy and its objectives focus on addressing domestic violence and do not address other forms of gender-based violence (KWN, 2021). This approach contributes to insufficient understanding of gender-based violence among institutions and other service providers, which may operate on basis of the domestic violence definition (Krol et al. 2018). Finally, addressing gender-based violence limited to the domain of domestic violence is a barrier to recognizing a much broader social problem, that of power imbalances and gender-based discrimination in Kosovo society. The gender-based violence that occurs in many families in Kosovo reflects patriarchal values and predefined gender roles that have been harmful to women for many years now (Farnsworth et al., 2008).

Positive developments in enhancing legislation to address forms of gender-based violence in Kosovo occurred in 2019 with the amending of the Criminal Code of Kosovo (CCK) that incorporated criminal offenses in compliance with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Istanbul Convention, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and female genital mutilation. Also, as of 25 September 2020, the Kosovo Assembly has approved constitutional amendments that enable direct applicability in its legislation to the Istanbul Convention¹. This important milestone mandates Kosovo institutions to amend relevant laws to comply with the Istanbul Convention provisions on covering gender-based violence or violence against women in all prevention, protection, and combating domains (CoE, 2020b).

Conclusions

COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for many countries around the world because, in absence of a vaccine or treatment, Governments were forced to take strict measures including quarantine and social distancing to contain or reduce the spread of the virus. These measures have been difficult for vulnerable groups within societies since they often rely on services that cannot be provided without social contact.

¹ The IC is now applicable under Article 22 [Direct Applicability of International Agreements and Instruments]

Women in Kosovo have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19-related measures because they are vulnerable to domestic violence, and the quarantine measures-imposed isolation at home, and increased the burden of stress and economic uncertainty, leading to women being more exposed to violence perpetrated mainly by male members of the family. Moreover, previous research suggests that women in Kosovo live in a society dominated by patriarchal values where limited socio-economic opportunities for women preserve traditional gender roles and there is in general a tolerance towards violence against women in situations when women do not perform in the expected roles.

The reports from the Kosovo Police on the total reported cases of domestic violence in Kosovo show that the trend of domestic violence has more than doubled since 2006. Also, in the first seven months of the pandemic, there has been an increase of 11% in domestic violence cases. Overall, since the pandemic started in March 2020 and until the end of 2021, there has been an increase of 28% in domestic violence cases. Women are in 80% of cases victims of domestic violence, whereas most perpetrators of violence were men members of the family including spouses, former spouses, partners living together, fathers, and brothers. Also, data show that during pandemics, trends of violence against children aged 0-18 and elderly over 70 years old have increased. This shows that pressure within families during pandemics has drastically increased, with women, children, and the elderly having been mostly affected by domestic violence. While issues with domestic violence against children and the elderly are beyond the scope of this study, we assume that a deteriorated mental well-being, closure of schools, along with social and economic uncertainty during pandemics has led to these groups being a target of domestic violence. Lastly, when intersectionality considerations are considered, the data on domestic violence cases reported to Kosovo Police show that Albanians make up the majority of reported cases of domestic violence during a pandemic. Also, there has been an increase in cases of domestic violence reported by Serb, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities in 2020 and 2021 when compared with 2019.

The political instability that predominated the political landscape in Kosovo during the very first months of the pandemics has influenced the priorities and effectiveness in managing the pandemic. The actions taken by the government were focused on containing the spread of the virus, often not taking well analyzed or informed decisions about how the confinement and social isolation actions would influence domestic and gender-based violence. Even when the government responded to calls for finding quick sheltering solutions for the victims of domestic violence, these actions did not enable sufficient conditions and treatment for the victims as required by law.

As the COVID-19 pandemic measures are eased in Kosovo with vaccine and more treatment becoming available, there is a critical need to review the true impact of the pandemic on gender-based violence and other groups in society whose multilayered

social identities has put them at greater risk for experiencing violence, including people with disabilities or special needs. Children, the elderly, and women from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities deserve special attention since the data analysis in our study shows that they have also been among those disproportionately affected by violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kosovo should enhance the legislation to untangle gender-based violence from the domestic violence domain. This is very important because previous research informs that when the focus is shifted and gender-based violence is addressed as such, the societies begin to address issues that enable male dominance and their violence towards women. This includes disentangling the patriarchal social order which enables asymmetries of power within genders and enables institutions to address the multidimensional nature of power that men exercise over women, even in cases when violence is not directly exercised. Lastly, incorporating intersectionalities within government actions in Kosovo is critical at any time, but especially when faced with public health emergencies, considering that gender intersects with other social factors leading to making some groups more vulnerable to violence and other forms of discrimination.

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Evaluation of Road Transport Studies with Google Map Traffic Technology as a Basis for More Accurate Traffic Forecasts

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Abstract

The rapid socio-economic developments in Albania, after the change of the political and economic system in 1990, brought a strong development of road transport. Albania, from a country with backward road infrastructure and a park of old vehicles, now has an improved road infrastructure and a large number of road vehicles. The continuous increase of the number of vehicles brings the need for the construction of new roads and the increase of the capacities of the existing roads. Engineering studies should lead to infrastructural developments. This opportunity has been used in various road transport studies. Various studies have been done to assess the traffic flows of road vehicles and forecasts have been made for the possible traffic of vehicles for the coming years, to assess whether the road capacities can withstand these flows. The studies are based on social, economic, demographic factors, etc. as well as data collected from the territory where the study was conducted. Engineering modeling of current traffic flows and forecasts for the future are based on this data. Comparing different studies, it is noticed that the calculated values in some cases are far from reality. One way to measure the values of traffic flows over the road network and correcting the values of other functions used in modeling can be Google maps traffic. This Google map feature is based on direct measurement of the number of vehicles on the traffic and has accuracy of over 95%. This paper will build on this idea and will suggest Google traffic as a way to evaluate calculations of traffic flows and road capacities.

Keywords: transport, study, Albania, modeling, traffic

Introduction

Albania has inherited many problems related to transport, and especially road transport, as the main way for the transport of goods and passengers within the country. After year 1990, the year in which the political and economic system was

changed, has faced a large increase in the number of vehicles, which does not correspond to the poor level of road infrastructure.

The general road network in Albania, considering all categories of roads where vehicles circulate, is about 18,000 km long, including 3,636 km of National Main Roads, 10,500 to 11,000 km of district and municipal roads, and the remaining part of about 4,000 km, is under the jurisdiction of different administrative units, enterprises or companies. The primary road network is approximately 1138 km with nine main links, forming the backbone of the network as well as a secondary network with a total length of 1998 km⁸.

The level of road infrastructure has been improved and roads with standards have been built, but on the other hand, the number of vehicles has also increased. Forecasts made for the future show that traffic flows on the road system will increase and in some road axes traffic flows will exceed road capacities, causing traffic jams.

The need for an effective road system without traffic jams, enabling the free movement of vehicles and friendly to the environment, are priorities for all transport studies. The accuracy of data collection, traffic measurements and finding a function that connects these parameters with traffic flow calculations, is very important for the results found, as they will be the basis for making predictions in the future. One way to calibrate and correct the function of traffic flow calculations is technology. Google map, with its traffic add-on, is a good opportunity to verify the results found. The Google traffic map application counts and calculates traffic flows in real time, giving also the level of road service. We will explain this idea in more detail below.

Literature Review

The development of the transport system in Albania, in order to justify investments for the improvement or construction of new roads, must be supported by studies to evaluate the current road traffic flows and to predict the expected flows on the road network in Albania. A great deal of work has been done to carry out these studies. This is not enough. If we compare the values calculated in the different studies, for example the values of the traffic flows, we notice that there are differences in the values of the flows on the road network, if we refer to the same year for these studies.

During the choice of the engineering model for the study of a transport system, it is important to determine its mode of operation. The model should have a structure as simple as possible. Modeling is a simplified representation of reality. Simplification begins with the definition of zones, the road system and the codification of an urban area, the collection of data, their calibration and evaluation. These can be annual data for any area of the urban space, for different levels of detail for the population, economic level, activities related to employment, commercial spaces, social-cultural centers, etc¹.

Modeling the transport system requires knowledge and experience and one of the most useful models is the classic transport model. According to the classic model, at the beginning, the study area should be defined and separated from the rest. For the area we study, a large number of data must be collected, which determine the accuracy of the model's results. Also, the traffic measurements on the road network are of great importance for the accuracy of the model.

The limitation of the study area is defined on the geographical space under study, in which the transport system is located. What is found outside the ideal boundary that limits the study area is the external study area. Geographical space is modeled in the form of a graph, which presents reality in a simplified way and can describe reality in many different ways².

A graph is composed of a pair of coordinates of the set G , which consists of N elements of the nodes and L elements of the arcs connecting the nodes: $G = (N, L)$. N nodes can identify points of a physical territory or different activities of a system. An arc L shows the existence of any relationship between a pair of nodes that it crosses³.

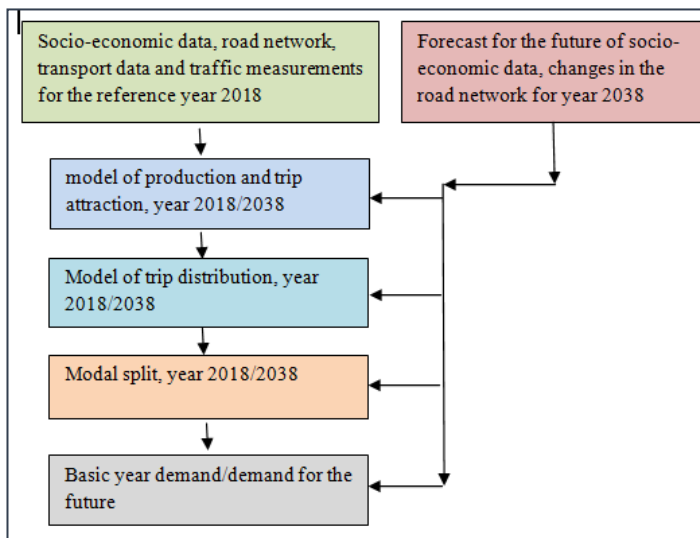


Figure. 1. Schematization of the classical transport model

The fastest representation of a graph is the graphical method in which the nodes are identified by a circle marked by a number and the arcs by segments connecting the pairs of nodes that form the set L . Each directed arc has an arrow indicating the direction of orientation. The numerical representation of a graph can be in matrix or vector form, in which all the nodes of the set N , which are usually an integer, are indicated. Different techniques are used to identify the pairs that make up the set L ³.

The level of detail of the system to be modeled is determined by many dimensional factors, which refer to the scheme to be used, the type of variables, the treatment of

time, and so on. These can be solved through the zoning system and the limitation of the road network³.

The nature of data collection depends on the model chosen for the study. The classic way is their manual collection. A modern way is to collect data using electronic devices, such as the use of GPS units and electronic traffic measurement devices, etc. However, regardless of the method used, there is always the possibility of errors¹.

To enable the avoidance of errors, statistical methods are used, through which the data are interpreted and analyzed in such a way as to obtain the maximum amount of information used. The most accurate results should be drawn from the collected data. The data collected is used to estimate the total number of trips generated and trips of attraction from each area.

After the data have been collected and analyzed, we start modeling the transport system or sub-system, for which we distribute the trips over the study area by building the Origin-Destination trip matrix. Next, the choice of travel mode is modeled, and then, through modeling, we make graphic representations of traffic flows on the road network³.

The method of direct observation in traffic, used to measure traffic flows, does not offer insight into the behavior of travelers, but it can be understood through the destinations and origins of their movement, and on this basis we can also determine the travel time. During the modeling of the trips generated, we are not only interested in the trips of people, but also of goods. Some of the most important factors that are taken into account in the modeling are: income, means of ownership, family size (number of persons), number and size of residential structures, land value, population density, ease of access and exit to area³.

With the help of mathematical regressions, a relationship will be found between different factors, such as the population, the number of businesses, the number of vehicles and the economic level of development of each area, with the number of trips that leave or enter each area of study, represented by the trips of generation and attraction¹.

The different factors that have an impact on traffic are related to each other by means of linear and non-linear or multiple regressions, which are used in the calculations the trips of generation and attraction¹.

During the modeling of the transport system, it is necessary that the total number of trips leaving the origin of the area (origin O_i) be the same as the total number of trips withdrawn to the area (destination D_j), which is given by the following expression¹:

$$\sum_i O_i = \sum_j D_j$$

The entire study area is considered isolated and all the trips that are generated from one area will be attracted from the other and conversely all the trips attracted from one area are generated from another area, so the total amount of trips generated is equal with the total sum of the trips attracted³.

Through this equation, it is required to reach the appropriate structure, which is applicable in the model of the distribution of trips, during the other phases of the modeling, where the total number of trips (T) is derived from the summation of the number of all lines, to be the same as the sum of the number of all columns².

There are many methods and techniques used to predict different variables during the modeling of the generation and withdrawal of trips that should be predicted for one year in the future. One of the most used techniques is the "Growth Factor", which can be applied in predicting the number of trips in the future in the same area under study. Its basic equation is¹:

$$T_i = F_i t_i$$

where T_i and t_i are the forecasts of future trips and current trips in area i , respectively, and F_i is the growth factor.

From here, by joining the two Tables, we can derive the Table of trips generated and attraction for the reference year in the future, in which the values of the external areas are also included. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out the process of balancing trips for the year in the future, since the Table does not guarantee us that the number of trips generated by area O_i will be equal to the trips attraction from area D_j ³.

This is otherwise called the Origin-Destination trip matrix and can be divided into several smaller matrices based on the different types of travelers, on the requirements or on the activities that influence each trip. This representation is necessary to evaluate the impact that its special elements have on the transport system. Travel models obtained through surveys and presented in the Origin-Destination matrix are proportional.

In cases where a database exists, such as the possibility of having a basic travel matrix, derived from a previous study or estimated from survey data, it is possible to make predictions from it to the future².

Also, we need to have information on road network changes such as the improvement and construction of new roads in the coming years in the entire study area. Another alternative that can be used in this case is the use of information on the increase in the number of trips generated or attracted by each area⁹.

Depending on this information, we can use different growth factor methods to estimate trips in the future model, for which the forecast will be made. The basic concept in the loading of traffic on the road network is the hypothesis of a rational trip, ie, choosing a route that offers the least perceived individual cost. A number of

factors influence the choice of route when traveling between two points. These factors include travel time, distance, monetary cost, traffic congestion, road type, travel time recovery and traveler habits⁹.

The number of drivers who are successful in achieving the objective of choosing the route with the shortest time and shortest distance is relatively low. The combination of time and distance gives a very good explanation in the choice of route. The contribution of other factors in the choice of routes is very small. The unexplained part can be attributed to factors such as differences in perception, inaccurate information on the cost of roads or small errors⁹.

Methodology

Being supported in the theoretical aspect of modeling, several studies, NTP I and NTP II (National Transport Plan)^{4,6} have been made for the traffic of road vehicles on the road system of the Republic of Albania. In these studies, done in different years, in addition to many different issues, the daily traffic flows and road capacities were also evaluated. These studies were made in year 2010 and year 2018 as reference years and traffic forecasts were made for two reference years in the future, for year 2030 for NTP I and year 2038 for NTP II.

In figure 2, the modeling of the study area, which is the Republic of Albania, is presented graphically^{4,6}. In addition to the areas, the centroids and the road network are also presented. The overlay of these three graphs gives us the graph of the road system, which is the basis for the beginning of modeling. The second graph given with figure 3, presents the daily traffic on the road network for year 2010 and year 2018 presented in these studies.

Also, the third graph given with figure 4, represents the expected traffic for two years in the future, in year 2015 for the first NTP I study and in year 2038 for the second NTP II study^{4,6}.

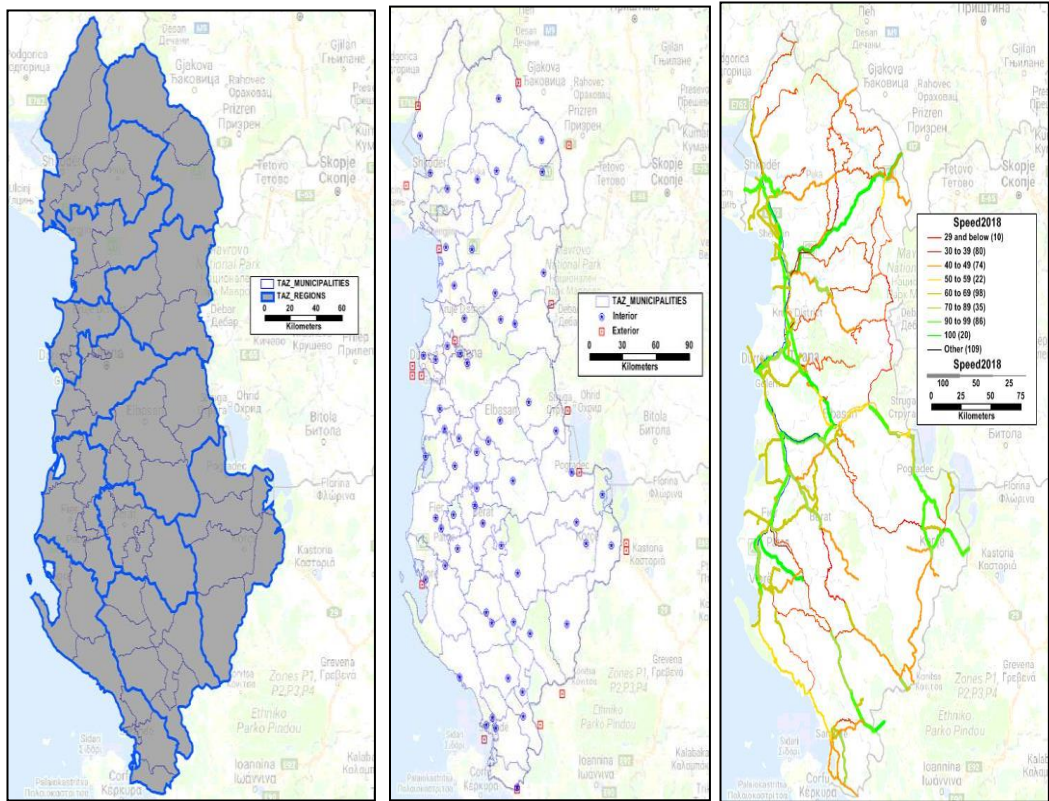


Figure 2. Presentation of the zoning, centroids of the areas and graph of the roads^{3,6}

In figure 2, the modeling of the study area, which is the Republic of Albania, is presented graphically^{4,6}. In addition to the areas, the centroids and the road network are also presented. The overlay of these three graphs gives us the graph of the road system, which is the basis for the beginning of modeling. The second graph given with figure 3, presents the daily traffic on the road network for year 2010 and year 2018 presented in these studies.

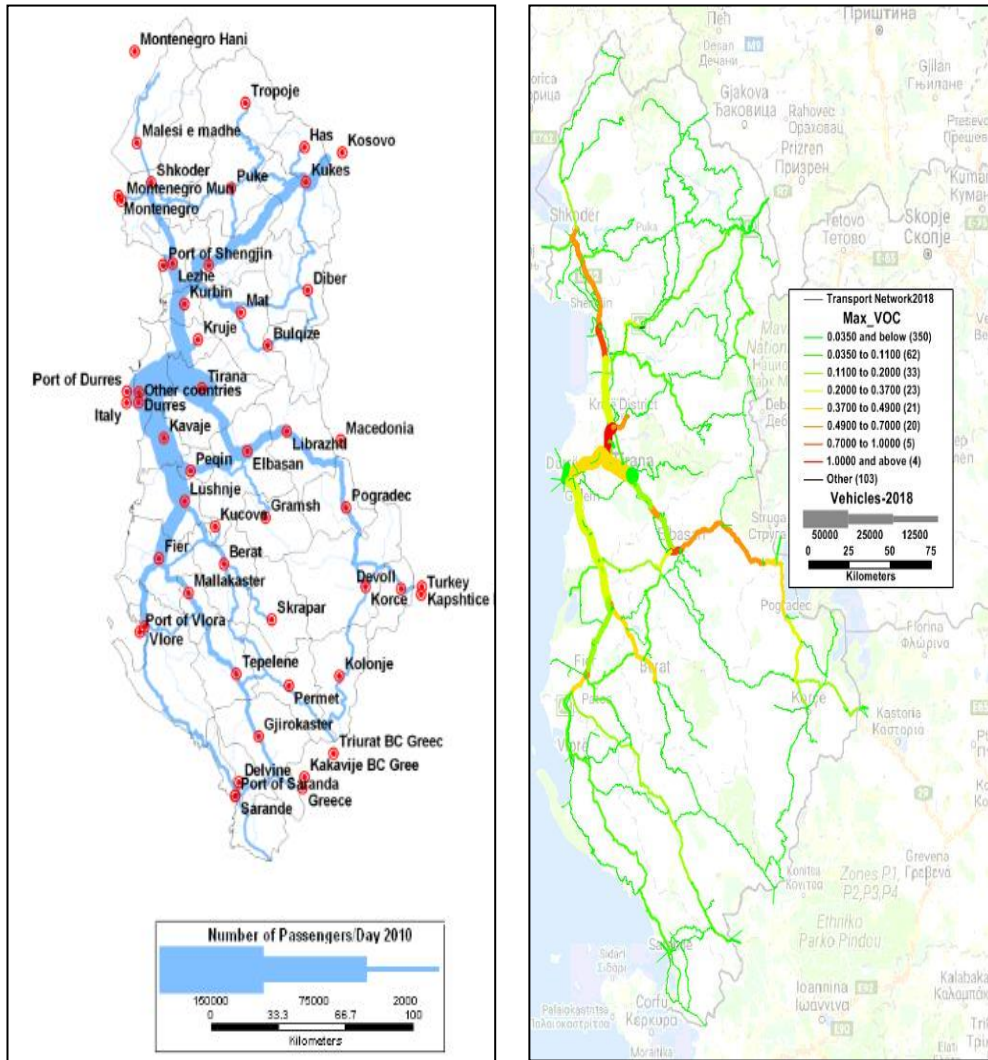


Figure 3. Graphic presentation of daily traffic flows for the year 2010 and year 2018^{3,6}

Also, the third graph given with figure 4, represents the expected traffic for two years in the future, in year 2015 for the first NTP I study and in year 2038 for the second NTP II study^{4,6}.

From the comparison of the number of daily passengers, for year 2010 we can see that their number is 210,070 passengers/day, while in year 2015 it is predicted that the number of passengers will be 412,007 passengers/day⁴. If we refer to the second NTP II study, the number of passengers per day, for the year 2014, is 247,918 passengers/day⁶.

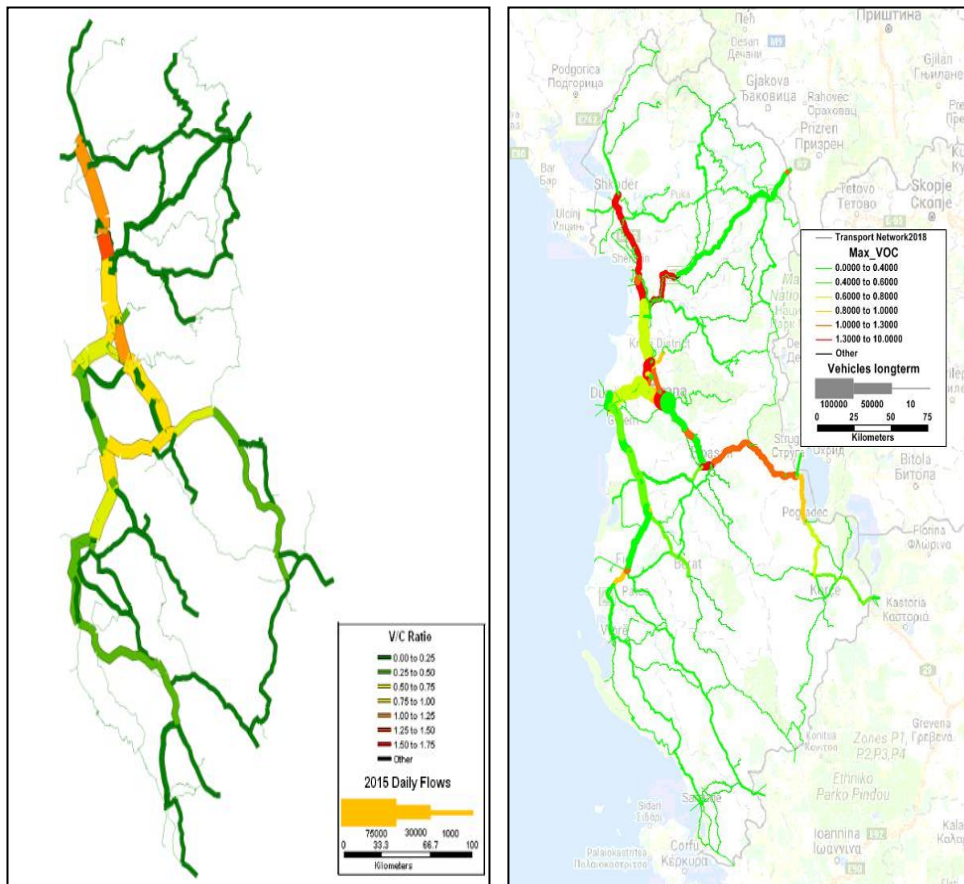


Figure 4. Graphic presentation of daily traffic flows for the years 2015 and 2038^{3,6}

This value are significantly lower than the forecasts in the NTP I study. Even the number of travelers in the NTP II study, for the year 2018, is lower than the forecast made in the first NTP I study, so in year 2018, the number daily number of passengers is calculated to be 307,426 passengers/day^{4,6}.

Year	2010	2014	2015	2018	2030	2038
Passengers of day PKT I	210 070	-	412 007	-	743 891	-
Passengers of day PKT II		247 918	-	307 426	-	658 914

Table 1. The number of daily passengers by year in both NTP I and NTP II studies^{4,6}

These deviations are also seen for the year for which the forecasts for the daily flow of passengers have been made. Thus, we see that for the NTP I study for the year 2030,

the daily flows of passengers are predicted to be 743,891 passengers/day, while in the second NTP II study, the daily flows are predicted to be 658,914 passengers/day^{4,6}. So again there is an important discrepancy where in one NTP I study, the daily flow of passengers is much higher than in the second NTP II study, which refers to a year that is 8 years later.

If we verify the growth of funds for the years that the studies were done and compare with the official data from INSTAT (Institute of Statistics) we see that again we have inconsistencies between the calculation of the funds in circulation and those predicted from the studies⁷.

Year	2010	2018	2038
Passengers number	95 669	307 426	658 914
Road vehicles number	49 784	94 927	?

Table 3. The number of vehicles and passengers provided for in the PTK II study⁶

Description Road Transportat ion	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total of freight and passengers vehicles	490.8 90	522.0 66	563.1 06	535.5 70	578.6 38	627.3 55	670.1 20	733.8 48
Road vehicles for passengers	415.1 21	443.2 27	479.2 17	460.2 99	500.8 94	544.2 79	586.8 89	640.8 24

Table 4. The official data with number of vehicles by year⁷

From the Tableles, we can see that the number of vehicles predicted according to the NTP II study, the number of vehicles for year 2018 is calculated to be 94,927 vehicles. According to official statistics, the number of recreational vehicles registered in year 2018 is 500,894 vehicles. Compared to year 2010, as the reference year in the NTP I study, the number of vehicles is much lower than the registration trend for other years. In the absence of official data, it is estimated that the number of vehicles for year 2010 will be 49,784 vehicles, while, according to official statistical data, the number of vehicles for year 2014 is 415,121 passenger vehicles. This is a much higher number than the one for year 2010, and it means that the number of vehicles in year 2010 should be much higher than the number of vehicles in the study⁷.

From the analysis of the NTP I and NTP II studies, we see that the calculations of traffic flows and the number of vehicles for a reference year and the forecasts made for a year in the future, have big differences. These errors occur due to various factors.

What interests us is how to have a way to verify if the calculations have been made correctly. For this, these calculations must be compared with real traffic data.

The way to get daily traffic data from the field can be done with technology. Thus, Google map has managed to create an application that measures flows in real time. This is based on the number of personal accounts that everyone has on Google and that is registered on their mobile phone. With the help of GPS and telephone antennas, the position and number of each driver is determined, in real time, on the road network⁹.

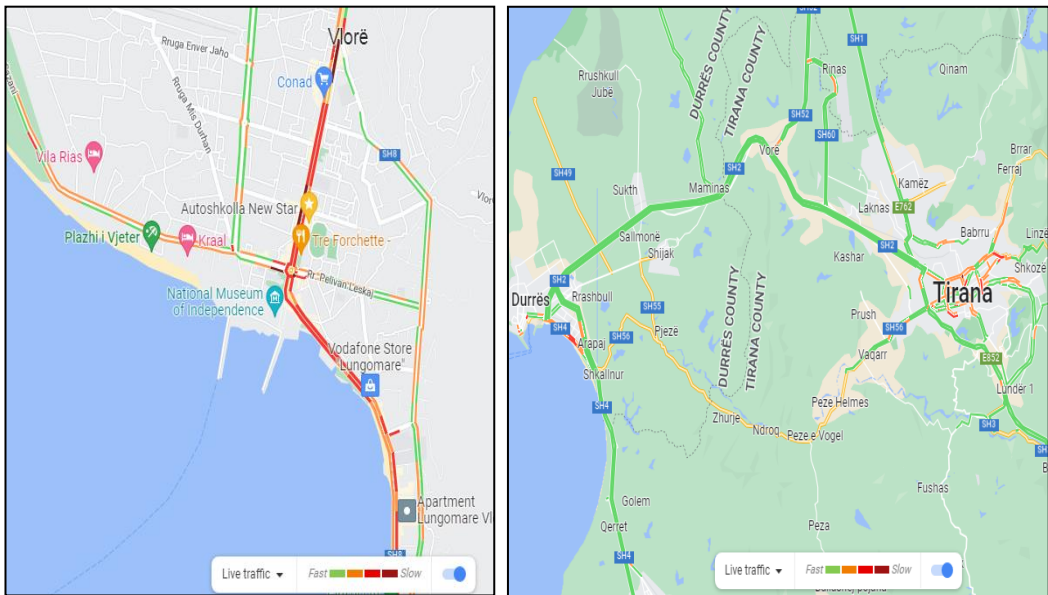


Figure 4. Daily traffic of road vehicles, for the city of Vlorë and the Tirana-Durrës axis, in real time.

The engineering model on which the Google add-on is built to evaluate traffic flows and their capacities is based on graph theory and **Dijkstra's algorithm**, which aims to find the shortest path to move from one position to another. The accuracy of traffic flow values on the road network according to google traffic is estimated to be over 95%⁹.

Real traffic flow values can be obtained from google and compared with the calculations made in the study. In this way, possible errors can be fixed and the real factors that have an impact on vehicle traffic can be selected. This is a paid service provided by google map.

The graphic representation of the road system is shown in different colors, from green to red, where the green color indicates a free flow of traffic and the red color shows roads where the movement of vehicles is difficult or blocked. These colors represent

the road service level, which is calculated from the ratio of the real traffic flow to the maximum capacity of the road axis. The values of this ratio vary from very small values to maximum values equal to 1 or greater. The greater the value of this ratio, the slower is the movement of the flow of funds, and the smaller this ratio, the freer is the movement of funds¹¹.

After adjusting the calculated traffic values in the engineering model with the help of real traffic values, we can make accurate predictions for traffic flows for a year in the future. The real values of the traffic flows on the road network would give us a greater clarity in defining priorities and interventions on the road network to facilitate the traffic of vehicles and to have a friendly transport with the environment.

Conclusion

The review and analysis of the studies "National Transport Plan" I and II, it is observed that the values found for the traffic flows of travelers, for the same year, have large differences. However, for each of the studies, different social factors were taken into account, economic, demographic, as well as their impact on vehicle and passenger traffic, as well as direct traffic measurements were carried out, following a standard procedure, again the calculated values are with large differences between the two studies, where in the second study, these values are much more moderate.

However, the calculated values of the number of vehicles in the studies are very different from the official data for the number of vehicles registered during the years considered in the studies.

The solution to these discrepancies can be resolved if the values calculated by an engineering model can be compared with the real traffic values measured with Google. This would bring an increase in the accuracy of the calculation of vehicle flows on the road network.

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Evaluating the Effectiveness of E-Learning, Based on University Students’ Perceptions

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Abstract

The evolution of multimedia and information technology, as well as the usage of the internet as a new mode of instruction, has radically altered the traditional teaching method. Higher education institutions have been through many changes as a result of learning technologies, particularly in terms of educational delivery and support processes. The usage of virtual platforms has ushered in a new era in remote learning, and it has grown in popularity over time, owing to the benefits that distance learning provides. The quarantine imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the immediate closure of universities, refocused attention on the usage of e-teaching and learning platforms. According to some studies, one of the benefits of e-learning is its capacity to focus on the requirements of individual students. The most glaring criticism of e-learning is the complete lack of important personal contact, not only between learners and instructors but also among students. The purpose of the study reported in this paper is to investigate the perceptions of university students at the University of Tirana, Faculty of Foreign Languages, during the 2020-2021 academic year. The findings of the data analysis offer significant information on the efficacy of using virtual platforms and the transformation of the education system from a traditional to an online teaching approach.

Keywords: E-Learning, Virtual Platforms, Covid-19 Pandemic, Teaching, Learning, university students

E-learning has made a significant impact on the business and educational sectors, and it supports the conventional delivery techniques. The traditionally difficult paradigms of education, such as adult learning and distant learning, have undoubtedly been made easier by it. E-learning can be used in addition to or as a replacement for in-person instruction. With e-learning, students typically have more control over and responsibility for their own learning (Vrasidas, C., & McIsaac, M. 2000). The limitations of time, location, and economics are insignificant via e-learning, which has the potential to transform educational practices. It has entirely eliminated the barrier of distance and made learning a practical and enjoyable experience. According to

studies, e-learning can boost student interest, engagement, and attendance which are significant prerequisites for learning.

Effective e-learning can also improve students' performance in key courses and foster the development of necessary skills to tackle 21st-century problems. Physical lessons were immediately converted to online classes during the Covid-19 Pandemic, however, the move was abrupt and posed numerous difficulties for students, teachers, and parents. The difficulties vary from one country to the next, depending on the kind of school and the academic ability of the students. In a country like Albania where technological resources and human limitations were present, the challenges posed by the change in the way of teaching were considerable, especially in remote and rural areas.

The importance of our study lies in the fact that today there are a few studies on the effectiveness of virtual platforms, due to the limited time that have been widely used as a method of teaching. There is still work to be done for teachers to be able to use virtual methods in the most efficient way, as technological and human resources in Albania still have room for great improvement. Also, the problem of using platforms remains the adequate selection of the most appropriate strategies and methods.

Virtual platforms in education

Online learning: The term "online learning" describes educational settings backed by the Internet. There are many different initiatives that use the Internet both inside and outside of schools to give students access to educational resources. Online learning can be conducted entirely online or in conjunction with in-person encounters. Below is a description of each of these strategies.

Fully online learning: A type of distant learning known as fully online learning uses online, Internet-based delivery for all of the instruction and assessment. According to this brief, if a resource includes educational contexts that can only be accessible through the Internet, it qualifies as completely online learning, regardless of whether it is teacher-led instruction or resources created to teach without a teacher present.

Hybrid learning: Through hybrid learning, students can receive a considerable amount of their education both in-person and online. Blended learning, according to researchers, lies between totally in-person and fully online training (Graham, Allen, and Ure 2005).

The traditional educational delivery system in universities and colleges has for a relatively long period of time been a classroom with a professor giving a lecture to students and the students listening and sometimes taking notes. Communication between the professor and students has been thought to be a vital learning component in this delivery method. Innovations in educational delivery mechanisms such as interactive and reflective schools of thought have, however, challenged the traditional approaches to education. Progress in information technology has enabled

new educational delivery methods such as distance learning and e-Learning. As a result of this, many universities and colleges have joined this innovative e-Learning world. Due to this, it is now necessary to have both pedagogical and technological expertise in order to teach using the Internet, and both teachers and students are gradually coming to rely on this knowledge as a fundamental skill. The important query here is how and to what extent e-learning is altering the quality of teaching and learning, given the spread of electronically supported instruction.

Advantages of e-learning

Given its many advantages and benefits, e-learning is regarded as one of the greatest ways of education. The adoption of e-learning in education, particularly for higher educational institutions, offers various advantages. Benefits and advantages resulting from the deployment of e-learning technology in schools have been offered by numerous researchers and writers.

The following are only a few advantages of e-learning usage in education:

- It is adaptable when location and timing considerations are incorporated. Every student enjoys the flexibility of selecting the location and time that work best for them. The adoption of e-learning, according to Smedley (2010), gives institutions and their students or learners flexibility in the time and location of delivery or receipt of learning information.
- By making it simple to access a vast amount of information, e-learning improves the effectiveness of knowledge and credentials.
- It also allows for the development of relationships between learners through the use of discussion forums. Through this, e-learning aids in the removal of obstacles that may prevent participation, such as anxiety about interacting with other students.
- Interaction with others and the exchange and respect of opposing viewpoints are encouraged by e-learning. Since there is no need for students or learners to travel, e-learning is economical. Additionally, it saves money because it provides learning opportunities for as many students as possible without the need for numerous structures.

The distinctions between each student are constantly taken into account in e-learning. For instance, some students choose to focus on particular course material while others are willing to go over the full curriculum.

Holmes and Gardner summarize the aforementioned benefits of e-learning by noting that it has the capacity to evaluate students or learners as they learn while also enhancing their educational experiences through interactivity appropriate for community education, cultural diversity and globalization, and the removal of geographical and temporal boundaries (Holmes and Gardner, 2006).

Disadvantages of E-learning

E-learning, in spite of the advantages that it has when adopted in education, also has some disadvantages. The most noticeable condemnation of e-Learning is the complete absence of vital personal interactions, not only between learners and instructors but also among colleague learners. The disadvantages of e-learning include the following:

- E-learning is a method of education that makes the learners undergo contemplation, remoteness, as well as lack of interaction or relation. It, therefore, requires a very strong inspiration as well as skills in the management of time in order to reduce such effects.
- The e-learning approach could be less successful than the conventional learning approach in terms of clarifications, an offer of explanations, and interpretations. Face-to-face interactions with instructors or tutors make the learning process considerably simpler.
- Another difficulty that online learners encounter is maintaining motivation in a course. Lack of self-regulation among students often resulted in the late or subpar submission of assignments since they did not give themselves enough time to finish them. Additionally, students must be able to assess the driving forces that will maintain momentum throughout the entire course. Lack of motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, can cause students to easily stray from their initial objectives, become lost in the material, and eventually drop out of the course (Chaney, 2001).
- The use of e-learning as a method may have a negative impact on learners' ability to improve their communication abilities.
- Since tests for assessments in e-learning may be done with the use of proxies, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to control or regulate bad behaviors like cheating. The learners may have excellent academic knowledge, but they may not possess the needed skills to deliver their acquired knowledge to others.

The use of e-learning in education is not possible in all fields or specialties. For instance, e-learning is inadequate for studying the strictly scientific disciplines that involve practicality. Researchers have argued that social science and humanities are better suited for e-learning than professions requiring the development of practical skills, like medicine and pharmacy.

Adapting the education system to virtual platforms

In most, if not all, educational contexts around the world, online learning has become the new norm as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. The widespread school closings took place during a time when technology advancements and digitalization generally underwent a fast change, not least in educational contexts (Selwyn 2012; McFarlane 2019). The question of whether the lockdown can be made up for by teachers and

students using digital tools in online instruction thus arises, but also how teachers' competence and opportunities for teacher education to learn digital competence contribute to teachers' mastery of the challenges of the particular situation. The analog courses have often just been converted into digital on the learning platform up until this point. In the worst-case scenario, the 50-minute classroom lecture is converted into a 50-minute video conference. The majority of the time, tasks are uploaded as PDFs, which students can download, print, and edit. Many queries come up, such as how students can collaborate on a project from different locations. How do they brainstorm collaboratively on a platform?

We assume that a significant portion of the lessons has thus far been taught using content from analog textbooks. As a result, we also require digital teaching tools from the publishers' offers, which are integrated into learning management systems. However, these must be fresh forms. Open educational resources, or things that teachers purchase on their own and are openly accessible and editable, are also quite significant. But for it to happen, there needs to be a sharing culture that hasn't quite permeated schools.

Universities are currently struggling with issues including data privacy, system overload, and a lack of digital formats when it comes to learning platforms. However, we should consider how learning will look in the wake of the crisis and how we may make instruction more project- or interdisciplinary-oriented, for instance. Digital evolution happens gradually; nothing happens all at once. Additionally, the time range and the steps must both be understood by everyone. One thing, however, must always be kept in mind during this process: pedagogy should support technology, not the other way around. We must construct the learning platform so that it aids us in improving the lessons rather than making us its slaves.

The efficiency of virtual platforms during the pandemic

Virtual platforms were in use before the Covid epidemic spread to every nation in the world. Some colleges throughout the world offered integrated tuition between online and offline courses or training with condensed class sizes, but their usage was minimal or remained in the experimental stage. It is commonly acknowledged among scholars that a new road has opened toward the digital transformation of teaching with the advent of virtual platforms in learning. These platforms have expanded the usage and adaptation of technology in the classroom. Although beneficial, online education still needs improvement if equal access to it is to be achieved.

But has online learning been successful in the last two years of practice? Researchers are discovering evidence that online learning can be successful in a variety of ways for all students who have full access and the appropriate equipment. According to several studies, pupils generally remember 25–60% more information when learning online compared to merely 8–10% in a classroom. This is mostly because students learn more quickly online; e-learning takes 40–60% less time to complete than

traditional classroom instruction since students can go back and re-read, skip, or move more quickly through ideas as they see fit. However, different age groups experience online learning in different ways.

Methodology

Study design

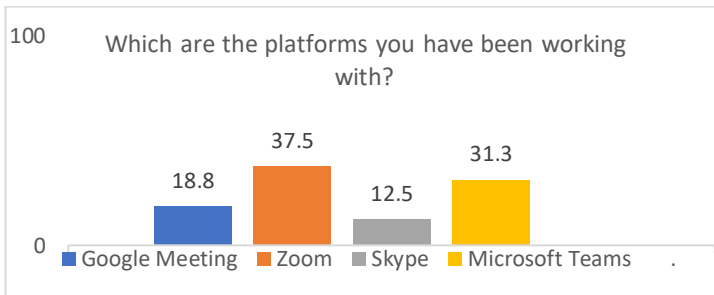
Due to the benefits that distance learning provides, the usage of virtual platforms has brought innovation to the field and gained widespread use over time. The quarantine imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic's propagation and the rapid closure of schools completely refocused attention on the use of online learning environments. Within a few days of placing physical constraints, they quickly became the only technique of instruction and the way that was employed the most. The immediate burden of converting instruction from physical to online was placed on educators, students, parents, and the entire school administration. The study was drafted, the methodology was selected and research questions were asked. Also, at this stage, a student questionnaire was designed and distributed to 350 students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Tirana. Their choice was completely random, to reduce as much as possible the margin of error and to target the selected group to be a good statistical representation of the population surveyed. They were invited to complete a survey on the use of virtual platforms. The data collection phase lasted a total of 5 weeks. 30 students decided to not answer the questions.

Data analysis

There were 320 students participating in the study as a whole, and the target group was chosen at random using a typology without any further selection criteria. In this approach, validity and reliability are guaranteed and it is ensured that the target group accurately represents the population. In the beginning, the study's topic and the questions and interview process are briefly explained to the students. Anonymity is completely maintained, and all data obtained is encrypted. The data collected from the questionnaires are presented below.

Question 1. Which are the platforms you have been working with?

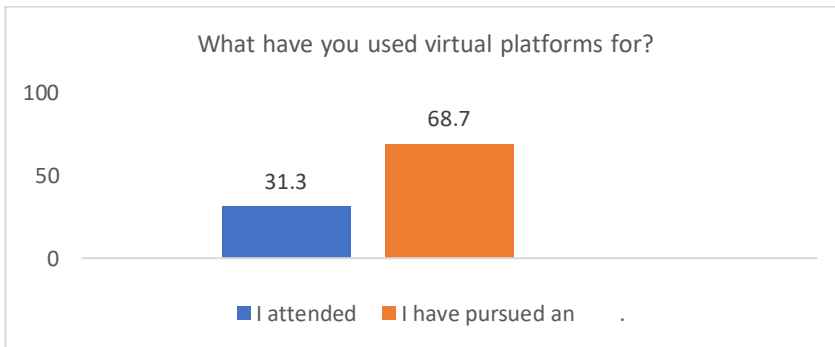
After working for at least 2 academic years through online platforms, students in this question had to differentiate which of the platforms they had generally attended. Microsoft Teams platform was the most used platform with 37.5% of the total and in second place was the Zoom platform with 31.3% of the total. Also widely used are Google Meeting with 12.5% and Skype with 18.8%.



Graph 1: Answers to Question 1

Question 2. What have you used virtual platforms for before?

About 70% of students reported having followed at least one educational and academic platform before through virtual platforms. With the increase of globalization, students are always more inclined to attend online courses and training in different professions such as Foreign Languages, IT, Computer Science, Social media, etc. The rest of the students, about 30% of them had previously attended extracurricular courses through virtual platforms.



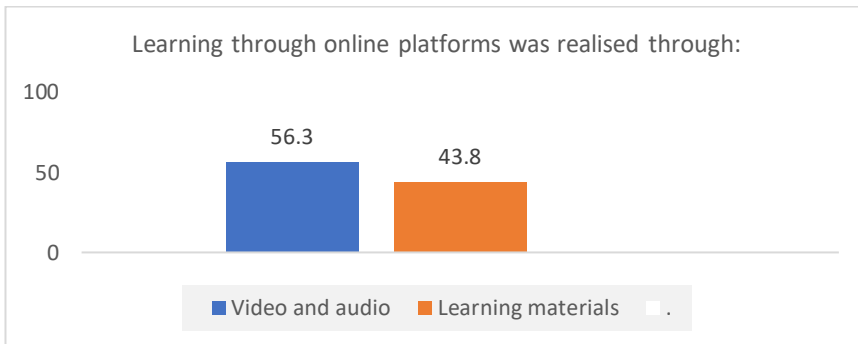
Graph 2: Answers to Question 2

Question 3. Teaching through online platforms was realized through:

The actuality of online education in Albania presented two ways of realizing the lesson, influenced by all external factors that are presented in the sections above.

About 56% of teachers participated in their classes most of the time through direct video and audio links, thus making the lesson almost the same as the classic lesson.

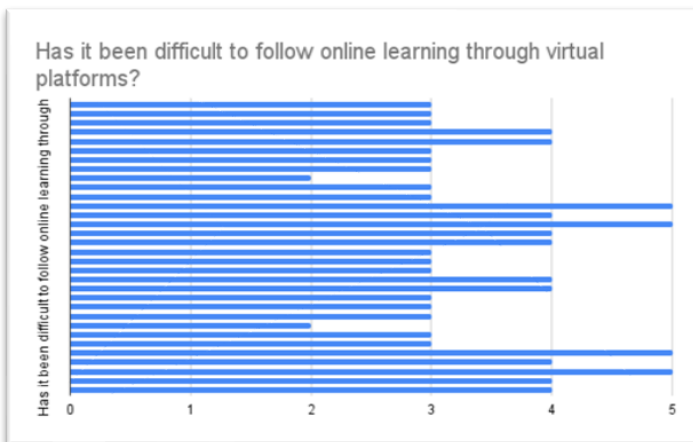
The remaining 44% of teachers did not manage to connect daily with their students via video and audio and developed the lesson by distributing materials such as Power point Presentation, Slide share, and uploading online books in PDF and WORD versions.



Graph 3: Answers to Question 3

Question 4. How difficult has it been to follow online learning through virtual platforms?

In this question, the students were evaluated according to a scalar system from numbers 1-5 on how difficult it was for them to attend online learning throughout the academic year. 59% of the students rated the difficulty of attending online learning with 3, 31% of them with 4 and about 12% of them rated it with 5, or as very difficult.



Graph 4: Answers to Question 4

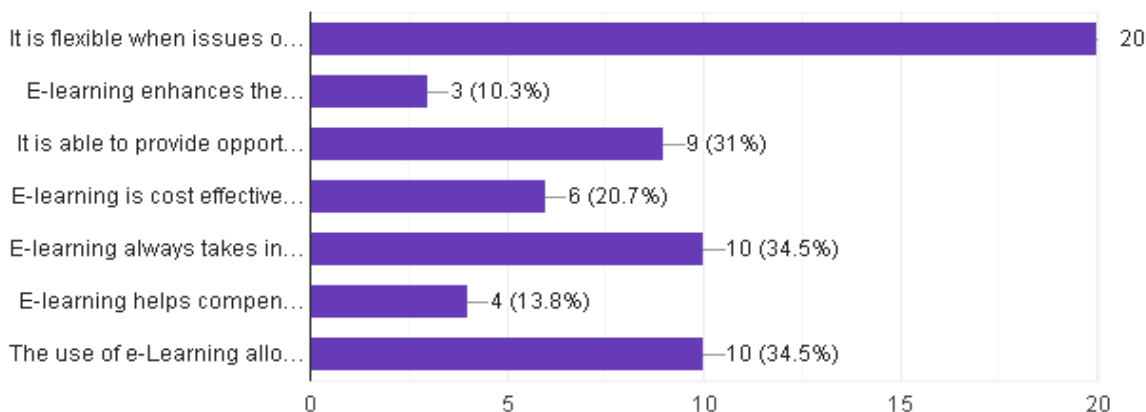
Question 5. What do you value as the strength of virtual platforms?

- It is flexible when issues of time and place are taken into consideration. (43.8%)

- It can provide opportunities for relations between learners by the use of discussion forums. (31.3%)
- E-learning always takes into consideration the individual learners' differences. (25%)
- E-learning enhances the efficacy of knowledge and qualifications via ease of access to a huge amount of information. (18.8%)
- E-learning is cost-effective in the sense that there is no need for the students or learners to travel. (18.8%)
- E-learning helps compensate for scarcities of academic staff, including instructors or teachers as well as facilitators, lab technicians, etc. (6.3%)
- The use of e-Learning allows self-pacing. (6.3%)

What do you value as the strength of virtual platforms?

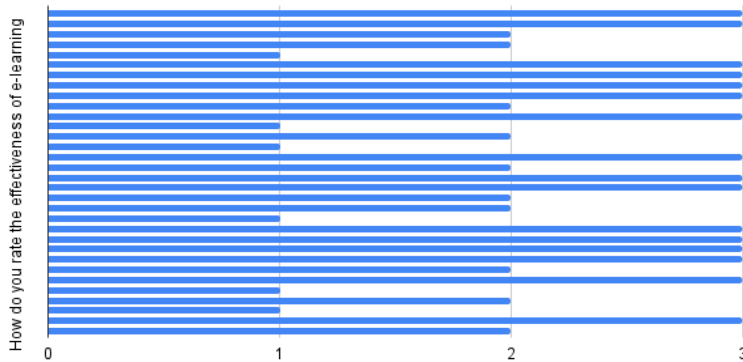
29 responses



Question 6. How do you rate the effectiveness of e-learning based on students' evaluations?

The data of this variable calculated in scalar units show that the efficiency of online teaching from 1-5 was evaluated by the students only for the interval 1-3 and no student evaluated the effectiveness of online teaching with numbers 4 and 5, which will result in very valuable. 50% of the students evaluated it as an effective method with 3 out of 5 units, and the rest of the students evaluated it as a less effective method.

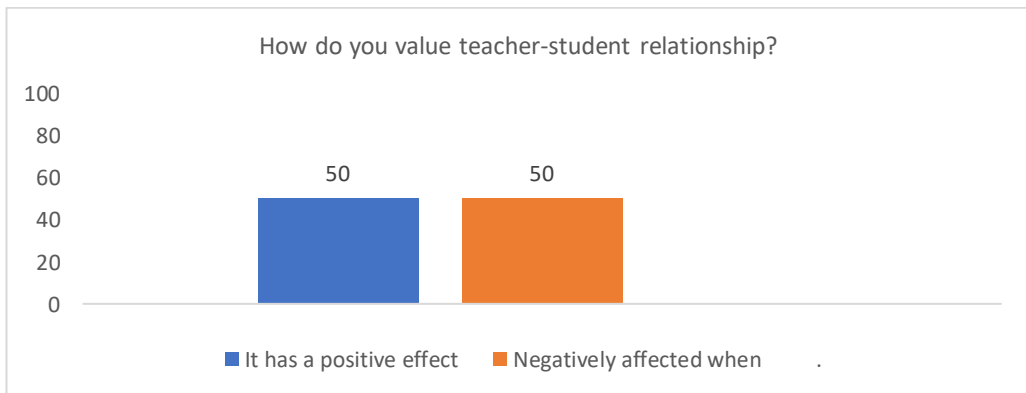
How do you rate the effectiveness of e-learning based on students' evaluation?



Graph 6: Answers to Question 6

Question 7. How do you evaluate the teacher-student relationship during e-learning?

In this variable, students were divided into two groups with opposite opinions about the teacher-student relationship during online teaching. 50% of them assessed that it had a positive effect on the establishment of the teacher-student relationship during the use of virtual platforms and 50% of them thought that the use of these platforms hurt the teacher-student relationship.

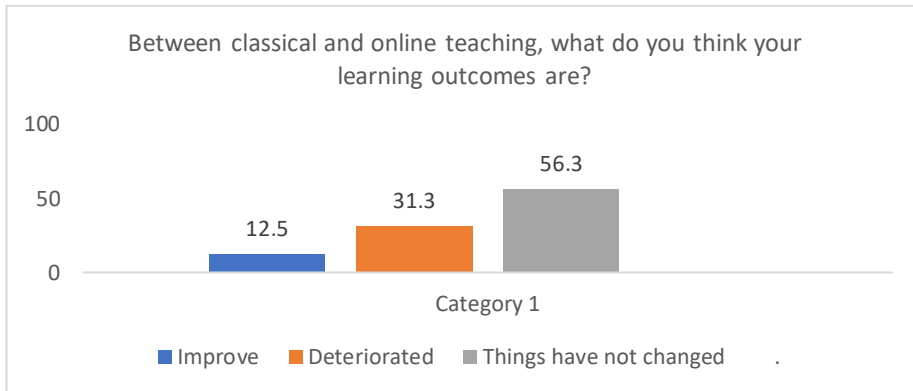


Graph 7: Answers to Question 7

Question 8. Between classical and online teaching, what do you think your learning outcomes are?

After the end of the academic year, a very important moment is the grading of students. About 56% of students thought that their final results did not change as a

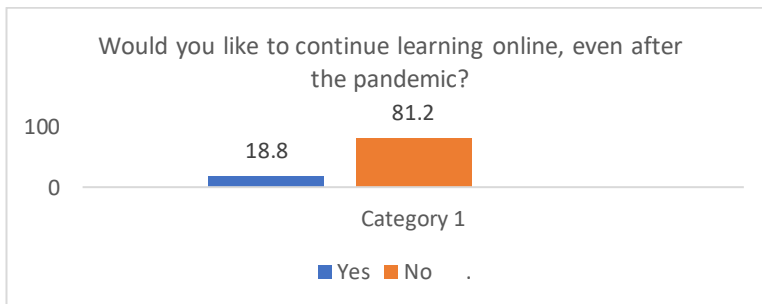
result of using virtual platforms. 31% of them had deteriorating results and only 12.5% of them had improved.



Graph 8: Answers to Question 8

Question 9. Would you like to continue learning online, even after the end of the pandemic?

If online teaching were an alternative option, would students choose to pursue their education? 81% of students would not prefer to choose online teaching, and only 19% of them would choose to continue another academic year online.



Graph 9: Answers to Question 9

Question 10. What are some of the problems you have encountered most often while using virtual platforms?

The most common problems that students referred to were those related to technology, such as disconnection of the internet line before and during school and problems with adapting to a computer or smartphone.

Another problem of attending classes from home was the distraction that often occurred during the lesson due to external factors.

Finally, but no less important students have identified some problems in the teacher-student relationship as an example: lack of communication, unrealistic assessments, and exams full of different problems.

Discussion

The findings from the study of student data offered extremely useful information on the effectiveness of using virtual platforms and changing the educational system from the traditional technique to online instruction. The Microsoft Teams platform and Zoom Platform, which came in first and second, respectively, were the platforms that saw the most use in education.

It is crucial to analyze the effectiveness of the use of virtual platforms after using them for a while. "Blended e-Learning," according to many students, is the greatest strategy for utilizing virtual platforms (the delivery of course materials and explanations is shared between the traditional learning method and e-learning method in the classroom setting). According to the student survey, only 70% of students had a reliable internet connection for online learning, and only 62.5 % of students possessed the necessary technological equipment, such as a computer, phone, camera, and headphones. The students gave an average rating of 3/5 for the difficulty of following online instruction and a rating of 2/5 for the effectiveness of using virtual platforms, with 50% of them believing that these platforms did not improve the teacher-student interaction. In comparison to the needs of the students, the school's contribution to the overall adaptation of teaching through online platforms turned out to be relatively minimal.

The student survey found that 62.5 % of students have the necessary technical resources, including a computer, phone, camera, etc. By the end of this discussion part, just 19% of students said they would choose to continue their academic careers online and 81 % said they would not choose online instruction if given the option.

For virtual learning to be successful, the primary formats must each contain reading assignments, case discussions, webinars, and the development of virtual scenarios. The ease of access and limitless adaptability of book resources and supplemental materials were found to be advantages through the numerous publications on the topic. Giving students more freedom and access to learning resources during a period of high ambiguity and doubt might boost their motivation and promote self-directed learning.

Conclusions

With the Internet's advantage of powerful communication and informational channels, distance learning systems have replaced earlier distance training systems and made significant improvements. With the Internet, a wealth of information that is constantly expanding can be easily stored and is accessible with limitless communication possibilities.

There are many opportunities and benefits that e-learning platforms provide. They must, however, be backed up by a learning theory that both justifies and defines them.

However, when using e-learning platforms, some factors may be viewed as obstacles in the learning process for students, such as decreased student motivation, delayed feedback or help because teachers aren't always available when students need it during the learning process, or feelings of isolation due to classmates' virtual absence. Nevertheless, these challenges can be solved with the aid of teachers who should modify their pedagogical approaches in accordance with the demands of their pupils. Experience and familiarity with online teaching are required for this, though. Universities, instructors, and students were unprepared for the abrupt move to entirely online teaching and learning, but they made an effort to come up with adaptation strategies to handle the new difficulties. There were occasional issues with access to those platforms and here as well, particularly when there were many pupils connecting. In order to ensure high standards of the teaching process, teachers lacked the essential technical abilities and did not adjust their teaching style or connect with students in the online environment in such a short amount of time.

Given the difficulties they faced, students believe that face-to-face instruction is the best method for carrying out the teaching-learning process. They believe that the usage of an online learning platform should be a supplemental tool to aid in the educational process. Even if the E-learning platform satisfies the fundamental requirements, students still choose other platforms due to the relatively few technical difficulties they encountered when using them.

The level of expertise that teachers have in using technology, their teaching style, interactions with students, and collaborative learning are some of the aspects that affect the quality of the educational process in the online environment. High expectations should also be communicated by the teacher in order to inspire and motivate pupils, stimulate diversified learning, and facilitate the use of technology.

Due to the capacity of the servers held by universities, technical difficulties continue to be the most challenging to resolve. Universities have undoubtedly made attempts to address these issues and enhance the functionality of the E-learning systems. Poor internet connections, signal loss, and a lack of sufficient digital devices continue to be issued for students, especially those who live in rural regions or come from low-income households. Universities could develop programs to address these kinds of demands and thereby aid students who find themselves in these circumstances in their academic endeavors.

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Nature Representation in Ahmad Tohari's Works of Fiction

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the forms of nature represented in the fiction written by Ahmad Tohari. The source of this analysis is Ahmad Tohari works entitled (1) Kubah, (2) Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak, (3) Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air (4) Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, (5) Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari, (6) Jantera Bianglala, and (7) Orang-orang Proyek. Data were collected by means of reading and note-taking technique. Semantic validity was used to measure the data validity, while intra-rater and inter-rater were used to check the reliability. The collected data were then analyzed using the descriptive qualitative technique. The results show that many works written by Ahmad Tohari represent nature. His works show nature in the story setting, characters, and titles. In terms of story setting, the fertile soil, the variety of plants, and small animals usually found in the countryside and forests are presented. The writer describes various places, such as the forest around Cibawor River, Cigobang forest, Citandui River creek, Cibalak Hill, Tanggir Village, and Dukuh Paruk where various plants and animals are found. Then, in terms of representation of nature in the names of characters, there is a character named "Srintil". In Banyumas area, Srintil refers to a type of tobacco that has a fairly higher economic value compared to other types of tobacco. Srintil tobacco may have a high economic value if only it is cared properly, and the green leaves are not damaged. At last, the nature representations in the novel titles are shown in Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak, Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari, and Jantera Bianglala. The nature representations in Ahmad Tohari's works add aesthetic values and deliver the message of environmental protection.

Keywords: Ahmad Tohari, nature, representation

Introduction

Literary work is a writer's response to the world around him. Pradopo (1995: 178) stated that it is rather the creation of a writer as a member of society. The work does not come from "a cultural vacuum but from a complex reality of life existing around the writer (Teeuw, 1980: 11). According to Faruk (1988: 7), literary works are semiotic facts that view a cultural phenomenon as a cognitive sign system.

Literary works and life are two social phenomena that complement each other as something existential. This implies that literary works and real life, apart from having their own autonomy, have a reciprocal relationship (Mahayana, 2007: 5). The writer's initiative in creating literary works is inspired by life phenomena. However, it does not mean that every phenomenon may be captured and written about. In order to create a literary work, there is a need to contemplate the phenomenon before interpreting it and then making it into a literary work. There are mainly three issues related to human life. They are (a) personal problems, (b) interpersonal problems with other people and their environment, and (c) problems with God (Nurgiyantoro, 1998: 323).

Environmental problems are society's problems because they show the social realities that have existed for a long time. Environmental problems do not occur only in Indonesia but also in other countries because it has become a global issue. There are many writers who have considerable concern for the problems of the natural environment. Nature has become a part of literary works as a number of writers, especially poets, use the words forests, seas, and trees in their works. Nature is the inspiration for creating literary works, and at the same time, it needs writers to be preserved (<https://fatchulkip.wordpress.com/2013/01/06/ekokritisisme-kajian-ekologis-dalam-sastra-oleh-fatchul-muin>).

In the treasures of Indonesian literature, the writer's attitude toward nature has been existing since the era of classic and modern literature. The poems written by Muhammad Yamin, Ramadhan KH, Amir Hamzah, Sanusi Pane, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, Abdul Hadi WM, and Sapardi Djoko Damono often represent the nature. In addition, nature is often represented in prose (Mahayana, 2009). One of the writers who express a lot about nature in his work is Ahmad Tohari. According to Yudiono (2003: 150) rural nature and the life of the poor are the main characteristics of Ahmad Tohari's works. The rural environment is especially evident in the description of the setting of the story. Environmental issues are also highlighted in Ahmad Tohari's work (Mahayana, 1989). Hall (1997: 15) reveals that representation is part of the process of producing and exchanging meaning, and language plays an important role in the process.

Ahmad Tohari is one of the Indonesian prolific writers whose almost all of his works show social criticism, including criticism of the environment in Indonesia. Some of his works are *Kubah/Dome* (1980), *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk/The Dancer of Paruk Hamlet*

(1982), *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*/A Shooting Star at Dawn (1985), *Jantera Bianglala*/*The Rainbow's Arc* (1986), *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*/*On the Foothill of Cibalak* (1986), *Senyum Karyamin*/Karyamin's Smile (1989), *Bekisar Merah*/*The Red Bekisar* (1993), *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*/*Soil Circle Water Circle* (1995), *Orang-Orang Proyek*/*People of Construction Site* (2002), dan *Belantik* (2000). Nature representation is seen in those works. More importantly, nature is dominantly represented in the setting and characters of the novels. The nature is highlighted clearly and in detail in each of the works.

Some theories to analyze the representation of nature in these works of fiction are ecocritical and sociology theories of literature. Ecocriticism is the latest literature approach that examines the relationship between literature and its physical environment (Glotefelty, 1996: xix). Ecocriticism examines the ideas of the environment and how they are represented in literary works. Ecocritical literature has several criteria. Buell (1995: 7-8) states that ecocritical literature uses nature to show how human life correlates with nature. Ecocritical literature usually tells about how someone escapes from a city to a country (pastoral). Then, ecocritical literature describes the village by contrasting it implicitly and explicitly with the city (Giffort, 1999: 2). Jonathan Bate in Juliasih (2012: 87) points out that ecocriticism talks about environmental awareness in literary works. Ecocritical analysis is interdisciplinary in nature, extending to other disciplines, namely literature, culture, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, environment, politics, economics, and religious studies.

According to Harsono (2008:35), the ecocritical theory is multidisciplinary as it uses both literary and ecological theories although those theories are multidisciplinary in nature. Literary theory is the basic assumption that literature is related to realities. This relationship makes literary works a form of social criticism that can be used as objects of research. This present study focuses on how nature is represented in Ahmad Tohari' fictional works and the functions of the representation.

Theoretically, this study provides an alternative to literary theory application, specifically ecocritical and sociology theories of literature in Indonesian literary works, especially fiction. Practically, this research provides a basis for appreciating novels by Ahmad Tohari that raise environmental issues, thus improving people's abilities in understanding and appreciating Indonesian literary works. Describing the environmental issues in Ahmad Tohari's works, this study is expected to increase society's appreciation of the novels and find values that are useful for society. Thus, these values are expected to add insight and appreciation of society towards Indonesian writers in general, and novels that represent the environment written by Ahmad Tohari.

Research Method

The subject of this study is Ahmad Tohari's novels that include environmental issues. The novels are (1) *Kubah*, (2) *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*, (3) *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*, (4) *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, (5) *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, (6) *Jantera Bianglala*, dan (7) *Orang-Orang Proyek*. Data of this study are in the form of discourse taken from the novels. The data were collected through reading and note-taking. The reading process was done repeatedly to find the main ideas that contain the representation of nature in the story. Then, the data were written on data cards and considered research data. The data validity was measured through semantic validity, while the reliability was measured through intra-rater and inter-rater reliability.

The data were analyzed using the descriptive qualitative technique. This technique is used to describe the forms of the representation including the representation of nature and the functions of the representations. The data description also serves as the interpretation and analysis of nature representation and realities existing in society.

Result and Discussion

Nature Representation in the Settings

Ahmad Tohari is one of the writers that show the natural environment as the story setting in his works. The natural environment becomes the characteristic and charm in his works. In his works, especially novels, many stories are introduced with a detailed description of nature as shown in *Orang-orang Proyek* novel below.

This morning, Cibawor River looks exhausted. Three days ago, heavy rains upstream made this river in flood. Fortunately, it is normal that the flood drains quickly because it is a mountain river in nature. The water, which was originally clear, started to cloud up in the morning, rose, and soon surged half an hour later. It was as if Cibawor was being poured from upstream with a large, thick, muddy sump carrying all kinds of garbage like rubber sandals, plastic bottles, banana trunks, and mahogany branches. (*Orang-orang Proyek: 1*)

At the beginning of this novel, it is presented in the setting that there was a heavy flood caused by environmental damage that occurred in the Cibawor river creek. Various garbage brought by the heavy flood indicates that environmental damage does exist. Very detailed setting that shows the natural environment is also found in other novels, namely *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* on pages 5-7, *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* on pages 7-8, and *Kubah* on pages 6 and 7.

The calm and quiet Gobang forest depicted in *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* novel is the hideout of the main character of the novel. Amin, the main character, is a DI troop. How the forest is depicted is shown in the excerpt below.

Very early in the morning, I went out, armed with a sarong wrapped around my waist. I left the weapons with Kiram and Jun who stayed at the secret post. I only brought a machete. I really needed this item, especially as a means of disguise. When going out of the forest was really necessary, I needed to pretend that I roamed around looking for firewood.

From Cigobang forest, I crawled under the dense teak forest to the north and later turned to the west. There was no wind in the forest, so the forest looked like a giant lying still. A piece of rotting twig that fell would be enough to disturb the silence let alone the crowing of partridges. Meanwhile, the sound of crickets creaking softly on the slopes was clearly audible.

The closer to the edge, the more dreamy the forest because many teak trees were cut down by the illegal loggers. There had been various plants and trees, so it was not only teak trees. I started seeing butterflies and dragonflies, and birds chirping. There are turtledoves and spotted doves perched on a branch of a *wangkal* tree. There was a pair of parrots perched near their nest in a rotting wood hole. They are chatty, but their red beak and green feathers were a real beauty. Then, I saw a Javanese eagle that suddenly swoop down from the sky. His stout body shot down, and it instantly disappeared among the trees. When I went up again, I saw that the mighty bird was already carrying a snake in its claws. It reminded me of venomous vipers that always gave me the chills. Still, the bird ate it instead. (*Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*: 117-118).

Ahmad Tohari's *Kubah* represents the poor society. Besides presenting rice fields as local wisdom, the rice fields also symbolize poverty in society. Poverty is caused by horizontal conflicts, and it is clearly depicted in the setting of the story. It is described that the soil is fertile but uncultivated. Such an illustration can be found in the following excerpt.

In Kokosan sub-district, Pegaten village is the most remote. There was a vast teak forest in its south. Meanwhile, its western part was rubber plantations and swamps. The rice fields and the other fields are fertile. That some of its' residents lived in poverty, it was certainly not the condition of the soil to be blamed. One of the facts that had spread misery in the area was the upheavals that were caused Japanese colonialization. There was also the struggle for independence which practically lasted until the early fifties. The peaceful life lasted only a few years, at the end of that decade. (*Kubah*:134-135)

The representation of nature is mainly shown in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* Trilogy. At the beginning of the novel, readers are provided with a pleasing village environment.

A pair of cranes soared in the wind high in the sky. Without even flapping their wings, they moved in harmony for hours. Its voice was shrill. It sounded like a long groan. Water. These two birds had drifted hundreds of kilometers looking for puddles. They

had longed for the mud on which they sought prey; frogs, fish, shrimp, or other aquatic insects.

However, the drought is not over. Thousands of hectares of rice fields surrounding Dukuh Paruk had been barren for seven months. The pair of cranes would not find any puddle of water. The rice fields turned into gray dry fields. All kinds of grass died. The green spots here and there were *kerokot* (a pest plant looking like a cactus), the food for grasshoppers and crickets. This type of cactus plant actually only appeared during summer.

In the other part of the field, a sparrow was trying to defend its life. It flew like a rock from a slingshot while screaming wildly. A kestrel chased it at an excessive speed. The air that the two beasts traveled through made a whooshing sound. The screech of the sparrow was heard as the beak of the kestrel bit its head. (*Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, 1982: 5)

Ahmad Tohari describes the setting of the story in detail. Nature as the setting of the story has become the charm of the story because only competent writers can depict nature thoroughly. Mahayana stated that:

The issue of the environment, which is rarely used by Indonesian writers has become the charm of Ahmad Tohari's works. The situation of the rural village is somehow perceived to have innocent, slum, open, naive, and natural sense, but it still promises a sincere and selfless peace. The situation is an honest world that prioritizes harmony between living beings and the environment in their surrounding. This is – at least – the impression that is conveyed in almost all of Ahmad Tohari's works (Mahayana, 1989: vii).

The representation of nature is also found in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* trilogy. At the beginning of the second novel entitled *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, nature is depicted to introduce the story. The description of nature is presented on pages 7 and 8. The morning situation in Dukuh Paruk, as well as the animals and plants found in the area, are described in detail.

Dukuh Paruk is quiet even though various animals were awake because the dawn was breaking. The goats began to get restless in their cages. The crowing of the roosters was heard once at a time and then more intensely. *Sikatan* bird scurried from its hiding place. It was ready to take off when it saw the first insect passing in its' sight. Crickets, big head crickets, and bugs had been silent for a long time. The big head crickets hid themselves in a hole in the ground that was plugged from the inside. A grasshopper blended itself with the green color of the leaves.

There was a rose apple tree in one corner of Dukuh Paruk. In the midst of the lush tree, a harmony of nature is being performed. Hundreds of honeybees very diligently gathered the pollen. Their wings were soothing as they filled the dim morning. (*Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, 1985: 7-8).

Similarly, at the beginning of *Jantera Bianglala* novel, Dukuh Paruk situation in early 1966 after the fire incident is described. The damaged nature is caused by the rebellion of the Communist Party of Indonesia in that small and remote area.

When Dukuh Paruk became *karang abang lemah ireng* (damaged by fire) in early 1966, almost all of those 23 houses turned into ashes. At that time, many people thought it was the end of the hamlet. Those who wanted to survive should leave Dukuh Paruk because all property, rice, and *gaplek* (sliced dried root of cassava) were burnt to ashes, so were chicken and goats (their farm). (*Jantera Bianglala*, 1986: 7)

The representation of nature in Ahmad Tohari's works shows his awareness of the sustainability of green nature in a remote village. In *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, Ahmad Tohari shows his awareness of the damaged environment caused by irresponsible people.

When the forests had been damaged. When the rice fields smelled like pest spray, and when too many youths had air rifles. So, the Segara Anakan area and the marshy area around was the last place for various types of birds to survive. (*Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, 1985: 94)

Ahmad Tohari also describes the condition of Dukuh Paruk by revealing the natural environment. Dukuh Paruk is like moss on a rock. The writer describes the setting of the story by depicting the natural environment, with moss as an analog. The life of the people in Dukuh Paruk is described as the growth and development of the moss. How moss grows and develops and its resilience in facing environmental drought and speed in responding to air and water to regrow are associated with the people of Dukuh Paruk.

Regarding the ability to survive, Dukuh Paruk could only be compared to moss on a rock. Moss was silent and seemed to die in the dry season. Dry and peeled. But in its death, a moss held the life force. The spores were encased in cysts that were capable of immediately turning their life cycle when the first drop of water or even the mere humidity of air touched it. Dukuh Paruk was a moss that was apparently created to fulfill the needs of living in the most minimal conditions. Dukuh Paruk was still there even without a smile or even a laugh. It was still there even though he barely knew the meaning of his existence anymore. (*Jantera Bianglala*, 1986: 10)

Nature representation was also carried out by Ahmad Tohari by revealing the life of various types of animals that live in the countryside, especially in Dukuh Paruk. The lives and habits of various types of birds are described by Tohari in his novel. The type, color, behavior, and food are described in detail and clearly.

Quiet morning. The sun rays in small beams went through the shade of the Dukuh Paruk cemetery. Drops of dew on the leaf tips caught the light and refracted it into a soft rainbow that glowed. A squirrel slid down from the tree.

In the thick of the parasite, a pair of honey birds chased. The red-colored male chased the female. After being caught, the two wrestled for a moment and then fell down while making love.

The large banyan tree as the crown of the Dukuh Paruk cemetery was the palace of the birds. On a hidden branch perched a plop. He was dozing off after spending the night hunting for mice, fish, or frogs. Only the little magpie bird dared to disturb the king of birds at night. The pitch-black crickets and the green stilts perched in groups (*Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, 1982: 65-66).

The detailed illustration of nature in Ahmad Tohari's fictional works not only bring its own charm to readers but also provides criticisms for Tohari regarding the use of the environmental setting. Dermawan (1992) in his thesis stated that there are elements of illogical background in the *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* Trilogy. The illogicality is related to the area of Dukuh Paruk which is not too wide but there are a lot of animals and plants. In the Dukuh Paruk area, there are no less than 38 types of birds, 21 types of insects, 15 mammals, 10 types of reptiles, and 15 other types of animals, and there are 48 types of plants in various varieties. Also, the number of types of animals and plants in Dukuh Paruk which is not too wide is illogical.

Writing his novel, Tohari did not think logically and illogically. Tohari wants to convey to his readers how the beauty of the natural environment with various living creatures in it can always live in balance. The balance and harmony of life with the natural environment, both plants and animals must always be maintained properly to make a better life.

The problem of the life balance related to the environment is also represented by Ahmad Tohari in the novel *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* and the novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*. In both novels, Ahmad Tohari describes the good relationship between humans and animals and their environment. The character of the story can live in the forest without the threat of wild animals; tigers become his friend because they take care of each other.

When there was a fairy tale about a friendship between a wild animal and a human, we really felt it in real experience. *Si Tutul* (leopard) got closer and stopped just a few meters in front of us. *Si Tutul* hid his body behind the hanging roots as if asking for protection from us. Me, Jun, and Kiram were used to seeing *Si Tutul* (*Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air*: 132).

Si Tutul is the name of the leopard that lives in the forest where they hide. They are used to seeing the animal. They look after each other, and no one interferes. The beginning of the novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* tells about the good relationship between humans and wild animals in the environment.

Once Mbok Sum's buffalo didn't come home for three days. On the fourth day, the animal appeared with its newborn cub in the forest. At that time there were still many Javanese tigers in the teak forests of Cibalak, but the wild animal preferred to pounce on monkeys or langurs, and there were still many wild boars there (*Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*: 6).

The teak forest environment in Bukit Cibalak was well maintained. No community members harmed the forest. The forest and everything in it was always guarded. There were foremen with swords and mustaches in charge of guarding the teak forest. Plants and animals thrived there, and the ecosystem chain was well maintained. (*Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*: 68-69)

2. Representation of nature in Characters

The main characters in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* Trilogy are Srintil and Rasmus. The name Srintil in Javanese culture represents its own meaning. Tohari chose the name of the main character, Srintil, which has a meaning related to the natural environment. There are some people who liken Srintil to goat dung. Although goat dung is dirty and disgusting, it has great benefits for the environment for plant fertilizers. *Beribil* is one type of organic fertilizer made from animal waste which has better quality than other types of fertilizers'. Although Srinthil is considered dirty, it has great benefits for the environment, especially for the people of Dukuh Paruk.

The first neon light in Dawuan was a witness that what happened to Srintil was something unique. Its historical background was destitute and rural like goat dung. Even though goat dung was smelly and disgusting, it was able to fertilize tobacco leaves in an arid land. Srintil was not torn apart by her history. On the other hand, Srintil rose to form itself with its backward history. The results began to be exposed under the light. Srintil became the center of interest and She sat controlled the situation (*Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, 1985: 120).

In addition, in the Banyumas community, Srintil is also known as the name of a type of plant, namely tobacco which tastes the best when made into cigarettes. This type of tobacco needs to be developed continuously because it contributes great benefits to tobacco farmers. Do not let it be extinct. The price of this type of tobacco is the most expensive one. The name Srintil still represents an object or goods that have a high value in the environment. Srintil as the main character in the novel represents a plant that is familiar to farmers, namely tobacco which has great benefits in their lives.

As *beribil*, goat dung provides the environment with great benefits because it can be used as fertilizer. The environment becomes greener and the plants are fertile. As one of the most delicious types of tobacco when smoked, it also has great benefits for the environment. In this case, there has been the production and exchange of meanings as revealed by Hall (1997: 15) that representation is part of the process of producing and exchanging meaning and through language, the process is carried out.

The name of the character Srintil as a ronggeng dancer in Hamlet Paruk also represents nature, and the ronggeng dance is related to fertility. Ronggeng or tayub dance is closely related to agrarian society, especially for ritual ceremonies, such as village cleansing (*bersih desa/ metri desa/sedhekah bumi*). This dance is believed to have magical powers related to fertility purposes (Suharto, 1999: 15, Soedarsono, 1991: 35). Initially, the ronggeng dance was a fertility rite among the farming communities (Simatupang, 2013: 230). The survival of agrarian communities in rural area is the result of the interaction between human work and the natural environment, such as soil fertility and rainfall. This shows that the choice of the type of art in Ahmad Tohari's novel is not arbitrary because it represents a separate message from the writer to his readers. The message of fertility is the one that must always be maintained and preserved, including, the natural environment in an agrarian society.

The characters in the *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* trilogy are always close to nature and maintain harmony with the natural environment. The beautiful natural environment with the plants and animals that inhabit it is described to live side by side with humans. The characters in the story are always united and integrated with nature, taking care of the natural environment properly. The characters in the story presented by Ahmad Tohari in his story live together and unite with all living things and nature around them. Almost all of the characters created by Ahmad Tohari are depictions of people who always emphasize the importance of establishing harmonious relations between humans, living things, and the universe (<http://sastra-indonesia.com/2009/03/lingungan-dunia-dalam-sastra>).

In addition, the representation of the natural environment can also be seen in the use of the novel title used by Ahmad Tohari. The title of the first novel is *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. Ronggeng as a form of folk art is related to fertility problems in agrarian societies or farmers. Dukuh Paruk also revealed a hamlet with a rural natural environment. The second novel is *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*. 'Lintang Kemukus' is one of the types of stars in the universe which according to Javanese belief is a sign of a big event in nature. 'Early morning' is also a representation of the natural environment in the form of time. It is a change of time from night to morning and related to the natural environment. The third novel is *Jantera Bianglala*. The *Jantera Bianglala* also represents natural events. Rainbow is a natural event related to the environment and it will usually look clear and beautiful when it rains, especially in rural areas.

Through his work, Tohari wants to give a message to readers about life and how the examples in the story solve a problem that is sometimes intelligent but absurd in the view of the readers (Roqib, 2007: 116). The stories in the novels *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, *Jantera Bianglala*, *Orang-Orang Proyek*, *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*, and other novels are packaged in simple terms with straightforward and communicative language and a natural environment setting that can soothe the

hearts of readers. Although sometimes it is exaggerated in its expressions, readers can happily enjoy it. For Tohari, the broadest and deepest motivation for writing a trilogy of novels is to achieve "nur", the light of life. Therefore, he is more solemn in describing nature, especially humans, animals, and plants (Roqib, 2007: 155). The illustration of the natural environment in the three novels is more dominant. Each chapter or section in these novels always has a description of the natural environment, especially the rural natural environment which is still well preserved and beautiful with various plants and animals that live and thrive in it.

The novels *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*, *Bekisar Merah*, and *Lingkar Tanah Lingkar Air* also imply the use of the environment. The titles of these novels stimulate the readers to imagine a good environment, even though the title of the novel *Bekisar Merah* is only used as an analogy, not the real red bekisar, namely the jungle fowl.

3. The Function of Environmental Representation in Ahmad Tohari's Fiction Works

Ahmad Tohari's fiction works make use of and represent the environment. This representation of the environment serves to obtain the aesthetic elements of the story. By utilizing the depiction of the environment in his fiction, Ahmad Tohari managed to make the story more interesting and beautiful. For example, the illustration of the environment at the beginning of the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is as follows.

A pair of cranes soared in the wind high in the sky. Without even flapping their wings, they moved in harmony for hours. Its voice was shrill. It sounded like a long groan. Water. These two birds had drifted hundreds of kilometers looking for puddles. They had longed for the mud on which they sought prey; frogs, fish, shrimp, or other aquatic insects.

However, the drought is not over. Thousands of hectares of rice fields surrounding Dukuh Paruk had been barren for seven months. The pair of cranes would not find any puddle of water. The rice fields turned into gray dry fields. All kinds of grass died. The green spots here and there were *kerokot* (a pest plant looking like a cactus), the food for grasshoppers and crickets. This type of cactus plant only appeared during summer.

In the other part of the field, a sparrow was trying to defend its life. It flew like a rock from a slingshot while screaming wildly. A kestrel chased it at an excessive speed. The air that the two beasts traveled through made a whooshing sound. The screech of the sparrow was heard as the beak of the kestrel bit its head. (*Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, 1982: 5)

The beginning of the story in the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* makes readers feel like they are in the real environment told by the writer. The story becomes more attractive and beautiful, and even the description of his living environment is quite detailed.

The same thing can also be seen in the depiction of the environment in the middle or at the end of the story. The example of the environmental illustration found in the middle of the story in the novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* is as follows.

Quiet morning. The sun's rays in small beams went through the shade of the Dukuh Paruk cemetery. Drops of dew on the leaf tips caught the light and refracted it into a soft rainbow that glowed. A squirrel slid down from the tree.

Among the thick parasite plants, a pair of honey birds chased. The red-colored male chased the female. After being caught, the two wrestled for a moment and then fell down while making love.

The large banyan tree as the crown of the Dukuh Paruk cemetery was the palace of the birds. On a hidden branch perched a plop. He was dozing off after spending the night hunting for mice, fish, or frogs. Only the little magpie bird dared to disturb the king of birds at night. The pitch-black crickets and the green stilts perched in groups (*Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, 1982: 65-66).

In addition to obtaining the aesthetic elements of the story, the representation of the environment in Ahmad Tohari's fiction also serves to convey a message for people to maintain the environment. For example, in the novel *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, Ahmad Tohari is also worried about the damage to the natural environment, which is done by irresponsible people.

When the forests had been damaged. When the rice fields smelled like pest spray, and when too many youths had air rifles. So, the Segara Anakan area and the marshy area around it was the last place for various types of birds to survive (*Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, 1985: 94).

Protecting the environment is a shared obligation, and Ahmad Tohari through his fiction has tried to remind us all of the significance of protecting our environment. In the novel *Orang-Orang Proyek*, the characters also always take care of the forest environment where they work on the bridge project. In the forest, they are always careful not to damage the various plants and animals that live around the project they are working on. The same can be found in other novels.

Conclusions

Ahmad Tohari's fiction works often represent the natural environment in his neighborhood. In his works of fiction, Ahmad Tohari represents the environment in the background elements, story characters, and novel titles. In the background of the story, fertility and the variety of plants that grow as and small animals that usually live in the countryside and forests are well narrated by him. The writer describes the setting of the places, for example, the forest environment around the Cibawor River, the Cigobang forest environment, the mouth of the Citandui River, Cibalak Hill, Tanggir Village, and Dukuh Paruk where various types of plants and animals live in

the hamlet environment. The representation of the environment through the name of a character, for example, the name Srintil, in the Banyumas area, is one type of tobacco that has a fairly high economic value compared to other types. 'Srintil' tobacco can have high economic value if it is cared for properly; the leaves are green and not damaged by pests. The representation through the title can be found in the *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, and *Jantera Bianglala novels*. The representation of nature in Ahmad Tohari's fiction serves to add an aesthetic element and convey the message to protect the environment.

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Some Reflections on Reference in the Teaching of French as a Foreign Language Context

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Abstract

Grammatical and lexical cohesion are necessary conditions to guarantee a text’s coherence (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Grammatical cohesion is classified into four types of relation: reference, conjunction, substitution, and ellipsis. This study aims to investigate the use of the cohesive device of reference in written discourse produced by users/learners of French as a foreign language, to explore the kind of references they prefer and to highlight the difficulties they come across. Our study is based on a learner corpus composed of written productions of Greek-speaking users/learners of French who participated in National Foreign Language Exam System (Κρατικό Πιστοποιητικό Γλωσσομάθειας, ΚΠΓ). We used a sample of texts produced by candidates who participated in the examination willing to be certified at the levels B (Independent user) and C (Proficient user) of language proficiency according to the 6-level scale of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001).

Keywords: Reference, anaphora, cataphora, National Foreign Language Examinations (ΚΠΓ), French as a foreign language

1. Introduction

The ultimate purpose of the building up of the communicative competence is the attainment of a successful communication in any social context. Written communication requires the elaboration of clear, cohesive, well-structured texts without ambiguities that may prevent understanding. Well-formed texts are coherent texts, in other terms, texts which “must be semantically well-constructed and coherent linguistic units” (Halliday & Hasan 1976).

In the context of searching for, and achieving, the coherence of a text, the rule of repetition plays a prominent role. Recursive elements should be included in the text as a mandatory condition attached to the homogeneous linear development. The repetition of these units permits to link clauses or sentences (Charolles 1978 : 14-15).

Reference is the set of grammatical resources that allow the speaker to indicate whether something is repeated from somewhere earlier in the text, or whether it has not yet been repeated in the text (Thompson 2004). Anaphoric and cataphoric referencing are related cohesive devices with a different direction. They are both subsumed under the generic term called *endophora* (Maingueneau 2000 : 172). *Anaphora* is the term which describes the relation of elements that contribute to the coherence of discourse and organization of the text when these elements follow the linguistic referent in the discourse. On the other hand, in the case of *cataphora*, these elements precede the referent (Riegel, Pellat & Rioul 1994 : 612).

There has been already a focus on anaphora by linguists working on applied or corpus linguistics because anaphoric phenomena can provide us information on syntactic description of languages and important clues to Natural Language Processing. They can tell us “how discourse is constructed and maintained – how linguistic patterning above and beyond the sentence is arranged” (Botley & McEnery 2000 : 3).

The purpose of this study is to make a first attempt to explore whether, and to what extent, reference is used adequately in written discourse of users/learners of French as a foreign language. Their sensibilization in the use of the appropriate elements could become a part of the written text analysis in classroom in order to help them to cope with difficulties, improve their skills and achieve the best results.

2. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2020)

The user/learner of a foreign language is nowadays considered as a social agent. Since the objective of the contemporary curricula is the development of users/learners’ communication skills, language awareness, intercultural awareness and the ability to interact and mediate, the development of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence needs to act complementarily in the classroom of the foreign language. Coherence and cohesion, together with flexibility to circumstances, turntaking and thematic development, have been mentioned as one of the aspects of discourse competence in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001 : 124-125) and they continue to be key concepts in the more recent Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020 : 140-141).

At the C2 level, users/learners “can create coherent and cohesive text making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of cohesive devices.” At the C1 level, they “can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured language, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. Can produce well-organised, coherent text, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns.”

As it concerns the B2 level, users/learners: “can use a variety of linking expressions efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas”, “can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link their utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though

there may be some “jumpiness” in a long contribution”, “can produce text that is generally well-organised and coherent, using a range of linking expressions and cohesive devices, and “can structure longer texts in clear, logical paragraphs.” Finally, at the B1 level, users/learners “can introduce a counter-argument in a simple discursive text (e.g. with “however”)”, “can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points”, “can form longer sentences and link them together using a limited number of cohesive devices, e.g. in a story” and “can make simple, logical paragraph breaks in a longer text”.

3. Methodology and Corpus

Textual coherence should be investigated in extended discourse contexts. Due to their structure, corpora may provide all information required (Biber, Conrad & Reppen 2005). Our study is based on a learner corpus composed of writing data in French. Written composition activities were produced by candidates who participated in the differentiated and graded examinations of the National Foreign Language Exam System (Κρατικό Πιστοποιητικό Γλωσσομάθειας, ΚΠΓ), which are organized twice a year under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Education.¹ The Greek state certificate for foreign language proficiency views linguistic pluralism as valuable to contemporary societies and offers exams in several European languages. The competences measured with the test papers are four: Reading Comprehension and Language Awareness, Writing and Written Mediation, Listening Comprehension, and Speaking and Oral Mediation.

The digitized corpus is enriched in an ongoing basis to maintain a balance in the representation of language proficiency levels (A1-C2), types of tasks, text types and communicative contexts to which candidates are asked to respond using the foreign language. Greek is the common language of all test takers. It is worth noting that the candidates taking these exams differ in their age group and literacy level. They also come from different regions and educational environments.

A criterion figuring among the evaluation criteria for the writing test is related to *text grammar* (text organization, coherence and cohesion). “Raters are trained to assess the degree to which candidates have managed to produce a coherent and cohesive script. *Coherence* refers to the presentation of ideas in a logical and understandable way. Candidates are expected to produce coherent texts by drawing on knowledge of how to organize and present their ideas from their previous experience as text producers and from their experience as readers.”²

In the present study, we use data gathered from written productions submitted for certification at levels B and C. We intend to investigate the variety in the organization and complexity of reference in discourse. As regards level B, candidates’ task was to:

¹ https://rcel2.enl.uoa.gr/kpg/en_index.htm

² https://rcel2.enl.uoa.gr/kpg/gr_kpgcorner_jul_aug2009.htm

a) write an email to a friend to invite him/her to the 9th Festival of Plurilingualism (approximately 80 words), and b) write, and post on the website of *Le Monde*, an article about the benefits citizens could enjoy from initiatives held by the municipalities of their country (approximately 100 words). At level C, candidates were asked to write an article which would be published on the site *www.doctissimo.fr*. This article should analyze the contribution of sports to the strengthening of social ties and explain how the public authorities could promote sports practice (approximately 350 words). The written outputs were expected to be informative and persuasive texts.

We used a sample of about 7000 words at levels B and C respectively. It must be noted that the corpus used was not annotated as regards anaphoras. This study was undertaken from a qualitative approach because elements used as anaphoric had to be separated manually after their automatic retrieval by means of a concordancer. Cases of exophoric elements (Martin 1992 : 122), e.g. definite articles, should be eliminated. Unitex was the tool we used to analyze our textual data. Unitex/GramLab¹ is an open source, cross-platform, multilingual, lexicon and grammar-based corpus processing suite.

In the sections presented below, we turn our attention to the pronominal and the lexical anaphora as well as the cataphora.

4. Pronominal Anaphora

Pronouns are intended as a tool for the achievement of the referential continuity in discourse (Brown & Yule 1983). Several categories of pronouns may be used as anaphoric terms: personal, demonstrative, possessive, relative, indefinite, numeral. In both levels, personal pronouns predominate contrary to demonstrative pronouns. We noticed a quite significant presence of relative pronouns and the absence of possessive and numeral ones. Anaphoricity is not present only in the same sentence, it can also be observed in the context. As Ariel (1988 : 69) points out about the anaphoric references, “pronouns are predominantly used when the distances are short”. In many examples, the referent is mentioned in the first sentence and the pronouns, present in the sentences that come after, get their meaning from it. Anaphoric chains, that is succession of anaphoric elements, are not very common but there are examples where the pronouns used are the adequate ones.

Partial representation with *en* and sequences of clitic pronouns, e.g. *le lui, la leur*, have not been found in our sample corpus. The users/learners preferred to repeat the lexical elements used previously. Cases of zero anaphora were not observed, and this can be explained by the fact that they are probably unfamiliar with this characteristic

¹ <https://unitexgramlab.org/>

of oral discourse. There were rare cases of omitting the complement of the verb needed to be represented by a pronoun:

Il faut visiter le stade et participer dans ce programme parce qu'il est fantastique. Il ne faut pas négliger. [You must visit the stadium and participate in this program because it is fantastic. It should not be overlooked.]¹

Anaphoras belonging to the nominal category are the most frequent. Anaphoras with a verbal or an adjectival referent were not attested in the sample. This fact could be interpreted as a consequence of the difficulty faced by Greek-speaking learners to replace an adjective with *le* because of the absence of this possibility in Greek, e.g.: *Ils sont fiers d'eux. Ils le sont.* [They are proud of themselves. They are.]

What is needed to point out are the inappropriate and/or ungrammatical choices. If the learner makes a wrong decision because of choosing an anaphora that does not correspond to the referent, the understandability of the context is jeopardized. Ambiguous co-referencing in the text is in all likelihood due to the absence or the erroneous use of a pronoun. In the following text, the adjective *compétitive* agrees in gender and number with *personne*, whereas, immediately after that, *il* is used instead of *elle*. Similarly, in the case of *capacités*, there is no agreement in gender with the adjective *dernier*, but with the determiner *ces*, being common in both genders.

Si une personne veut être compétitive au marché mondial, il doit acquérir des capacités. C'est vrai que la plupart des cours ne fournissent pas ces derniers. [If a person wants to be competitive in the global market, he must acquire skills. It is true that most lessons do not provide these.]

In the following example, the referent of *ils* should be *les responsables*:

Les volontaires seront encouragés par les responsables et ils les aideront à développer leurs connaissances. [The volunteers will be encouraged by people in charge and they will help them to develop their knowledge.]

It is noteworthy that misunderstandings as regards the writer's intention may be provoked by such faults.

The incorrect choice of *qui* or *que*, although it was found very rarely at level B, is another point to be noted which shows the insufficient acquisition of the relative pronouns.

Ceci and *cela* are two neutral demonstrative pronouns with a subtle difference in their usage. *Ça* is the informal version of the latter. *Ceci* is used to refer to something which shall be mentioned and is a cataphoric device. *Cela* refers backward to something that has already been mentioned. Users/learners of French cannot always distinguish the role of these elements and select randomly one of them. In our sample, we found *cela*

¹ Examples translated

13 times at level C and once at level B. We found no occurrence of *ceci* in both levels. It could be reasonably assumed that, at level C, the knowledge about the colloquial use of *ça* would have been acquired. Counterintuitively, the results are different. *Ça*¹ occurred 3 times at level B and 15 times at level C, where it was used incorrectly. It must be noted that these productions received low assessment scores in all categories of evaluation criteria.

¹ «Lorsque /ça/ renvoie à la situation, il est « déictique » ; quand il réfère au discours, il est anaphorique.» (Maillard 1974 : 66)

5. Lexical Anaphora

Anaphoric noun phrases were found in both levels. Definite articles, demonstrative and possessive determiners were used with an anaphoric functioning. Several types of associative anaphora (Kleiber 2001: 55-57) were found especially belonging to the type *members-collection: famille-parents* [family-parents], *personnes-enfants* [persons-children], *loisirs-sport* [hobbies-sport]. There were also observed sequences of functional associative anaphoras.

Faithful anaphora¹, “a case in which the referent is not recategorized” (Willemse, Davidse & Heyvaert 2009 : 31), is present at both levels to represent several referents.

The unfamiliarity of users/learners with the importance of the interdependence of discourse elements not only inside the sentence limits but also in the entire text is plainly marked in cases like the one hereunder, where, apart from the deficient use of connectives and the unclear link between concepts concerning several *capacités*, the repetition of the noun *personnes* disorients the reader.

Les élèves d'aujourd'hui doivent acquérir des capacités certaines pour survivre dans notre monde globalisé. En d'autres termes, ils doivent avoir la capacité d'analyser des affaires internationales. C'est nécessaire de coopérer avec des personnes qui viennent d'autres civilisations. Les personnes qui vont acquérir ces capacités seront mieux équipées. [Students of today must acquire certain skills to survive in our globalized world. In other words, they must have the ability to analyze international affairs. It is necessary to cooperate with people who come from other civilizations. People who acquire these abilities will be better equipped.]

There were also occurrences of unfaithful anaphora, as it can be observed in the case of the hypernym *sentiments* or the synonyms *participants* and *bénévoles*:

Les élèves ont du stress et des angoisses. Au fil des années, ces sentiments peuvent devenir répressifs. [The students have stress and anxieties. Over the years, these feelings can become repressive.]

Les participants peuvent obtenir de l'expérience professionnelle. Ces bénévoles peuvent travailler dans plusieurs postes. [Participants can gain work experience. These volunteers can work in several positions.]

In the example set out hereafter, *ce besoin* probably replaces two word sequences: *développement des compétences globales* and *naissance des compétences et des capacités*:

En ce qui concerne les raisons du développement des compétences globales, nombreuses raisons ont contribué à ce besoin. Le monde entier sait la problématique qui a conduit à

¹ *Anaphore fidèle* and *anaphore infidèle* (Maingueneau 2000 : 175) were translated as *faithful anaphora* and *unfaithful anaphora* (Willemse, Davidse & Heyvaert 2009 : 31).

la naissance des compétences et des capacités. Ce besoin a... [Regarding the reasons for the development of global competencies, many reasons have contributed to this need. The whole world knows the problem that led to the birth of skills and capacities. This need has...]

Cases where the anaphora is not a pronoun but a noun phrase were noted, e.g. in the following example *cet âge* is the anaphora referring to the referent *quinze ans*:

Salut ! Je m'appelle Martha et j'ai quinze ans. Tous les adolescents dans cet âge ont des problèmes. [Hi! My name is Martha and I am fifteen years old. All teenagers in this age have problems.]

To reformulate or explain the referent, an important variety of noun phrases *ce + general noun* was used in the case of action taken by the municipalities, previously mentioned in the productions. The relation of co-reference is based on an attribution of this property to the action taken, made implicitly. *Cette mesure, cette pratique, cette modernité, cette solution, cette façon, cette façon de vie, cette méthode, ce phénomène, ce changement* are anaphoras used. Sometimes, this device was used twice:

En ce qui me concerne, cette pratique n'est pas correcte. Je suis contre ce phénomène. [As far as I am concerned, this practice is not correct. I am against this phenomenon.]

In most cases, a referent corresponds to a noun or an adjectival phrase. Nevertheless, there are cases of resumptive anaphora where the referent corresponds to a larger segment of the sentence.

Repetition is essential in some cases, but, sometimes, a word hovers around the text without having any objective and the use of a pronominal element or a determiner would be the most appropriate option. An important observation we often made in both levels concerns the iteration of a key word throughout the text. This approach may be related to the fact that pronouns eventually provoke ambiguities in discourse, or the candidates may have chosen a surest route against the risk of using an incorrect pronoun.

Le musée organise beaucoup d'activités pour les enfants qui vont avoir lieu dans ce musée. [The museum organizes a lot of activities for children that are going to take place in this museum.]

In the following example, the referent is the same in almost the whole production reducing the possibility of the existence of other referents.

Je voudrais parler des bienfaits de la musique. On doit aimer la musique. Il y a une organisation qu'on peut faire des activités avec la musique. On doit écouter à la musique parce que la musique est très bonne pour la santé. [I would like to talk about the benefits of music. We must love music. There is an organization that we can do activities with music. One should listen to music because music is very good for health.]

Although anaphoric elements are used adequately in a text, sometimes, in the same text, the lexical anaphora that is introduced by *ce, cette, ces* is distant from the referent and it might be difficult for the reader to resolve the reference, e.g.:

Un programme de volontariat est une bonne solution. On proposera une façon contemporaine pour devenir un volontaire qui va participer pour aider les autres personnes. Les volontaires seront aidés par les responsables. On peut donner la chance aux participants de gagner de l'expérience et des savoirs. Ainsi, les volontaires, après leur enseignement, seront capables de travailler dans nombreux domaines d'action intéressants. Cette initiative est... [A volunteer program is a good solution. We will propose a contemporary way to become a volunteer who will participate to help other people. The volunteers will be helped by the leaders. Participants can be given the chance to gain experience and knowledge. Thus, the volunteers, after their education, will be able to work in many interesting fields of action. This initiative is...]

Cette initiative is used here in place of *Un programme de volontariat*. The two noun phrases are separated by four sentences.

Adverbial anaphora was found five times at level B and four times at level C. Regarding on adjectival anaphora, no occurrences were observed at level B but it was found eight times at level C with the structure *tel + noun*. There were also cases of indirect anaphora (Gardelle & Vincent-Durroux 2022). In the following text, there is no referent. The lexical unit *aussi* helps us to understand, after a sequence of complex inferences, that Greece is not the only country where innovation in the domain of sports is welcome:

Des programmes d'innovation et de motivation sportive doivent exister en Grèce aussi. [Sports innovation and motivation programs must exist in Greece too.]

6. Cataphora

Speaking about the entire sample corpus, cataphoric mechanisms are not abundantly used. Nevertheless, there are interesting cases that attracted our attention. In our corpus, cataphora is either interphrastic or transphrastic (Kęsik 1989 : 36-43). Different cases which show how cataphora is used are shown below:

Pour son développement personnel, la jeune personne doit acquérir des connaissances nécessaires. [For his personal development, the young person must acquire the necessary knowledge.]

Les actions des participants sont nombreuses. Ils peuvent participer en programmes sociaux ou à l'organisation de rencontres. [The actions of the participants are numerous. They can participate in social programs or in the organization of meetings.]

Je suis une adepte du premier choix, c'est-à-dire je préfère de rester en classe un peu plus longtemps. [I am a fan of the first choice, that is to say, I prefer to stay in class a little longer.]

Les jeunes peuvent aider avec un support qu'ils utilisent au quotidien : l'ordinateur. [Young people can help with a medium they use daily: the computer.]

In the same way as anaphora, cataphora can be segmental or resumptive. In our sample corpus, we found a few examples of resumptive cataphora. In relation to examples of segmental cataphora, none was found.

It would also be interesting to note the ana-cataphoric use of the pronoun *le* in the following example. *le* replaces *le programme sportif* of the previous sentence and announces the subsequent discourse (Kęsik 1989 : 79).

J'ai trouvé des renseignements pour le programme sportif. Laissez-moi le présenter. D'abord, à Athènes, il y a des volontaires... [I found information for the sports programme. Let me introduce it. First, in Athens, there are volunteers...]

Solution was used several times in the first written production of level B. In the first two examples, it is used successfully in a cataphor where the explication follows immediately after, and, awkwardly, in the third example, where the sign of equality (=) interferes in the text:

J'étais triste et j'ai décidé de discuter avec mes parents pour une meilleure solution. On a trouvé un professeur et j'ai commencé des cours. [I was sad, and I decided to discuss with my parents for a better solution. We found a teacher and I started lessons.]

Je te donne deux solutions à ton problème : tout d'abord, [...]. Ensuite, [...]. [I give you two solutions to your problem: first, [...]. Next, [...].]

Ma solution pour ton problème est = il faut faire plus attention en classe. [My solution for your problem is = you must be more careful in class.]

There is also a case where the same noun is used as a cataphor at the beginning of the text and as a conceptual anaphor at the end of the text:

Je lis l'e-mail et j'ai les solutions pour ton problème. [...] J'attends ta réponse pour ces solutions. [I read the email and I have the solutions for your problem. [...] I await your response for these solutions.]

7. Conclusions and suggestions for future research

This paper encompassed the question of the presence of the anaphora and cataphora in a sample corpus composed of texts of the language proficiency levels B and C of the *Common European Framework*, written by Greek-speaking users/learners of French who participated in National Foreign Language Exam System (Κρατικό Πιστοποιητικό Γλωσσομάθειας, ΚΠΓ).

The findings of this modest sample size study led to the conclusions outlined below:

- a) Anaphora is an essential element in the written production of the candidates, and it accounts for the predominant part of endophora. Cataphoric reference examples were also found in our data but to a lesser extent.
- b) Both pronoun anaphora and lexical anaphora are present in the text. Anaphoras belonging to the nominal category are the most frequent. On the other hand, anaphoras with an adjectival or a verbal referent were not attested in the sample. Reference was also made to the use of noun phrases *ce + noun* and the replacement of the referent by another noun. Faithful and unfaithful anaphora are also used.
- c) It should be noted that the linguistic errors committed by the candidates were not considered in the framework of this study. However, errors regarding the reference were noted because they usually impede the comprehension. It is noteworthy that restructuring of sentences is in some cases considered necessary. The distance between the referent and the anaphora and, also, the context which stands between them may sometimes lead to confusion.
- d) The redundant use of the referent throughout the text is also an observation made. Its replacement by the most appropriate pronoun, or any linguistic element, but also the information relating to the risk of overuse of this element should be considered by the teacher as a challenge.
- e) Regarding the presence of anaphors and cataphors in the sub-corpora of levels B and C, the research revealed no significant differences between them except some cases, e.g. the use of *cela* or the adjectival anaphora). More indications should be necessary to confirm or not that users/learners do not behave differently.

French is a language which disposes a variety of anaphoric devices that they are not always introduced or considered as such during the teaching process. Teachers should identify the characteristics of anaphora and explain the role of all cohesive devices found in texts exploited in the classroom of the foreign language for the enhancing of comprehension skills. Corpora are a precious instrument to provide evidence on text elaboration. They can be used to facilitate learning and to assist learners to reflect on the correct interpretation of relationships among elements.

Writing a cohesive text by connecting ideas in an appropriate way is an important skill for a successful communicative process, but it is not the only one that should be fostered by teachers. It should be noted that proofreading of learners' written productions by themselves is a very important skill that should be tackled with particular care in the classroom of the foreign language. It is an opportunity for them to provide for the quality of their productions and to develop their self-awareness. On the other hand, teachers should show professional awareness to develop this capacity to learners. They should enable learners to manage their time so that they can have the opportunity to read very carefully their completed texts before submission in

order to reveal inconsistencies, ambiguities and lack of clarity. The time devoted to proofreading should be considered as an essential part of the writing procedure and not as a luxury or an unnecessary final step. As it happens in real life, in the professional and social domains, proofreading strategies should be also appreciated and prevalent in the teaching of foreign languages.

Regarding the generalizability of the conclusions in our limited study, it should be noted that the combination of quantitative and qualitative research could probe into the issue we are dealing with and offer reliable results. To achieve a more complete description in the hope that it will illustrate what users/learners can do or cannot do, it would be useful to verify the conclusions drawn here in a large-scale, more representative, dataset compiled from written productions of varying text type or genre and a range of topics treated. Argumentative or narrative strategies keep abreast of the relationships among the different elements in context. Data from users/learners' not having a common mother tongue could also be explored in order to find out if this is a significant factor as regards the use of anaphora. Furthermore, the annotation of anaphoric reference in learners' corpora could be a useful tool for the extraction of statistical data and the exploration of this domain in users/learners' interlanguage. It should also be useful to explore the appropriate use of cohesive ties in written productions having a good evaluation in the other criteria imposed by the evaluation grid of the examination system.

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Sudanese Women Living with HIV/AIDS Stigma and Discrimination

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Abstract

This study aims to explore and describe the meaning and effect of the women's experience of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. The study adopted an exploratory descriptive qualitative research method. The sample is purposefully selected and consists of 10 women living with HIV who were members of people living with HIV/AIDS association in Khartoum State in 2019. Results show that all the participants were facing stigma and discrimination because they were living with HIV and AIDS. Distant relatives were the main source of stigma and discrimination followed by friends' rest of community members. Most participants indicated that they felt they were discriminated because HIV infection is associated with 'sexual misbehavior'. However, some of them complained that they contracted the virus from their married partners and hence they did not deserve to be stigmatized or discriminated against. Results show that there is a need for creation of awareness among community members on the transmission of HIV.

Keywords: Sub Saharan Africa, Women, HIV, AIDS, Discrimination

Introduction

Despite progress in many aspects of the global HIV response, women particularly adolescent girls and young women - continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV. Young women and adolescent girls account for one in every five new HIV infections in Africa and are nearly three times as likely as men of the same age group to be living with HIV in Sub Saharan Africa (UNAIDS2015The Foundation for AIDS Research 2015).

Adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa acquire HIV five to seven years earlier than their male peers (Dellar, R.C. et al (2015). Devries, K.M. et al (2013). Stigma and discrimination, as well as inequitable laws and cultural practices, further exacerbate women's vulnerability to HIV and undermine the response to the epidemic (UN women 2015). Rrecent statistics show that the number of people living with HIV in Sudan have now reached 70,000 people prevalence was at 0.4%. People living with the disease are the main source through which HIV is spreading. They suffer social stigma and community discrimination (UNAIDS 2013, SNAP 2013). There were

25000 Sudanese Women aged 15 and over living with HIV (UNAIDS 2015). Sudan has one of the largest populations of people living with HIV in Middle-East and North Africa, Sudan is a generally conservative and highly religious society where sexuality is not openly discussed, and a disease such as HIV/AIDS is surrounded by myths and taboos and even ignored in official circles. It is difficult and requires sensitivity to get people to talk openly about the disease (UNAIDS, 2014, WHO 2007). However, the HIV epidemic among Sudanese women exacerbate their vulnerability to stigma and discrimination (Daoud s. 2013). This study gives the chance to five Sudanese women living with HIV to narrate their stories on their stigma and discrimination resulted from being HIV positive.

Objectives of the Study

Describe HIV-related fear, denial and experiences of stigma and discrimination reported among persons diagnosed with HIV

Describe participants' perceptions and understanding of societal and community responses to HIV/AIDS and in particular the role of stigma and discrimination;

Methodology

The study was an exploratory descriptive qualitative research design s used to explore and describe the meaning and effect of the experience of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination among ten women living with HIV who were the members of people living with HIV/AIDS association in Khartoum State selected through the convenience purposively sampling process. Using qualitative data collection the women in the sample narrated stories that expressed their emotions, perceptions and experiences of stigma and discrimination resulting from their HIV positive. Collected stories were presented in forms of narrative stories.

Ethical Issues

The researcher obtained permission from the heads of HIV/AIDS Association in Khartoum State . Participation was voluntary and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. Informed consent was obtained from each participant who met the inclusion criteria including the minors where consent was obtained from their parents or guardians before being interviewed. The participants were allocated code numbers instead of names to ensure confidentiality and anonymity results.

Results

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The majority of participants were between 20 and 35 years of age. The youngest participant was 17 years old, and the oldest was 42 years old. Two of women participated on the study were currently single while one was divorced and other two

were widow. Two of women completed university education and one was currently university student and two were illiterate. All women interviewed did not born in Khartoum State some of them migrated with their families and other with their husbands from other states in Sudan. Their length of time in Khartoum ranged from three years to 12 years, with an average of 17 years. Three of women interviewed were engaged in small businesses one employed and other was one still student. Two of five women got infected from their husbands while two form sex practices with multiparters and one from blood transformation. The average time since diagnosis was 7 years. Three participants had been diagnosed between 2010 and 20012.All women did not had symptoms of the disease they discovered it by chance

Women's Narratives

This part presents five stories narrated by five women living with HIV. Women narrated in depth their situation, feelings and emotions resulting from being HIV positive

Story One

I am 19 years old university student moved to Khartoum to study. I discovered my infection when donated blood to my friend. I still single got the infection from blood transformation. I feel this is end of the world. I could not tell any one of my family or my friends *stigma would mean that once a person look at me they would just characterize me as sex worker and it is a committed cardinal sin. So that's one of the stigma that will be attached to me being HIV.*

Because they don't know about my HIV status, everybody in the community, they know I'm HIV positive and they talk bad about me. You know, they even call me names. They don't know me, they don't know anything about me, but still, because they found I'm HIV positive, they think I'm a bad lady . Thanks God found some support from the members of association and break my silence but still could not participate on activities conducted by association because I afraid to be identified as HIV positive. I need to be referred and seen regularly by someone who can help me cope with this disease and live with our families and society.

Story Two

I am 40 years old university graduate employed moved to Khartoum for work I got HIV from my husband. Learning that I HIV-positive was one of the most difficult experiences I go through in life. felt scared, sad or even angry. I have been living without marriage till reached 38 year old but my friends and family pushed me to get married after one year marriage my husband died and discovered my infection I hate the men. I kept my infection secret except told my mother she is giving me support and kindness. Sudanese people discriminate against people living with HIV because when they hear that someone's HIV positive – they'll be seeing someone who's dying, someone who is not supposed to touch anyone." 'After I was diagnosed I felt so bad and

I hated myself but then I calmed down and I joined the association of people living with HIV. Then I felt good and that I accepted my disease as wrath of God. *Association helped me to break the stigma I become active on awareness raising and prevention activities specifically to protect women because HIV stigma affect women more than men. Stigma and discrimination is the biggest problem that we face in our community specially we are women. I got HIV /AIDS from my husband and where he got it, I don't know either; I advise Sudanese girls before marriage should do HIV test.*

Story Three

I still single uneducated, I discovered my infection seven years ago and I got HIV because I used to practice sex with multi sexual partners. I was poor and ignorant of the transmission of HIV. When people discover that I HIV positive, they run away from me and look down to me.

People hate us because the infection of HIV is related to bad sexual practice. I moved from my area to Khartoum the person I would never, ever tell in my life is my mother. You know back home, in rural areas they are highly ignorant of HIV. They don't even believe that there is a way you can manage your life and live longer. Once they hear that someone is HIV positive, the thing that comes into their head is death. I wouldn't want her to know about it – she might die thinking about it." I am happy that the association does not discriminate me instead accommodated and encouraged me got job for me there are some times when it's difficult to cope. But knowing I'm not alone, that there are other people with HIV with similar experiences, and people who'll work on my behalf makes a difference. It gives me the strength to go on to live my life."

Story Four

I am female headed household with many children illiterate and poor. Poverty is the reason that caused to be infected by HIV / aids because I used to sell my body to support my children. I kept my infection secret inside me my stigma would affect my children

I live very difficult life experience health problems, loneliness, exclusion, poverty and unhappiness. I blame myself for the situation as HIV positive I have to keep all these feelings inside me to survive We feel desperate grief isolated without support. I don't tell people I have HIV because I don't want them to judge me."

My family kept me out of the kitchen and stopped talking to me because I have HIV.

I know I got this through sex. I feel really ashamed having a sexual disease and am no longer interested in having sex." "No one could really want to be with someone who has HIV. "Of course I am afraid for my children. I'm very afraid for their future, and how people will relate to them. 'I do not want any person to know about my disease condition...what people will do for me, I don't want even any physician to know, only my treating physician to know. If others know they will not help me, instead they will blame me and distance themselves away, so I do not want anyone to know my disease

condition. The attitude of our society on HIV is very bad. We live in the dark and are scared of the people to know because they will treat us bad and look to us bad

Story Five

I am 45 years I have got HIV from my husband. My husband was abroad for a long time before we got married. I heard he tested positive at that time and was sent back to the country, but he married me without revealing any of this. I have got sick and tested HIV positive my husband and his family divorced me went back to my family a shamed. My husband had gone around telling our previous neighbors about my positive status. I am discriminated against by a lot of friends they afraid to sit near me they treated me like sick animal, because it is assumed that HIV is only transmitted through extra-marital sex and a Muslim woman is not supposed to behave that way. Thus, an additional component of HIV-related stigma could involve the assumption that HIV positive people have transgressed their culture or religion. Some participants indicated that most people do not know about how HIV is transmitted and they fear contracting it through contacts or close association with the PLWHA. There is a lot of inaccurate information about HIV and AIDS on how it is transmitted. People are afraid of contracting the disease, therefore, HIV and AIDS patients are stigmatized and discriminated. “Stigma and discrimination make me feel miserable and sometimes I wish I could die early because I know I am bothering innocent lives. Sometimes I don’t want to eat and I know my health is going down slowly”. People’s feelings toward HIV patients are very bad and they think it is a punishment from God for their sin

Discussion

The stories illustrate what gender reacted stigma means in reality. Many women felt shame low self-esteem due to being HIV-positive. Women was much more likely to have been discriminated against by friends and community members. The stories confirm that attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS are shaped by the religious, social and cultural framework, and by misconceptions about the methods of HIV transmission among both the general population and healthcare providers (Al-Ghanim, 2005; Badahdah, 2010). This lack of knowledge is significantly and negatively related to stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS Holzemer W, Human S, Arudo J et al (2009) All participants experienced stigmatization.

Stigma has always been closely associated with HIV/ AIDS (Emler 2007; Liamputtong et al, 2009; Badahdah and Foote, 2010) Perceived HIV stigma has a significant negative effect on the quality of life of women living with HIV/ AIDS (Greeff et al, 2010)

Sudanese a very conservative HIV/ AIDS is perceived as a moral disease and people with HIV/AIDS are perceived as deviant and as deserving the disease for having violated social and religious rules (Hasnain, 2005). These attitudes are a key factor shaping the lived experience of study participants living with HIV/AIDS in Sudan.

The results that almost all the participants in the study faced some form of stigma and discrimination show a need for community sensitization on HIV and AIDS. Results show that stigma and discrimination should not be ignored or overlooked in the care of HIV and AIDS patients.

Conclusion

It is found that we will never make progress in the response to HIV – prevention, treatment, care or support – unless we deal with the gender dimensions of HIV-related fear and ill-treatment.

It can be said that Stigma can be particularly intense – even overwhelming – for women living with HIV from rural areas, are strongly conservative or religious. Here, women can experience multiple layers of the ‘jigsaw’ of stigma and discrimination. They may be forced into ‘protective silence’ which means that they do not seek support from the community or services,

Recommendations

Young women and girls are not passive victims of HIV-related stigma, but the impact of HIV-positive women’s activism and advocacy needs to be better understood and taken to scale. Indicators that measure stigma need to be tailored to the realities of women’s lives.

Stigma stands in the way of women realizing their rights. So how can progress be made in overcoming this? How can we change people’s attitudes to AIDS? A certain amount can be achieved through the legal process or through institutional and other monitoring mechanisms which can enforce the rights of women living with HIV and provide powerful means of mitigating the worst effects of discrimination and stigma

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Career Guidance in Service of Young People Professional Development

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Abstract

Young people career guidance and its challenges, as a concept, has been laid out for a long time, as over the centuries, the problems of younger generation future have been constantly emphasized. Whereas nowadays, in modern times, the concept of career guidance has evolved tremendously and there is a need to address the prospects of youth career, reconsidering the proposals that counselling program policies offer, and developing these services to better reflect the current socio-economic reality. This study aims to highlight the importance of career guidance and student orientation, to identify the goals of counselling and orientation, to analyse the characteristics of career guidance and the factors influencing student orientation and counselling. Through this study, we aim to raise students' awareness of a wide range of opportunities that career guidance offers by orienting and advising them on how to combine their interests and skills towards studies and professional career choice.

Keywords: career guidance, youth, student orientation, labour market

Introduction

The meaning of the term “career” has changed many times over the years. During the 1970s, career was a concept which was related only to the professional aspects of human life. Consequently, new meanings were added to the term, related to personal, social, or economic aspects. (Hatch, 2007)

Kaufman was the first to point out the necessity to approach the concept of needs in terms of a noun and not a verb, accurately emphasizing the ease with which one can fall into the trap of not taking into consideration a series of variables, not formulating assumptions, and jumping to erroneous conclusions. (Kaufman, 2006)

Wright defines career guidance as ‘a means of helping individuals to apply relevant knowledge, understanding and skills to their own circumstances when choices must be made. (Wright, 1997)

According to the definition given by UNESCO (2000) career orientation can be defined as the process by which an individual is assisted in the discovery, acceptance and proper use of their abilities, skills, and interests in accordance with their aspirations and values.

Career guidance is a comprehensive professional help to humans in solving the developmental tasks, situations during the life journey, and to complement the needs in the sphere of labour, employment, profession (Thompson & Dahling, 2012).

Career theories provide systems for explaining which factors operate together to determine occupational choice and development over the life periods such as preparation

for work with education and training, work entry, adjustment to work and disengagement

from work. Developmental career theories explain how the work role relates to other life

roles such as parent and leisure, how contextual factors such as socioeconomic status affect career trajectories and how people partly construct their own career and life stories

and experiences. (Balci, 2018)

Career decisions are not made solely at school, and changes to the labour force mean that shifting to new occupations and sectors is a usual part of most people's careers and may well increase in intensity in the future (McMahon, Patton, and Tatham, 2003)

What is career orientation?

Terms like place of work, employment, position, job and profession or craft, have the same meaning in a certain context although technically revised, they do not represent the same concept.

From the Puritans, who regarded job as the sole purpose of human beings as social beings, and to modern humanists, who conceive job as a means of personal fulfilment.

Job, as a concept, has been extensively analysed in recent decades and is currently associated with the term career. Job is considered any activity, (paid or unpaid), which is performed to produce a product or service for oneself or society, within a certain schedule, or during free time. (Brown, 2012)

Career has been previously and variously conceptualized in terms of personality types suited to certain work environments, developmental stages, self-efficacy for work behaviours, self-narratives of personal identity, and in terms of personal relationships (McIlveen, 2009).

Career development is presented as an ongoing learning process, followed by some flexible steps related to self-discovery, job opportunity research, decision-making activities and goal setting, according to the following steps:

Collecting information about oneself such as: roles, interests, values, skills, attitudes, personal style, preferred environment, and development needs. (Euraxess (2020).

Collecting information related to media, networking, informative interviews, etc. on employment opportunities in existing professions, industries, labour market. (Euraxess (2020).

Decision making, identification and evaluation of opportunities, study on selection of short-, medium- and long-term options (Ceschi et al., 2016).

Career guidance means the support given to students to be better prepared in making decisions on education, vocational training, or career, based on their self-knowledge, interests, skills and abilities, as well as related resources and opportunities. In the conditions of a dynamic labour market and knowledge-based economy, the approach to career guidance is becoming increasingly complex, and the goal of guidance extends beyond the acquaintance with professions and the development of skills related to them. (Eurydice, 2017)

The overall aim of career guidance is to develop the capacity of individuals to manage their careers (known as ‘career management skills’). It involves a range of connected learning activities that help people to access services, resources and experiences related to employment and further education and training. (European Commission, 2021)

The field of career guidance includes a series of activities that are defined to orient, inform, advise young people to choose the possible direction for education or employment. Career guidance, according to Kidd (2006), is a critical issue of education policies and strategic government policies, which has come about because of individual adaptation to the constant changes in the labour market.

The broad goal of career guidance would be defined in three main concepts:

- To support lifelong learning and career development.
- To serve as a learning experience including a range of learning activities.
- To promote student autonomy, helping them develop the skills and knowledge they need to manage their decisions and transition from school to work.

Guidance towards a successful career

Effective career guidance helps individuals to reach their potential, economies to become more efficient and societies to become fairer. It is critical to the smooth transitions of people as they make choices about education and training and to mobility within the labour market. (European Commission, 2021)

Career guidance is a particularly important process, which aims to guide, and help graduates to make the right choice for their future profession, thanks to information

on the different study opportunities they have, as well as exploring each of these alternatives. Career guidance implies or involves a large variety of steps (IZHA, 2018).

It is understood as a deliberate, directed, and organized process, with clearly defined goals and that must be functional. Such a view of the problem can bring more theoretical and practical value.

First, young people need career guidance, more complete information on the direction of further education, on their preferences and personal development, on the knowledge of the demands of today's labour market, on the choice of professions of jobs tailored to their personal values and abilities. (Kidd, 2006)

Second, educational concepts suggest that career guidance is no longer simply a help given to young people, but also an opportunity for them to better understand themselves and make more coherent decisions in the choices they make.

So, career guidance includes aspects such as: professional information of young people through educational work done in school, fostering interest in professions required for future professional career, work done to diagnose personal skills and guidance by recognition experts of professions, for a clear perspective for the future.

McDaniels (1984) considers career as a summary of the individual's work and leisure activities. Many times, when there is discussion about the role of leisure in career development, one of several reactions, according to McDaniels, may occur:

Some people just do not take the topic seriously.

Some people think that this type of consideration will take all the fun or joy out of leisure- "leave it alone", they say

Some people see leisure as the opposite of work and therefore having no relationship- why even talk about the two at the same time?

Some people just have not thought about relationship between work and leisure and prefer not to disturb the status quo.

Influencing factors on student orientation and guidance

Career planning is an integral part of life planning focused on work activity and the work environment. It intertwines and matches life planning. (Hatch, 2007)

During 2002-2005, the European Commission, in cooperation with other international institutions, conducted several studies, with the aim of finding out whether career guidance services, in EU member states, are prepared for the challenges of the future. The findings show that further major steps need to be taken: faster service development, better service quality, better training systems for orientation practitioners, and the development of coordinated career guidance policies.

Different studies reveal different orders of influence of social actors on career decisions found that families are more influential than career services, and career services are more influential than impressions gathered through work experience (Chin et al., 2019). According to Lent, career analysis considers psychological, social, educational, economic, and physical factors - as well as opportunities (Lent, 2005).

Career orientation as a function in education should deal with the individual development and growth of students, aiming at enabling individuals to make decisions autonomously. (GIZ Albania 2011).

Therefore, the assessment of counselling needs must always be proactive, indicating gaps between the current situation and the desired situation being followed by the identification of optimal solutions to improve factual situation (Watkins et al., 2012).

According to the taxonomy of career development interventions devised by Dykeman and his colleagues (2001) to standardize career guidance language, our focus is primarily on advising and curriculum- based interventions.

In 2012, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) conceptualized the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) as a multidimensional construct comprising four self- regulatory and psychosocial resources: concern (involvement in preparing for one's future career), control (ownership and responsibility to influence one's career), curiosity (exploring possible selves and opportunities) and confidence (active career pursuit and anticipation of success in the midst of challenges) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

According to the Handbook on career guidance of UNESCO (2002) There are various assumptions underlying the practice of career guidance. These include the following perspectives:

People have the ability and opportunity to make career choices for their lives. The amount of freedom in choices is partially dependent upon the social, economic, and cultural context of individuals.

Opportunities and choices should be available for all people, regardless of sex, socio-economic class, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, or cultural background.

Individuals are naturally presented with career choices throughout their lives.

People are involved in a wide range of work roles across their lifespan. These roles include both paid and unpaid work.

Career counsellors assist people to explore, pursue and attain their career goals.

Career guidance basically consists of four elements: (a) helping individuals to gain greater self-awareness in areas such as interests, values, abilities, and personality style, (b) connecting students to resources so that they can become more knowledgeable about jobs and occupations, (c) engaging students in the decision-making process in order that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their

own interests, values, abilities and personality style, and (d) assisting individuals to be active managers of their career paths (including managing career transitions and balancing various life roles) as well as becoming lifelong learners in the sense of professional development over the lifespan.

The reasons why individuals enter occupations vary according to the amount of importance placed on personal preferences, such as interests, or external influences, such as labour market trends or parental expectations.

Career decision-making is not something that happens only once in a person's life but, rather, it is an ongoing process that might take place at any age.

All forms of work are valuable and contribute to the success and well-being of a society.

Career guidance planning - DOTS model

According to Rogers, Creed and Glendon (2008), career planning is a decision-making process in which personal differences and environmental impacts play a particularly significant role. Within this context, the targets of individuals, personal characteristics, social interaction affect the decision-making process.

Given the requirement to align or reconcile complexes of factors that comprise the goals for career development learning, it was concluded that the conceptual framework that best satisfied criteria in terms of integration with the world-of-work, self-reflection, and transferability across settings, was the DOTS framework (McIlveen et al, 2011)

The DOTS model introduces career decision-making and career education and orientation for the learner. This model was developed in 2003, by Law & Watts, representing: The Decision to Learn Opportunity Recognition, Learning to Change, and Awareness.

DOTS includes four components:

Self-assessment

Who am I?!

This includes supporting students getting to know and understand "themselves" in terms of career: being able to communicate what they have done and can do; know how others view that information about themselves and identify what is important from different points of view; knowing what they can offer for the job - in terms of accomplishment; knowing what they can expect from the job - in terms of motivation; and understanding how and why the "self" can change in all ways.

Career Research

Where am I?!

This includes supporting students in knowing and understanding what job is available, in other words, showing them the way: knowing what job is available and what is available to whom; knowing what the job offers - in terms of interests and satisfaction, as well as rewards and incentives; knowing what the job requires - in terms of commitment and motivation as well as skills and qualifications; and understanding how and why job changes in all these directions.

Decision Making

What should I do?!

This means supporting students to be willing in making decisions on which they expect responsibility; knowing what they are going to do; knowing that they could have done something else; why they will do this and what will be the consequences of this decision; practicing decision-making skills and styles; and being able to apply these skills and styles to real decisions.

Action plan

Where can I do it?

This includes supporting students in being ready to constructively solve problem-related problems; being able to anticipate what needs to be done to implement the decision and deal with the consequences of other people's decisions; practicing the skills to change - such as data search, self-presentation, communication, self-management, perseverance, and conflict resolution; being able to apply these skills in real periods of change.

Conclusions

It can be said in full conviction that career guidance is a lifelong process. It begins in the family, develops during the period of schooling as well as turn up in job experiences, it is matched with the ability of the individual to make decisions about his future, in accordance with the qualification status and changes in the labour market.

Guidance, and counselling programs take various forms depending on regional and cultural priorities. There is mounting evidence suggesting that to be effective, it is important that programs begin by focusing on the needs expressed by the young people themselves (Hiebert 2002).

Career guidance should be conceived as an especially important process, which aims to guide and help students make the right choice for their future profession, thanks to information on the various study opportunities they have, as well as exploration. of

each of these alternatives, given the skills, qualities, desires, schooling, and life experience.

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The Influence of the African Religious and Cultural Context and Its Impact on Lutheranism: The Case of Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality

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Abstract

In Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, traditional religion has played a significant role in transforming Christianity by confronting it with the decisive issue of indigenization. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to examine the inter-religious relations among Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), and to explore how African religious and cultural values have impacted on Christian – ATR relations within the municipality, and how the latter has, also, been affected by the former. The primary research question raised in this study is: what is the relevance of indigenous people’s music in the existing (Lutheran) liturgy? The study employed an intercultural theological approach to Science and Religion, and the analysis is based on acculturation and the principle of elimination by substitution. The study also utilized a triangulated and contextual approach, and data was collected through observations, face-to-face interviews and video recordings of rehearsals and performances during church services and other related events. Secondary sources included published books and Journal articles. The investigation has revealed that the integration of spiritual folk songs (choruses), traditional musical instruments, handclapping, and dancing into liturgical church service of almost all Evangelical Lutheran churches found in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, has not compromised the essence of Lutheran tradition. It has rather encouraged maximum, active and unimpeded participation in liturgical church service and/or Congregational singing. Indications from the investigation have also shown that the dimensions of rhythm play an important role to contextualize and Africanize the existing (Lutheran) liturgy, in order to make the missionary qualities of worship an integral part of mission work. During the study, it was also observed that musical creativity and musicality in the visited churches embrace other elements such as the capacity for becoming absorbed emotionally in music and the ability to enter into an intimate relation with it, so that the whole organization of the soul is affected. It was concluded that it is indeed of great significance that indigenous people’s music should be

regarded as a matter of relevance and ultimately becomes a vessel which carries the full meaning of the Gospel.

Keywords: African religious, Lutheranism, Greater Sekhukhune Municipality, cultural context, traditional religion.

Introduction

Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality is one of the municipalities found in Limpopo Province (see Fig. 1). In the Bapedi society, religion¹, culture, music, and spirituality² are broad and complex concepts which vary their understanding according to different cultural, religious, and musical backgrounds. Within Bapedi people’s cultural context, spirituality is linked to the expression of religiosity, and religiosity can be described as the way an individual follows and experiences or practices a particular religion, whether intrinsically or extrinsically. Beliefs can be considered as the cognitive dimension of spirituality, an affirmation of something considered real, which varies according to the culture; and spirituality can be considered a source of coping to handle crisis and stressful moments, and related to positive meanings in the face of challenges, such as health problems. To Bapedi people, music seems to be intertwined in the everyday life, as something to enjoy, relax with, regulate stress, and so on. This characteristic seems to accord with much published research on everyday uses of music (Lo-Bamijoko 2015; Isabirye 2021; Monteiro & Wall 2011; Silverman 2018).

Bapedi people have faith in themselves. Their belief system is connected to God through their intermediaries (ancestors – the living – dead). They acknowledge that God exists, and He is the Supreme God. Their spiritual experiences have a strong impact on characteristics of physical and emotional well-being associated with health and wellness. Within Bapedi cultural context, music functions as a cultural immunogen and a psychospiritual container wherein the body and the spirit are connected and there is an integral relationship between music and spirituality. Among Bapedi people music has an important role to play in ritualistic and spiritual healing practices, and is capable of affecting and eliciting experiences in health care and creating a positive emotions and spiritual wellbeing.

¹ In the context of this study, Nweke (2020:43) defines Indigenous religion in Africa as the way Africans understand and worship their god. According to him, this religion is found in almost all the activities of the African man. In his view, African traditional religion cannot be discussed without mentioning that it is the way of life of the people of Africa, and so cannot be differentiated from the politics, education, and socialisation, etc. of the people which are all together (2020:43).

² According to Le Roux and Sauer (2016:162), the term ‘spirituality’ is derived from Latin ‘*spiritus*’, meaning ‘breath’, and related to the Greek *pneuma* ‘breath’ which refers to the vital spirit or soul.

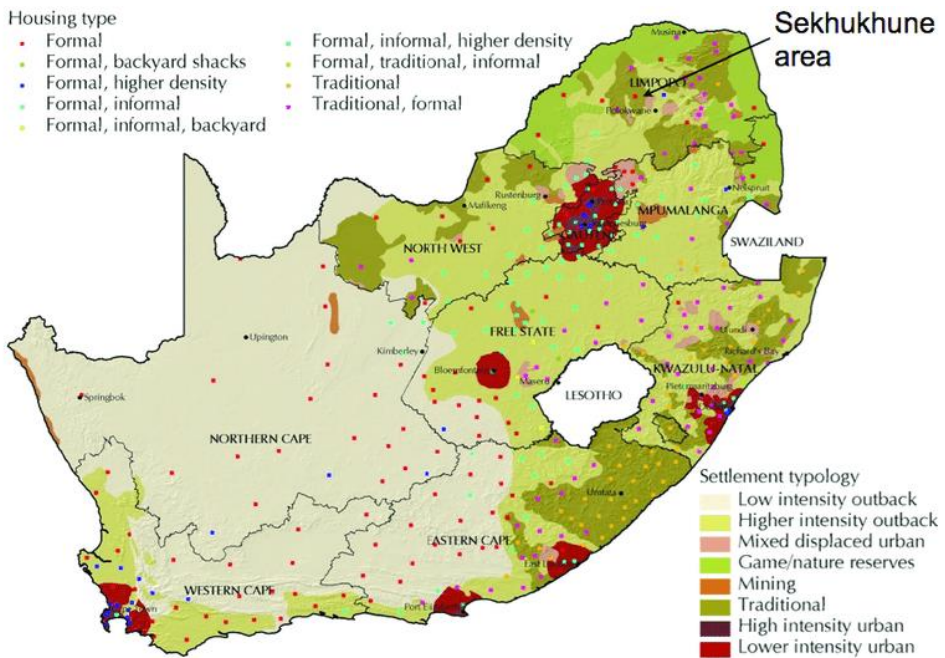


Figure 1

Figure 1: Geographical Location Map of South Africa showing Limpopo Province & Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality.

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-human-settlements-in-South-Africa-showing-Sekhukhune-area-in-Limpopo-province-with_fig1_228092563 [accessed 21 June 2022].

In Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality music creates an emotional and cognitive context that is conducive to a feeling of well-being or a state of alertness or relaxation in accordance with the needs of the situation. Bapedi people use music on a regular basis to re-focus one’s attention or address and align oneself with troubling memories to spark an emotional catharsis. This gives evidence that music may also be used to change one’s mood or forget about one’s worries.

Corroborating the above observations, de Brito Sena et al. (2021:6) observe that spirituality is a complex and multidimensional part of the human experience, and has cognitive, experiential and behaviour aspects. According to de Brito Sena et al., the cognitive or philosophic aspects include the search for meaning, purpose and truth in life and the beliefs and values by which an individual lives (2021:6). These scholars postulate that the experiential and emotional aspects involve feelings of hope, love, connection, inner peace, comfort, and support (2021:6). In their view, these are reflected in the quality of an individual’s inner resources, the ability to give and receive spiritual love and the types of relationships and connections that exist with

self, the community, the environment and nature, and the transcendence. In the same vein, Singh and Bhagwan (2020:409) write that drumming is a common practice in the African tradition which enhances the way in which individuals and communities call on their ancestors. Singh and Bhagwan contend that people are believed to experience a sense of calmness and guidance, as they feel the presence and closeness of the ancestors when they drum (2020:409). These scholars believe that drumming fosters a spirit of togetherness with community members and family (2020:409).

Sharing more insight of the concept 'spirituality' Le Roux and Sauer (2016:163) remark that spirituality alone is not necessarily considered to be a positive factor, as people may use it toward negative or positive ends. According to Le Roux and Sauer, through spirituality, individuals attempt to perceive their world, themselves, and their needs in terms of their connection to the self, others, nature and God, and music is capable of affecting spiritual aspects with emotional needs in health care and can contribute to the 'wholeness' perception of a person (2016:163). Based on the foregoing, Bapedi traditional religion has played a significant role in transforming Christianity¹ by confronting the missionaries' activities, Lutheranism inclusive, with the decisive issue of indigenization. Their bold response to acculturation yielded significant results. According to Lebaka (2020:1; 2017:165), culture change usually took place over an extended period, but in Sekhukhune district, acculturation took place at a tremendous speed. Lebaka writes that missionaries of all church denominations from different cardinal points across the globe were heartily welcomed into Bapedi society in Sekhukhune district, Limpopo province, to establish churches and schools as the main vehicles for the dissemination of European culture (2020:2). According to Lebaka, the missionaries were skilful and helpful in many ways, unfortunately they did not take into consideration the traditional beliefs, customs and practices of the Bapedi people. Instead of adding to the Bapedi cultural practices, they applied the principle of elimination by substitution (2020:7). A serious attack, for instance, was launched on Bapedi traditional and religious beliefs, customs and practices – polygamy, ancestor veneration, initiation or circumcision, traditional religious music, traditional healing systems, etc. (2020:5). This puritanical attitude frowned upon and condemned incorporation of any indigenous religious and cultural expression into Bapedi Christian life, and this undermined those positive values of indigenization and inter-religious relations among Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), as well as the cultural blend within Evangelical Lutheran Congregation singing context.

¹ Christianity in the context of this study is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (Nweke 2020:43). According to Nweke, it is a missionary religion holding that Christ's message, as intended for the whole world, is not just for a particular area of people, instead it is for everyone as we can see in Mark 16:15ff. Jesus gave the injunction "Go ye into the world and preach the gospel to all creation".

Theoretical Perspective

This study is underpinned by the theory of cultural risk often referred to as ‘Cultural Theory’, developed by Mary Douglas (1992). This theory focuses on collective, social, and shared conventions that influence individual perceptions (Douglas 1982:40). Cultural theory proposes that individuals choose what they fear in relation to their way of life – that is, in relation to the ‘culture’ they belong to (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Thompson et al., 1990; Douglas, 1997). The theory advocates that, structures of social organization endow individuals with perceptions that reinforce those structures in competition against alternative ones (Douglas, 1966). Two features of Douglas’s creative work inform the basic structure of cultural theory. The first is a general account of the social function of individual perceptions of social dangers. Douglas argues that this tendency plays an indispensable role in promoting certain social structures, both by imbuing a society’s members with aversions to subversive behaviour and by focusing resentment and blame on those who defy such institutions (1996:4). The second important feature of Douglas’s work is a particular account of the forms that competing structures of social organization assume. Douglas and Wildavsky (1992) stress that individuals are embedded in a social structure and that the social context of individuals shapes their values, attitudes, and worldviews. Douglas maintains that cultural ways of life and affiliated outlooks can be characterized (within and across all societies at all times) along two dimensions, which she calls ‘group’ and ‘grid’ (1970). According to her, a ‘high group’ way of life exhibits a high degree of collective control, whereas a ‘low group’ one exhibits a much lower one and a resulting emphasis on individual self-sufficiency (1970). Attesting to Douglas’ viewpoints, Rayner (1992) observes that a ‘high grid’ way of life is characterized by conspicuous and durable forms of stratification in roles and authority, whereas a ‘low grid’ one reflects a more egalitarian ordering.

This model is indeed in agreement with Moscovici’s (1981) theory of social representation. Borrowing Moscovici’s theory, Rodlach (2006) argues that within any culture, there are points of tension and fracture around which new representations emerge. According to Rodlach, social representation emerges when individuals engage in interaction with each other during everyday conversations. He describes the concept as everyday thought associated with colloquial language. In his view, the result is a set of explanations originating in daily life during inter-individual communications (Rodlach, 2006:9). Rodlach outlines two specific processes which are engaged when people integrate new ideas, and these are anchoring and objectification (2006:11). According to him, through anchoring, unfamiliar concepts are compared and interpreted in the light of the phenomena generally acknowledged as common sense, as well as widely shared values, norms, and beliefs (Moscovici, 2001). These two mechanisms make the unfamiliar familiar, first by transferring it to a sphere that allows people to compare and interpret it, and second, by reproducing it among tangible things. He is of the opinion that once social representations are

created, they can be modified and reworked as they continue to evolve. Applying the theory of social representation to the context of this study, depicts the manner in which the indigenization process of Lutheran tradition evolves over time.

The theory is applicable to this study because Christians/Lutherans in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality feared acculturation, infiltration of culture, Westernization, indoctrination, and distortion of culture by the missionaries. They confronted all these with bold response and with the decisive issue of indigenization. They are currently embedded in a social structure of indigenization. Their mission is to transform Christianity and/or Lutheran tradition, and shape their values, attitudes, and worldview. In the context of this study, all aspects namely, collective, social, and shared conventions as outlined by Douglas (1982) apply. The context of this study is ideal for this model because indications from the investigation in this study have revealed that the rapid growth of Lutheranism in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality and elsewhere, and the inter-religious relations among Christianity and indigenous people’s music in the existing Lutheran liturgy made inter-religious dialogue an urgent necessity. The present research complies with this endeavour because during observations and interviews, it was established that the integration of spiritual folk songs (choruses), traditional musical instruments, handclapping, and dancing into liturgical church service of almost all Evangelical Lutheran churches found in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, has not compromised the essence of Lutheran tradition. It has rather encouraged maximum, active and unimpeded participation in liturgical church service and/or Congregational singing.

While I greatly respect the theological traditions of the Western and/or European church, yet I feel that the African Lutherans should be allowed to theologize without feeling they have to submit to the Western or European yardstick. There is an African metaphor/proverb saying, *‘A bee does not start a new home with honey’*. So, just as a bee starts with the raw material and produces honey, so African Christians, Bapedi Lutherans in particular, must take Lutheran tradition and biblical message (gospel) as the raw material and using their own culture should make (manufacture, weave) a Christian theology capable of responding to Bapedi Lutherans’ deepest concerns and questions. I applaud Christians/Lutherans within Bapedi religious and cultural context for their bold response, by confronting acculturation with their decisive issue of indigenization. It is not an overstatement to contend that there is a need for the Christians/Lutherans in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality to keep, uphold and promote their indigenized Lutheranism, for the preservation of Lutheran tradition in African context.

Previous Related Studies

Research over the last decades has been growing substantially in the field of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), showing a significant influence of inter-religious relations among Christianity and African Traditional Religion; and

exploring how African religious and cultural values have impacted on Christian – ATR relations within the society, and how the latter has, also, been affected by the former (Adamo 2011; Chukwu 2018; Crews & Taylor 2022; Lebaka 2020; Luhrmann et al. 2021; Manganyi & Buitendag 2013; Mtemwa et al. 2021; Mpofu 2020; Nweke 2020; Ogbonna 2021; Sanneh & Carpenter 2005). Religion according to Nweke (2020:42) gives answers to a lot of things and problems people face in the world, has no founder and that is why it is called an indigenous religion. Nweke is concerned that African traditional religion has been seen by many from a negative point of view (2020:44). He cites some negative terms used for ATR, such as a) *archaic*, which implies old, old fashioned, antiquated, no longer in use; b) *Paganism*, which refers to pagan, derives from the Latin word for a rustic, village dweller, and its use in English connotes polytheism; c) *Animism*, which is described as a belief that spirits inhabit some or all classes of natural objects; d) *Heathen*, which implies an uncultured or an uncivilised person or religion. Based on these misconceptions, according to Nweke, ATR is seen as a religion that is not refined, but crooked and, e) *Idolatry*, which implies a religion that worship idols (2020:44). His statement of position is that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is not archaic because it is the life of the people which has to do with the day-to-day life of an African, is not a polytheistic religion, rather a monotheistic one, does not worship idols, it is the religion of the people that has to do with their way of life, does not worship idols, is not heathenism, and its adherents worship the Supreme Being just like every other religion (2020:44). Nweke (2020:46) further asserts that community life practices among religious groups in Christian societies must have had its teaching and foundation in African traditional religion. In his view, religion generally includes belief in the supernatural and a code of ethical behaviour (2020:47). His humble advice is that as each religion is important and has a lot of things others can learn from, no religion should be seen as superior to the other, and each should encourage the other, see something good in the other, appreciate the other, applaud the other and equally condemn the negative sides of the other. Hence, no one should single itself out as the best because they are all monotheistic by nature (2020:47). Nweke is convinced that by doing this, ATR, Christianity, and Islam can co-habit and have peace, love, unity and understanding between them (2020:47).

Sharing more insight on the encounter between Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), Adamo (2011:1) postulates that the rapid growth of many religions in Africa and the revival of ATR in postcolonial Africa have made inter-religious dialogue an urgent necessity. In consonance with Nweke’s viewpoints, Adamo suggests that unlike the colonial encounter with ATR, which was characterized by hostility and the condemnation of ATR, the postcolonial encounter should be characterized by mutual respect, understanding, tolerance, and some level of freedom, liberation and genuineness, and in this way, suspicion will be reduced, because despite the adherents’ confession of Christianity, ATR is not about to be extinct (2011:1). Adamo defines ATR as the inborn and aboriginal religion of Africans, embraced by the forefathers of the present generations (2020:3). He further

describes it as the religion that emerged from the sustaining faith of the forebears of the present generation of Africans passed from generation to generations and still practiced today by the present generation of Africans (Lebaka 2020:3; Awolalu 1991:111). Adamo maintains that dialogue with adherence of African Indigenous Religion (AIR) is a way of expressing our love and concern to our neighbour, which is the greatest commandment in the Bible (2020:9). According to Adamo, this means that dialogue without genuine love and concern is not true dialogue (2020:9).

Manganyi and Buitendag (2013:1) testify to this fact when they state that the missionaries were not only perceived as turning Africans away from their culture but were also understood to be undermining African culture by being arrogant, in the sense that they compared African culture to their so-called *superior* culture. According to Manganyi and Buitendag, an African continues living life as part of a community, not in isolation as an individual. Life is lived in connection with those that are alive in the here and now, but also with an awareness of those who have died, yet who are also present in the here and now (Maimela & Buitendag 2013:13). Maimela and Buitendag maintain that the reality of life for an African is that there is never a separation of physical from spiritual. To the traditional African, there is no coincidence or accident. Nothing happens by chance (2013:11). Manganyi and Buitendag further point out that African Traditional Religion has a space to exist within the Christian faith, yet the approach to worship differs (2013:13). Relatively, few studies have focused upon the decisive issue of indigenization and the role of culture in liturgy (Amalorpavadass 1971; Lebaka 2015; Ndemanu et al. 2018; Triebel 1992). Lebaka (2015:5) writes that traditional African religious music in general has a great impact on Evangelical Lutheran liturgical church services. He proposes that Evangelical Lutheran congregations in Africa (that are losing church members because of poor attendance) could potentially consider introducing traditional African religious music as part of their church services (2015:5). On a similar note, Ndemanu (2018:83) notes that the level of inter-traditional religious tolerance in Africa is worth celebrating. Ndemanu elaborates by stating that the degree of tolerance has gone a long way to impact how Africans view interfaith relationships (2018:83). There is a vast literature on the use of music in everyday life (Dargie 1988, 1995; Davidson 1991; Hustard 1981; Isabirye 2021; Lebaka 2009; Lo-Bamijoko 2015; Monteiro & Wall 2011; Nelson 1999; Nketia 1949, 1954; Nketia & Djedje 1984; Scott 2000; Silverman 2018). What is noticeable in the use of music in the use of music in everyday life in African context, is the vital role played by musical instruments. Lo-Bamijoko (2015:20) explains that instruments described as rattles have one common feature. According to him, they are always strung together, and are then used as anklets or waist bands, or tied around a musical instrument to act as a buzzer, and their names vary according to the material with which they are made (2015:20). Lo-Bamijoko contends that the drum has been described by many scholars and musicians as a rhythm-melodic instrument; and as a rhythmic instrument, it is regarded among the Igbos as the generator of everything happening around it, and a pulsating force,

like the heart, which gives life and meaning to music (2015:24). Lo-Bamijoko is of the view that as melodic instrument, it is regarded among the Igbos as possessing life, but this is not life as we know it, of the mortal, ephemeral type (2015:24).

Attesting to the above observations, Silverman (2018:13), notes that in West African cultures, drums themselves are sacred, signifying power and influence. According to Silverman, ‘drumming in this tradition, is spirit’. Monteiro and Wall (2011:234) add another important point. They observe that in the African worldview, dance is a conduit of individual and community healing. According to Monteiro and Wall, African conceptualization of illness and health integrate social, spiritual, physical and mental realms, all of which are impacted by trauma (2011:234). Monteiro and Wall further maintain that traditional African dance is connected to ritualistic and spiritual healing practices and addresses a range of ailments (2011:235). These scholars assert that the understanding belief is that in the community, mind and body must be incorporated into ritual systems to facilitate healing, as well as transform and empower the individual and the group (2011:235). Based on the foregoing, it is worthwhile to mention here observations by Isabirye (2021). Isabirye remarks that before colonization, Basoga people in Uganda, like other African societies, learned music through indigenous ways: through social interaction with everyone and anyone in the community who was more knowledgeable and skilled (2021:240). In his view, the transmission process was from elderly people to the children, and from siblings to siblings (2021:240).

Research strategy

Subjects for this study were identified because of their knowledgeable and informative qualities. Pastors (*baruti*), church elders (*badiši*), church choirs’ conductors (*bahlahli ba dikhwaere*), and selected congregants/singers in different Evangelical Lutheran Church Congregations made it possible for me to attend their church services and church choirs’ rehearsals with them. During my association with them they corroborated my data on the significant role played by traditional religious and cultural context in transforming Christianity for the purpose of indigenization. Sincere thanks are due to them for their patience, time, and kindness. The study employed an intercultural theological approach to Science and Religion, and the analysis is based on acculturation and the principle of elimination by substitution. The study also utilized a triangulated and contextual approach, and data was collected through observations, face-to-face interviews and video recordings of rehearsals and performances during church services and other related events. This approach consists of (i) ethnographic observational data, (ii) interview data, and (iii) literature searches. Firstly, *ethnographic observational data* was obtained from eleven (11) Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in eight (8) villages. I also endeavoured to attend church choirs’ rehearsals of different Congregations and other relevant events (church rallies and conferences) that would further understanding of the Lutheran hymn singing within Bapedi cultural and religious context. Secondly, *interview data*,

was obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with twenty-seven (27) participants across the eight (8) villages, who were full members of Evangelical Lutheran church, pastors and church elders inclusive, with conversations focused on addressing the key research questions. Both oral interviews and observations were employed to gather data. Most of these interviews were informal and spontaneous. However, I also carried out other interviews that were longer, more formal, and in some instances taped. Virtually, all the interviewing, formal and informal, revolved around questions emerging from my observations. Thirdly, I reviewed existing literature around the topic from published books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, reports and theses, while analysis and discussion of results were in progress.

The above approach is supported by Reck, Slobin and Titon (1992:444) who argue that although we may travel to far-away places to meet, see, and relate with unfamiliar things and people, or search for marvellous treasures, ‘the pot of gold is buried in one’s own backyard’. They encourage researchers to seek out nearby musical cultures, which they can observe, understand, and document, to contribute to the body of knowledge on the influence of the African religious and cultural context and its impact on Lutheranism. The author found the above guide and the approach of purpose definition useful in this study. After every interview and discussion session with individuals and groups, I listened to the playback to determine issues that needed further clarification. Since the researcher was born and bred up in the Bapedi society, Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, Limpopo Province, the knowledge of Sepedi language and culture was very useful to the understanding of structural elements and characteristics (language), content and context of traditional spiritual folk songs (choruses) and the Lutheran hymnal. I found in the study that the congregants/singers have very good diction in their Congregational singing, and this made understanding of text a bit easy. The data was continuously analysed in a dynamic ‘top down’ manner based upon the key research questions. The purpose of this study was twofold: a) to examine the inter-religious relations among Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), and to b) explore how African religious and cultural values have impacted on Christian – ATR relations within the municipality, and how the latter has, also, been affected by the former. Two interrelated research questions therefore guided this study: a) what is the relevance of indigenous people’s music in the existing (Lutheran) liturgy? and b) what is the attitude of the current missionaries, local pastors, church elders and congregants towards the transition process? Both questions are addressed in this study.

Results and Discussion

Integration of spiritual folk songs (choruses), traditional musical instruments, handclapping and dancing into Liturgical Church Service.

During observations and interviews, it was established that the integration of spiritual folk songs (choruses), such as ‘*Ntate roma nna*’ (Father send me/*Vater schick mich*); ‘*Ngwanesu o sa diegelang*’ (My brother/sister why are you undecided?/*Mein Bruder/Meine Schwester, warum bist du unentschlossen?*); and ‘*Re tswa ka mo re ya ka mo*’ (We are moving from one place to the other/*Wir ziehen von einem Ort zum anderen*); traditional musical instruments (**see Photo 1**), handclapping and dancing into Liturgical church service of almost all Evangelical Lutheran Churches found in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality has not compromised¹ the essence of Lutheran tradition and/or Lutheranism. It has rather encouraged maximum, active and unimpeded participation in Liturgical church service and congregational singing by congregants.



Photo 1

Leg Rattles (*dithlwathlwadi*); (Lobethal Church Centre, 23.06.2019), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka.

It was also found that during this type of service congregants feel that they are themselves, recognized as part of the congregation, and are free to express their

¹ Whelan (1990:202), for instance, has observed that “many local churches have begun to produce a body of liturgical music that is a worthy cultural expression of their Christian faith”. Furthermore, Chenoweth (1984:35) gives a few examples showing the “fruits of indigenous musical leadership in the church” which have resulted “in a wealth of worship styles all over the world”, such as those of Papua New Guinea, Nigeria or Cameroon.

emotions, appreciation, satisfaction, and social excitement by either dancing, drumming, ululation, blowing whistles and handclapping, which is in line with the African religious and cultural context. Congregants are singing from memory (in four-part harmonic setting), dancing and praising the Supreme God, Lord God Almighty, the Father of Jesus Christ, the way they like and as they wish, without any barriers or obstacles, and there is active participation in the church (**see photo 2**). This viewpoint is supported by Lebaka (2015:1) who writes that from a cultural point of view, African people do not always feel comfortable in a controlled and/or solemn church environment where emotions are not expressed freely. Lebaka further notes that whilst traditional African religious music is carried out with the help of traditional musical instruments (e.g., *meropa* (drums), *dinaka* (whistles), *dithlwathlwadi* (leg rattles) and *mekgolokwane* (ululation), liturgy enables the congregants to encounter God within the context of a worship service (2015:5). Lebaka further argues that traditional African religious music is indispensable and has a positive impact on mission work, as it proclaims the gospel within the South African missionary context (2015:2).



Photo 2

The congregants feel that they are themselves, recognized as part of the congregation, and are free to express their emotions, appreciation, satisfaction, and social excitement by either dancing, drumming, ululation, and handclapping. They are singing from memory (in four-part harmonic setting), and worshipping the Supreme God, Lord God Almighty, the Father of Jesus Christ, the way they like, and as they wish. There is active participation in the church (Schoonoord; Evangelical Lutheran Church

– Schoonoord Congregation, 09.08.2015), Photographer: Morakeng Edward Kenneth Lebaka (Researcher).

Attesting to the above thoughts and observations, Liebernecht (1994:281, 283) rightly postulates that singing helps the congregation of God to recognize itself as church, so that it can establish its own identity through music and appears to be attractive to outsiders. In the same vein, Nketia (1984:15) shares more insight and contends that apparently 'the fact that drums and other percussion instruments were used in the Ethiopian church, which has been established in the fourth century A.D., did not affect the evangelistic prejudices.' It is worthwhile to mention here that it is not only the Lutheran church denomination, that is transforming Christianity, but other church denominations, such as Anglican, Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed and others have incorporated similar Congregational singing strategy to indigenize their liturgical church services. This approach or strategy is supported by Dargie (1989:138) who views the incorporation of African hymns into worship as the best alternative option, a wise move and contributor to the renewal of the whole church.

Music making and music identity

When analysing the data material, it becomes evident that creative music making and music identity are two sides of the same coin, in that the former provides an arena in which the latter can be explored. It is also noticeable that in all the visited churches, creative music-making takes place during a process of interaction between the congregants' musical experience and competence, their cultural practice, their traditional instruments, and the instructions. Altogether this forms the *affordances* in the creative situation. The following spiritual folk song (chorus) was communally composed by the congregants at Lobethal Lutheran Congregation because of their expertise, musical experience, inborn talent, competency, and creativity (**see table 1**).

Spiritual Folk Song '*Ntate Roma nna*' (Father send me)

'*Ntate roma nna*' (Father send me) is an example of spiritual folk songs (choruses), a genre of communal singing whereby a group of congregants (both men and women) sing, clap their hands and dance to the beat of the clapping. According to Mamogudi Phaladi (personal communication, 18 August 2019), the lyrics tell how the singers/congregants are prepared and willing to be sent out there, to the people to spread the Word of God (good news). Table 1 below is the lyrics of '*Ntate roma nna*' followed by the transcription (Transcription A).

Text and translation

Spiritual Folk Song (Chorus): ‘Ntate Roma Nna’

Table 1: Lyrics of ‘Ntate, roma nna’

Lyrics in Sepedi	German translation	English translation
Ntate roma nna	<i>Vater schick mich</i>	Father send me
Ntate roma nna	<i>Vater schick mich</i>	Father send me
Ntate roma nna	<i>Vater schick mich</i>	Father send me
Roma nna ditšhabeng	<i>Schick mich den Menschen</i>	Send me to the people.

Table 1: The song was recorded by the author on a field trip at liturgical church service held at Lobethal Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ga-Phaahla Mmakadikwe village, Sekhukhune area-Limpopo Province on the 23rd of June 2019.

Figure 3: Musical transcription of the spiritual folk song ‘Tate, roma nna’ - Father send me (my transcription)



Figure 3: Musical transcription (own transcription) of the spiritual folk song ‘Tate, roma nna’ - Father send me (my transcription). (Transcription C; my transcription) shows the song ‘Tate, roma nna’ (Father send me) in instrumental version. This was performed by Lobethal Congregation, and accompanied by Kenny’s Brass Band, Ga-Phaahla Mmakadikwe, Limpopo Province – South Africa; Date: 23rd of June 2019.

Descriptive Assessment

The song ‘Ntate roma nna’ is a spiritual folk song (chorus) originating from Lobethal congregation, Arkona parish – Greater Sekhukhune Municipality; Botshabelo Circuit, Northern Diocese in South Africa. This song and others are often sung during the church offertory because of their power to excite and put congregants in a celebratory mood that makes them more generous in making their contributions. This celebratory mood associated with these songs stem from the functions for which the songs were designed and performed - a happy occasion. During church rallies, conferences and liturgical church service, the rendition of this song excites and makes congregants

participate by singing, clapping hands and dancing due to the song's tune and rhythm they are familiar with. The pulling power of this song was in its tune and rhythm that compelled most of the congregants to participate actively during the performance. Their active participation also heightened their religious experience. In fact, the lyrics used in this song are taken from the Bible and the dancing style is about innovation and creativity. With its attractive melody and setting, this song supports numerous biblical texts such as Joshua 24:15; John 8:7; Isaiah 6:8; Isaiah 6:8-10; Exodus 3:4; I Samuel 3:4; Isaiah 6:5 and Exodus 3:10. Its danceable rhythm tends to move the congregants to dance. Moreover, the use of Sepedi language in spiritual folk songs (choruses) tends to emphasize the scriptural lyrics in the song.

When the song was sung during liturgical church service, the congregants actively participated and gave to the church as much as their souls were motivated to give. The happy feelings generated by this song facilitated the gift-giving in the form of money, which translated into making contributions towards renovating the church. This simple melodic and rhythmic song is popular among the Lutherans in South African context, because it is relatively easy to sing and can be sung as individual or as a group. During field research, it was interesting to observe that while singing spiritual folk songs (choruses), the congregants are using both inhalation and exhalation technique to produce musical sounds. This breathing technique differs from regular singing (of hymns) where sounds are produced only during exhalation technique. Consonant with the above observation, Niemi (2009:52) asserts that the vocal technique which is based on sounds produced through alternating inhalation and exhalation is quite common in the circumpolar cultural area.

The melodic structure of this song is based on two parts, the call and response. The instrumental rhythms, on the other hand, depend on the dancing style. During church rallies, conferences and liturgical church services, the song's structure such as melody, rhythm, pitch, and instruments are adapted to suit congregational singing and church service. There is no fixed tempo in this song. It gradually gets faster as the performance approaches the climax. The intensity of the music also grows with the tempo as more instruments join the performance. At the climax, a signal is given by a drummer, or a whistle is blown by the leader and all music and handclapping stops.

The relationship between music and culture

With regards to the relationship between music and culture, closer investigation has revealed that in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, music is part of culture and at the same time forms culture. It also has communicative qualities necessary for relating the Christian message in all cultures. There is a growing body of evidence to support this view. Nelson (1999:152-155) for example, provides convincing evidence of a relationship between music and culture. He examines the role of 'ethnomusicological' research in the mission context, herein stressing the importance of the bonds between music and culture and arguing that 'God can and will use whatever we

have for His Kingdom and service’. Darby (1999:66) gives the example of the African initiated where allegedly ‘African spirituality has been allowed to permeate fully the worship and liturgy’, while all ‘mainline denominations in Africa have incorporated into their traditions, whether they like it or not, music, rhythm, ceremonies and pilgrimage, which are intrinsically African’. How vital authentic hymns are for the relevance of a liturgy, has been evidenced in the Indian mission context, where, according to Amalorpavadass (1971:11), a truly Indian liturgy has been shaped through the implementation of Indian instead of Western music. Hence, considering the cultural impact on liturgy, including its music, it becomes clear that ‘the future of worship and its music will be written by both the church and society’. From what has been pointed out concerning the relationship between music and culture, the implication is that indigenous music in missionary work should be taken seriously, as it will play an indispensable role regarding indigenization. Endorsing the above observations and viewpoints, Triebel (1992:235) states that ‘We cannot ignore culture in our missionary task’. On a similar note, Scott (2000:9) asserts that ‘accepting that music is part of the experience of every human culture group, we can say that it is an inherent gift given by a wise Creator for the benefit and enjoyment for us all’. Scott proposes that the church, in its missionary endeavours, ought to recognize and accept ‘the powerful effect of music in all aspects of Christian ministry (2000:9), and, therefore, employ it in its missionary work’. From the discussions above, it is arguably true that indigenous music has an important role to play in the missionary work.

Handclapping in Liturgy

At this point it is appropriate to bring the vital role played by handclapping into the discussion. An interesting observation on the vital, if not central role of handclapping in liturgy should be mentioned. The impression created during interviews and observations was that handclapping helps to maintain the tempo since the congregants have a tendency of gradually and habitually slowing down the tempo of hymns during Congregational singing. Regarding musical parameter (tempo) during Congregational singing, the enquiry revealed that when handclapping is enforced, the tempo is regularized, thereby producing a metronome effect. During my field research at Lobethal Congregation, it was further observed that with musical creativity and rhythmic direction, congregants build a repertoire which is characterized by interlocking rhythms, four-part harmonic setting, improvisation, polyrhythm, and cultural blend, which compel the congregants, the pastor inclusive to dance to the music, and hence increase attendance and participation.

Singing and Movement

Oral accounts and literary evidence have revealed that singing and movement, like dance, is another quality of music which supports a total understanding and acceptance of the message in the African mission context (Khuzwayo, 1999:17; Scott

2000:9; Triebel 1992:235). Khuzwayo explains that it forces the missionary to integrate certain movements, which underscore the song’s content, together with music in worship, as part of an Africanization process (1999:17). It is an accepted position that the emphasis on contextual indigenous music would be in line with Luther’s criterion of familiarity. Martin Luther emerged as a voice in Europe at a time when Church elders were out of touch with the religious needs and expectations of their community, who were poor and downtrodden. The data analysed thus far, confirm that this is perhaps a reflection of what is happening within our communities again in the modern world.

Musical creativity and musicality

During the study, it was also observed that musical creativity and musicality in the visited churches embrace other elements such as the capacity for becoming absorbed emotionally in music and the ability to engage into an intimate relation with it, so that the whole organization of the soul is affected. When participants were asked about the creation of traditional spiritual folk songs (choruses), it was found that to the congregants/singers, music is an inborn talent. The talent for composition is based on originality, creativity, improvisation, imitation, and spontaneity, together with other aspects such as a listening skill and an ear for music. It was further observed that the art of composing, instrumental playing, ululating, handclapping, whistling, and dancing requires a reliable musical memory, concentration, determination, commitment, and passion.



Photo 3

The researcher who is also a Lutheran (Lobethal Congregation), and an insider (Bapedi society) & Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, occasionally participates during Congregational Singing (playing his drum). Ga-Phaahla Mmakadikwe; Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa, (09.08.2015), Photographer: Moletje Frank Paledi.

It is worthwhile to mention here that despite fundamental and multi-consequential changes Christianity brought about in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, African religious and cultural values have also impacted on Christian – ATR relations, and congregants are using their Lutheran – indigenous system of worship.

Concluding Thoughts

The primary objective of this chapter was to examine the inter-religious relations among Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) to explore how African religious and cultural values have impacted on Christian – ATR relations within the municipality, and how the latter has, also, been affected by the former. The investigation has revealed that the integration of spiritual folk songs (choruses), traditional musical instruments, handclapping, and dancing into liturgical church service of almost all Evangelical Lutheran churches found in Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, has not compromised the essence of Lutheran tradition. It has rather encouraged maximum, active and unimpeded participation in liturgical church service and/or Congregational singing. During observations and interviews, it was also established that the dimensions of rhythm play an important role to contextualize and Africanize the existing (Lutheran) liturgy, in order to make the missionary qualities of worship an integral part of mission work. Indications from the investigation have shown that the dimensions of rhythm play an important role to contextualize and Africanize the existing (Lutheran) liturgy, in order to make the missionary qualities of worship an integral part of mission work. During the study it was also observed that musical creativity and musicality in the visited churches embrace other elements such as the capacity for becoming absorbed emotionally in music and the ability to enter an intimate relation with it, so that the whole organization of the soul is affected. It was concluded that it is indeed of great significance that indigenous people’s music should be regarded as a matter of relevance and ultimately becomes a vessel which carries the full meaning of the Gospel.

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Identity Issues - Turkish-Tatar Community in Dobrogea

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Abstract

Recognized as the area with the richest ethnic mosaic in Romania, Dobrogea can be a model of interculturality for the other geographical areas of the country, as there is a model of relationship that could be replicated in other regions where there is interethnic coexistence. As far as the communities in the south-eastern part of Romania are concerned, it should be noted that, over time, it has been noticed how most people associate the term "Dobrogea" with the label "seaside". It could be said that the overwhelming majority of tourists are more attracted by this idea (possibly 'delta'), 'beach', 'fun' than by getting to know the region, the local people, the history of this place, visiting cultural-historical sites. This is why Dobrogea remains for many Romanians "an unknown in their own home".¹

Keywords: identity, ethnic mosaic, Romania, interculturality, culture, solidarity, social identity

1. Dobrogea, as an area of interethnic settlement:

On the basis of the awareness of ethnic identity, the members of an ethnic group build a specific community, manifested by close relations between them and a slight isolation from others. Ethnic characteristics are learned and passed on from generation to generation; at the same time members of ethnic groups change their views significantly under the influence of the majority with whom they come into contact. The theoretical framework is represented by multiple theories on concepts such as "ethnicity", "ethnocity", "culture", "multiculturality", "solidarity", "social identity", "social interaction", etc., all with specific reference to the Dobrogea area.

Interculturality is a desirable option for coexisting populations, just as multiculturalism is a solution for coexisting populations. In fact, I believe that both variants of culturalism correspond to stages of integration of some populations (e.g. the Roma population) into the life of the majority population. Multiculturalism thus corresponds to co-existence in the sense of living together, i.e. living in the same place without assuming anything other than

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mutual tolerance within the framework of well-established rules that are necessarily respected by all those involved in the context.

Dobrogea, as an area of interethnic settlement, imposes itself on attention through a model of open intercultural consociation, whose representation is decoded both at the level of material culture and at the level of immaterial culture, of the traditional civilization of this area. The model of co-location has in turn generated the free manifestation of multiculturalism, based on acceptance and understanding of the other.

The coexistence of Romanians with other ethnic groups (Ukrainians, Lipovenes) since before the 19th-20th centuries, determined - in the Dobrogea area - similarities in the manifestation of some facts and aspects of traditional life.

The relationship of ethnicities with life frameworks and manifestations - in a territory of ethnic co-location - generates the phenomena of: - ethnic co-location - ethnic coexistence.

2. Turks and Tatars – within the literature

Within the literature, but also from a general institutional perspective, the two ethnic groups, Turks and Tatars, often benefit from being placed within monolithic syntagms, either of ethnic configuration - the Turkish-Tatar minority, or of religious configuration - the Muslim community. Today, the approach of the two ethnic groups as two distinct communities is necessary not only because of the evolution of their political and institutional organisation in the post-communist period. The rationale for such an approach also involves the relationship between ethnic self-representations and Turkish-Tatar mutual representations. At a deeper level of analysis two defining cores of Turkish and Tatar identity discourses can be identified, one of convergence and one of separation between the two groups.

On the one hand, there is the common core of belonging to the Turkic world, and on the other hand there is a specifically Tatar core, represented by Crimean origins, from the interwar period, a decisive element in the current delimitation of the Tatar identity discourse from the Turkish one.

In terms of the issue of self-identification during the communist period, in the case of Turks and Tatars, but also in terms of mutual identification and the general perception of society, their situation was obviously influenced by the communist state's policy towards minorities. The creation of the single working people meant a homogenization of society, and the integration of all citizens, regardless of nationality, into the egalitarian communist society meant a homogenization, even an assimilation, both social and national (Florea 1975: 82, 83). As a result, at the level of groups and individuals, the interviews conducted with members of the Turkish and Tatar communities reveal first an intimation of ethnic identity, whose space of unfolding was often the family and the home, as personal space. On the other hand, and blurring of the sense of ethnic belonging during this period, resulting from and motivated by the concern for social and professional adaptation within communist society. In the case of families directly targeted by the repression of the authorities, life in communism appears to be lived from the perspective of personal drama. The ethnic values

of spirituality therefore take second place to the primacy of material survival under the communist regime.

Both Turks and Tatars have emphasized in terms of Turkish-Tatar mutual identification the absence of major lines of differentiation between the two ethnic groups for this period. The arguments refer to the practice of the common Muslim religion, mixed marriages between Turks and Tatars, common customs, education based on the sense of common belonging to the Turkic world.

From the perspective of the members of the two communities, Turkish and Tatar, this organisational, administrative and representative separation in the post-communist period is motivated strictly from a material point of view, by the possibility of obtaining two separate funding from the state budget for two separate unions, one representing the Turkish minority, the other the Tatar minority.

3. Conclusion

Despite these identity variations and claims to the specificity of their own ethnic group, both Turkish and Tatar perspectives, both individual and official, recognize the link between the two ethnic groups, identified by commonalities such as religious affinity, common customs and belonging to the Turkic world.

Most Turks and Tatars accept in their daily social contact the perception and classification of themselves as belonging to this local ethnic category, although exploration at a deeper level reveals an identity discourse that is far from unitary, on the contrary, fragmented between the acceptance of belonging to a Turkish-Tatar community, or to a Tatar community aware of its own ethnic specificity, or to a unitary Turkish community including both Turks and Tatars. In conclusion, we can say that in fact the social contact with the majority leads ethnic Turks and Tatars to accept this ethnic, Turkish-Tatar pattern quite easily in their daily social experiences. In fact, it is a pattern imposed more from the general perception of society, and therefore a product of otherness, of the historical, social and political reality that has taken shape from 1878 to the present day.

Today, the situation of mixed marriages reveals the importance of the religious element in the identity structure of Turks and Tatars, through the interfaith and interethnic behaviours and attitudes that they generate in this context.

We managed to get in touch with several people from the target group, thus better understanding their typical problems and information. The issue of intermarriage illustrates on the one hand a historical sub-stratum, the importance of belonging to the religious community, and at the same time reveals an ongoing social trend, which gives us a perspective on future developments, but at the same time reveals the primacy of religious identity over ethnic identity within the two ethnic groups.

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Instrumental Role of Foreign Language Learning in Public and Non-Public Pre-University Education System in Albania

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Abstract

This paper addresses the role of instrumentality in foreign languages learning with focus English language, taught in public and non- public pre-university education system in Albania. By conducting the Attitude Motivation Test Battery, for the scale "Instrumental Orientation" with a measuring Likert scale ranging from 1-6, overall, high schools students have stated that learning English is important for many reasons like: career upgrading, with item mean value (M=5.6); Learning English makes them more educated (M=5.05) ; It will help them find a good job (M=5.8) ; And, learning English is important because other people will respect them more if they speak English (M=4.1). The one-way ANOVA procedure was conducted to examine the mean values for each group of school and differences for the dependent variable *instrumental orientation* of the foreign language between three groups of schools: 1.urban public high school with a sample size representation of 63.6%. 2. Rural public high school with a sample size representation of 23 %; 3. Non-public high school with a sample size representation of 13.4%. The ANOVAs descriptive statistics for the *instrumental orientation* according to groups of school found that mean value for urban public high school is (M= 4.3) ; For Rural public high school is (M= 5.6) ; For non-public high school is (M= 5.4). Post Tukey HSD procedure for comparisons of groups indicated that the difference between urban public and rural high schools is (-1.3) with a non significant value (p= .1, p>.5). The difference between urban public high schools and non-public is (-1.1), a non-significant result (p=.87, p>.5). A significant small difference (0.2) for *instrumental orientation* of foreign language (p=.041, p<.5) was found only for the groups of rural public high school and non - public schools. In formal education system in Albania, students attending rural high schools are more instrumentally oriented to learn English compared to their peers attending non public high schools.

Keywords: public and non- public pre-university education system, urban and rural high schools, instrumental role of the foreign language

Introduction

Actually, Albania is a country heading toward European integration and is completing tasks assigned by European Union to reach the status of full membership. Being also a country with continuous emigration drive abroad, Albanians have met many cultures and have faced the need to learn foreign languages, most commonly English language. Due to the rising need of meeting foreigners over the last three decades in different situations, learning English language became the passport to certain paths like, travelling abroad, meeting new people, making business, exchanging information, finding a better job, getting better education increasing promotion chances. Due to the advantages of learning English as a foreign language, grew the necessity to enhance its importance by upgrading the school curriculum in pre-university education system in Albania, which actually has undergone many significant changes dependent on a variety of formal educational policies and reforms over the last decades¹. An increasing number of English classes to three classes a week at school has emerged to the school curriculum, also by adding English language class to the curriculum since the first grade elementary school, as a pilot study for year 2021-2022. Since 2005 English subject is a mandatory foreign language state examination for high school education with objective to reach the required scores for the students' preference of a study program for university enrollment. Furthermore, admissions in the second and third cycle of studies in higher education are only possible by taking international exams from level B1-C1 (CFER)². Thus it is crucial to make researches on the importance of English language learning in formal education to examine whether the students performance and their orientations to language go in line with recent reforms and the country's education strategies toward European integration.

Literature Review

Gardner R.C., Gardner and Lambert W. (1972), identified two motives why people learn another language: 1. Integrative motive, and, 2. Instrumental motive. A major distinction was made by Gardner (1985a), precisely between orientations, i.e. the set of reasons for learning a language, which represent a kind of purpose similar to what Gardner calls the driving force in any situation, (Gardner, 2001a, p. .6). Continuity of orientation (the purpose of language learning) can be instrumental (recognizing the practical benefits of language learning) or integrative (a sincere and positive interest in people and cultures that use a foreign language, (Gardner R.C., 2009). Gardner's theory does not belong to theories of orientation (Dörnyei Z., 2001c); consequently

¹ Source: Language Education Policy Profile: ALBANIA, Country Report, 2016
<https://rm.coe.int/language-education-policy-profile-albania-country-report/16807b3b2d>

² Udhëzim Nr. 52, datë 3.12.2015 Azhornuar me udhëzimin nr. 5, datë 16.02.2017, Udhëzimin nr. 11, datë 10.04.2017, Udhëzimin nr. 20, datë 22.09.2017

<https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Udhezimi-nr.-52-dhe-ndryshimet-e-tij.pdf>

the focus of his theory is motivation rather than orientation. Instrumental role refers to language learning for pragmatic reasons and concrete benefits such as career, better education or high economic perspective, related to language perfection. If, for example, an individual is motivated to learn a foreign language for pragmatic reasons, then it is to be expected that he will be less motivated once he has achieved his objectives (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991, cited in Gardner, 2005, p.12). In the research of Gardner et. al. (1972), (1985), (1991), (2006), the integrative role of the foreign language has dominated its functional role. Gardner R.C. (1985), states that: "despite the results in the studies of Gardner and Lambert (1959), it is possible that students oriented to the effect of the instrumental role of language may be more motivated, than those motivated by the integrative motive for them. The study conducted by Clément, Dornyei and Noels (1994), reinforced the issue of integrative and instrumental motivation. They observed the attitudes and motivations of 301 high school students in Hungary who learn English as a foreign language and concluded that Gardner R.C. (2000) integrative motivation was related to instrumental reasons among others. Integrative orientation is defined as "a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group" (Lambert, 1974, p. 98), while instrumental orientation pertains to the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as to get a better job or to pass a required examination.

Methodology

Research Questions

At what degree are high school students instrumentally oriented to learn English language in formal education in Albania?

Are there any differences for the scale of instrumental orientation between the three groups of schools: urban public high schools, rural public high schools and non public high schools?

Sample size

The sample size in this research was calculated with the statistical method Raosoft Sample size Calculator with a confidence boundary 95% and error acceptance coefficient 5%. After calculating the data of total population, it resulted the sample size in this research was (N=400). Through the '*Stage and Cluster Sampling*', technique for sample distribution according to categorical variable group of school, the sample size for the urban public high school is 63.56 %, (N=252) students. Rural public high school is 23%, (N=92) students and non public high school is 13.44%, (N=54) students. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the sample distribution of independent variable 'Group of Schools'

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
valid Urban public high school	252	63.6	63.6	63.6
Rural public high school	92	23.0	23.0	86.6
Non public high school	54.	13.4	13.4	100.0
Total	440	100.0	100.0	

Instrument

The Attitude Motivation Test Battery, AMTB, (Gardner R.C., 2004), international version is used in this research for the scale: "Instrumental Orientation" of English language.

The scale is composed of four items: 1. Studying English is important because I need it for my career. 2. Studying English is important because it will make me more educated. 3. Studying English is important because it will be useful in finding a job. 4. Studying English is important because other people will respect me more if I know English.¹ The scoring system is based on a Likert scale ranging from 1-6. Codes (1-3) indicate negative values and 4-6 indicate positive values for the subscale.

Test reliability

Cronbach's internal reliability coefficients were analyzed as by recommendation for test application in Albania, which is the same analysis conducted in a broad research in other countries in Europe, where the Socio Educational Model was applied (Gardner R.C., 2005, p.18). The values of the Alpha Cronbach coefficients for the internal reliability for 'Instrumental Orientation' scale was above (.7), which meets the criteria that: "Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above (.7), (DeVellis 2012, cited in Pallant J., 2016, p. 116). In this research the instrumental

¹ Attitude/Motivation Test Battery AMTB item-key' document, Questionnaire Keys Master, <http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/questionnaires> (Gardner R.C., 2004, Item key document). Gardner R.C., 1985, Test manual; Technical Report Gardner Robert C., (2005). *Integrative motivation and second language acquisition* Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics/Canadian Linguistics Association Joint Plenary Talk - May 30, 2005, London, Canada <http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/caaltalk5final.pdf>

orientation scale has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient reported of (.76). (See Table 2)

Table 2. Alpha Cronbach coefficient for internal reliability of AMTB scale of `Instrumental Orientation`

Subscale of AMTB	Alfa Cronbach
Instrumental Orientation `	.76

Preliminary analysis

The continuous variable of `Instrumental Orientation` was checked for normal distribution of values before conducting ANOVA procedure. Indicators of asymmetry, localization and variation for this variable showed that this variable did not meet the conditions for normal distribution as the asymmetry values were: (-, 253) and the extreme values: (kurtosis -, 127), thus indicating the distribution was not normal. Also Kolmogorov Smirnov test did not reach the level of significance ($p \leq .05$). The significant (p) value in this research was higher ($p > .08$). With reasonably large samples, skewness will not 'make a substantive difference in the analysis' (Tabachnick & Fidell 2013, p. 80). Kurtosis can result in an under-estimate of the variance, but this risk is also reduced with a large sample (200+ cases: see Tabachnick & Fidell 2013, p. 80, cited in Pallant J., 2016, p. 73).

Furthermore, the Levene Test for homogeneity of variance in scores is the same for each of the three groups because the assumption of homogeneity of variance is not violated. The significance p value in this research is reported $p = .>09$, thus $p > .05$. (See Table 3)

Table 3. Homogeneity test of the variable of `Instrumental Orientation`

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Instrumental Orientation	2.818	2	380	.090

Data Analysis and Variables

The variables included in this reach are: 1. the categorical independent variable (group of school) and 2. Dependent continuous variable (instrumental orientation) presented in a Likert measuring scale (1-6).

The data gathered for (N=400) were examined for mean values (minimum and maximum values), standard deviations, frequencies in percentages for the whole scale of instrumental orientation. One-way ANOVA procedure was conducted to check if there were significant differences in the mean scores on the dependent variable

across the three groups. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test was processed to check where exactly the differences between the groups existed and there was significance of result.

Results

1. First Research Question Results

The descriptive data for overall level of 'Instrumental Orientation` includes a total sample of N=400 students. Scores from 1-3 indicate negative motivation values and scores from 4-6 indicate increasing positive values of "Instrumental Orientation". In a Likert scale from 1-6, the mean value of the Motivation scale is: M = 5.14 and SD = .16. The minimum value of the scale is (1) and its maximum value is (6). High school students (N = 400) are moderately oriented to learn English for instrumental reasons. (See Table 4)

Table 4. Descriptive data for the scale: Instrumental Orientation

	N	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean	SD
Instrumental Orientation	400	1.00	6.00	5.14	0.16372

Overall, 21.4 % of students have expressed negative instrumental language orientation and a majority of 78.6%; have been positive to the scale. The most frequent answer code selected was "Absolutely Agree (6)" with N=180 respondents. Only 11 students have shown absolutely no indication for instrumental language orientation. (See Table 5)

Table 5. Frequencies for scale: Instrumental Orientation

Instrumental Orientation		Frequencies	Percentages	Valid percentages	Cumulative percentages
Valid	Absolutely disagree` (1),	11	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Moderately disagree (2),	23	5.8	5.8	8.6
	Slightly disagree (3)	51	12.8	12,8	21.4
	Slightly Agree (4),	90	22.6	22.6	44.0
	Moderately Agree (5),	45	10.8	10.8	54.8
	Absolutely Agree (6)	180	45.2	45.2	100.0

	Total	400	100.0	100.0	
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2. Second Research Question Results

The ANOVAs descriptive statistics for the *instrumental role* according to groups of school found that mean value for urban public high school is (M= 4.3, SD=.033) ; For Rural public high school is (M= 5.6, SD=.059) ; And, for Non-public high school is (M= 5.4, SD=.076). (See Table 6)

Table 6. Descriptive data for the independent variable "Instrumental Orientation" according to school groups

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error	95% Mean Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Instrumental Orientation	Urban public high school	252	4,3470	0,1368	,03361	4,1811	4,3130
	Rural public high school	92	5,6195	0,2181	,05987	4,1818	5,6172
	Non-public high school	54	5,4339	0,1937	,07674	5,1827	5,4850
	Total	400	4,3478	0,1637	,02743	4,2940	4,4016

One-way ANOVA procedure indicated there are significant differences in the mean scores on the dependent variable across the three groups: $p = .036$, $p < .05$, $F(2,348) = 4.019$. $df=400$. The result is statistically significant, $p = .036$. However with very large samples, in this case ($N=400$), even the smallest differences can be significant, despite the fact that this difference has little practical significance (Pallant J., 2010, p.219). (See table 7)

Table 7. ANOVA sum of squares within the groups and between the groups, degrees of freedom and significance p value for Instrumental Orientation

	Sum of squares	degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2.759	2	1.380	4.019	.0361
Within groups	2433.532	348	1.354		
Total	2436.291	400			

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the difference between urban public and rural high schools is (-1.3) with a non significant value ($p = .1, p > .5$). The difference between urban public high schools and non- public is (-1.1), non-significant result ($p = .87, p > .5$). A significant small difference (0.2*) for *instrumental role of foreign language* ($p = .041, p < .5$) was found only for the comparison of rural public high school and non - public schools. (See Table 8)

Table 8. Results of the Post Hoc procedure for `Instrumental Orientation` differences between the three groups

HSD Tukey							
Dependent Variable	(I) School group Urban public high schools	(J) School group Rural public high schools	Mean Differences (I-J)	Std Error	Sig.	Confidence Interval 95%	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Instrumental Orientation	Rural public high schools	Non-public schools	-1.301	.06674	1.000	-.1124	.2074
		Urban public high schools	-1.143	.08234	.875	-.2842	.1104
	Non-public schools	Non-public schools	1.301	.06674	1.000	-.2074	.1124
		Urban public high schools	.0267*	.09416	.041	-.3600	.0913
		Rural public high schools	1.143	.08234	.875	-.1104	.2842
		Rural public high school	-.0267*	.09416	.041	-.0913	.3600

* $p < .05$.

Discussions

The results in this research go in line with researches featured by two dimensions: 1. Time (mostly with studies at the beginning of Socio education Model agenda during eighties and nineties). And: 2. Research location (mostly with studies in countries in the Middle and Far East, like Libya, Sudan, India, Japan, Taiwan, Arabia, Iran, etc.), basically not European countries. For example, in this study, the moderate values for instrumental orientation $M=5,1$ and the fact that 78.6%, have been positive to the scale match mainly with findings in the studies of R. C. Gardner and P. D. MacIntyre (1991) who demonstrated that both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation facilitated learning. Other results indicated that instrumentally motivated students studied longer than non instrumentally motivated students when there was an opportunity to profit from learning, Gardner R.C., (1985), (2001). Gardner (1985) illustrates that, this was possible in a study that Lukman conducted in Mumbai with 60 Marathi-speaking high school students, using the scale of attitudes towards the English-speaking community and integrative and instrumental reasons for language learning, it turned out that instrumental reasons had a stronger correlation with language perfection. The findings, in Albania about the very low impact that public high schools, in urban and rural areas, and non-public high schools have on students for the instrumental role of foreign language, coincide with the stable theory and empirical research of (Gliksman , Gardner & Smythe, 1982), (Clément, Smythe & Gardner, 1978), (Gardner, Moorcroft & Metford, 1989), (Gardner, Lalonde, Moorcroft & Evers, 1987), (Robert Gardner, (1985, 2001, 2005), that the learning process of foreign language, also relates to individual differences, cognitive, affective and personal aspects.

The most recent researches have found that the instrumental orientation had a positive mild and significant correlation between the instrumental correlation and achievement in foreign language of high school students in Albania ($r=.305$), Softa V. (2016). In another study it was found that the majority of the participants (Taiwanese university students' learning English) were mostly oriented for travel, instrumental, integrative reasons and intrinsic motivation and these motives have a strong correlation with the ideal L2 self. "To a large extent, I believe these EFL learners have the view that if they speak English fluently, they will be able to travel around the world, explore various countries and cultures, and be successful in their future studies and career" (cited in Hsuan-Yau Tony Lai, 2013. p.97.) Gökhan Öztürk, NurdanGürbüz, (2013) found that instrumentality is more important than integration for male students. Few significant differences were found between learners of French and Spanish, which were both, deemed to have continued instrumental value despite the dominance of English in the world today, (Leigh Oakes, 2013). This finding goes in line with the result in this research that 45.2% of high students in Albania are absolutely oriented to instrumental reasons for learning English.

Conclusions

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of groups of schools on student's instrumental orientation as measured by the Attitude motivation Test Battery, Gardner, R.C 2004. Participants, (N=400) were divided into three groups according to the type of school they attended (urban public high school, rural public high school, non public high school). Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite small. In a Likert measuring scale from (1-6), the overall foreign language instrumental orientation was moderate (M=5.1). High school students stated that learning English is important for many reasons like: career upgrading, mean value (M=5.6) ; Learning English makes them more educated (M=5.05) ; It helps them find a good job (M=5.8) ; Learning English is important because other people will respect them more if they speak English (M=4.1). Post-hoc comparison procedure using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the difference between urban public and rural high schools is (-1.3) with a non significant value (p= .1, p>.5). The difference between urban public high schools and non- public is (-1.1), non-significant result (p=.87, p>.5). A significant small difference (0.2*) for *instrumental role of foreign language* (p=.041, p<.5) was found only for the comparison of rural public high school and non - public schools. Students attending rural high schools were more instrumentally oriented to learn English than the students in urban areas and their peers in non public high schools.

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Professional Education for Automotive Specialists and Change of Their Profiles According to the Trends of the Vehicle Market in Albania

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Abstract

In Albania during the last three decades every sphere of life has changed, as well as professions. According to the demands of the labor market, the demands for automotive specialists have also changed. The purpose of this paper is to assess the current situation of specialist technician mechanics for vehicles and liaise with universities that prepare these professionals, the need for curricular changes of mechanical profiles according to trends in technological developments of new vehicles. To assess the potential labor markets, employment statistics and requirements for mechanical profiles of recent years have been collected. In Albania the trend of new cars is always growing. The technological level of cars currently circulating has increased, the trend is towards cars that feed on alternative fuels. The curricula of Universities and Professional Colleges that prepare these senior specialists for vehicles must adapt to these requirements presented by the labor market and new trends in production technologies of road vehicles. The collected statistical analyzes show an increase in the demand for qualified and certified technical specialists for the motor vehicle. From these results we conclude that improving the curricula of programs that prepare technical staff is a necessity to follow these changes with high growth in the automotive industry.

Keywords: auto mechanics, professional education, automotive industry, vehicles with alternative energy, technological innovations

Introduction

In the last 30 years, with the change of the regime from totalitarian to democratic, the way of life and the form of mobility have also changed. This has led to an increase and change of vehicles types. Thus, and the need for vehicle repair and maintenance [2] are increased.

Industry of vehicles today in Albania consisting of about 3550 services car repair shops, over 210 spare parts sales units, 15 new car dealerships with over 22.000 employees serving a fleet of 740700 vehicles.

Vehicle types	Number
Automobile	593280
Bus	7867
General transport vehicle - Van	49596
Trailer	5138
Semi - trailer	2400
Vehicle for special transport	11388
Truck	14404
Tractor	1673
Motorcycle	37931
Others
Total	740669

Table 1: Number of vehicles in year 2021 (DPSHTRr – statistics sector)

Number of total in year 2021 in Albania are 740669 vehicles, where the regions Tirana 35% [14], Durrës 13%, Fier 10% and Elbasan 7% have the main part of the fleet of road vehicles. From the table above we see that 80% of the totals are private cars.

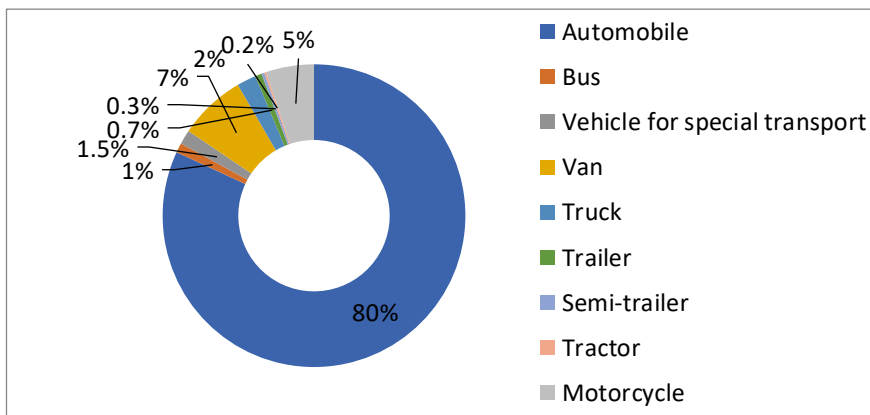


Figure 1: Percentage of vehicle types

The Albanian education system that prepares specialists in the field of automobiles starts from general secondary (gymnasium) or professional education [11].

These specialists then turn to universities for the bachelor or 2-year professional cycle.

According to the data, professional high schools [4] offer 22 basic profiles, where 5 engineering profiles represent 25% of all students.

High school student	Mechanical	Electro mechanical	Electronic	Electro technical	Thermo-hydraulics
full-time	964	368	687	935	996
13563	7.1%	2.7%	5%	6.8%	7.3%
part-time	970	-	33	257	195
4555	14.7%	-	0.7%	5.6%	4.3%
total	1934	368	720	1192	1191
18118	9%	2%	3.9%	6.5%	6.5%

Table 2: The data for high school student

These students enroll in university to deepen their knowledge and employment opportunities. In Albania have 2 public universities and 3 Professional Colleges serve to prepare these senior specialists for vehicles.

According to INSTAT statistics [6], 84.8% of active enterprises are service providers. Albania's economic development trends [16] with small and medium enterprises necessarily require the accelerated development of short-term 2-year professional study programs, which will prepare "masters in crafts".

This academic year marked a strong turn towards vocational education, enrollment in professional high schools increased, as a result and in university.

Methodology

To assess the potential labor market for the mechanic profile for automobile we have summarized the analytical employment data in the last years and the current and future requirements from vehicle services, from car showrooms, from car parts sales points. We are presenting this data in the bellows tables.

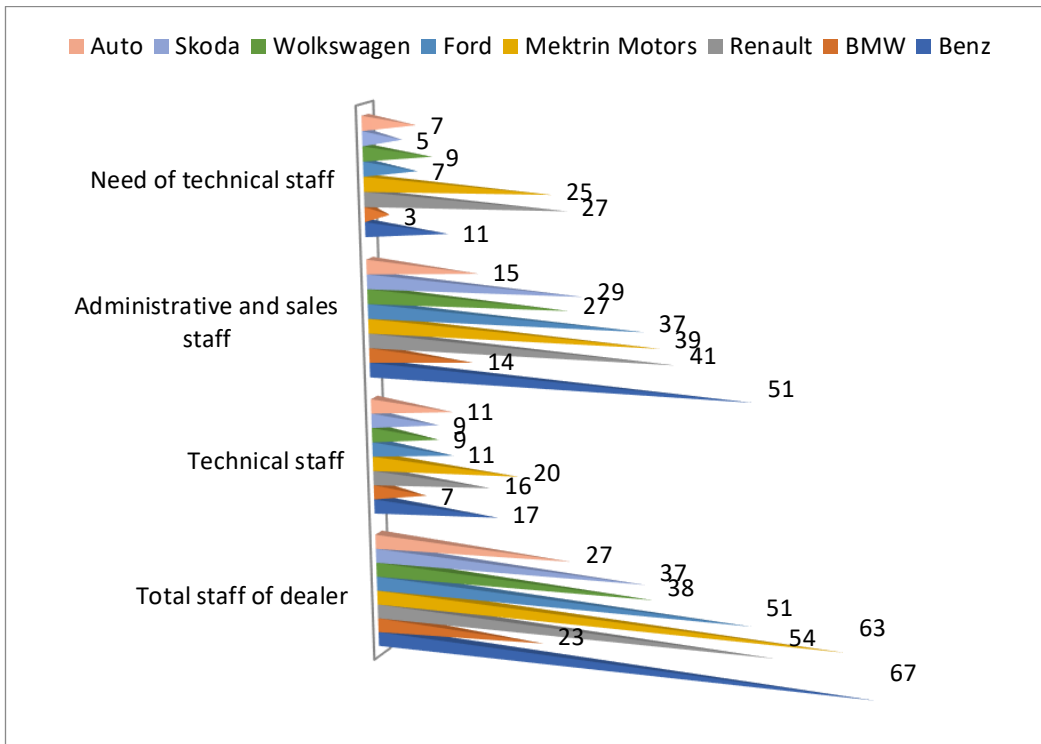
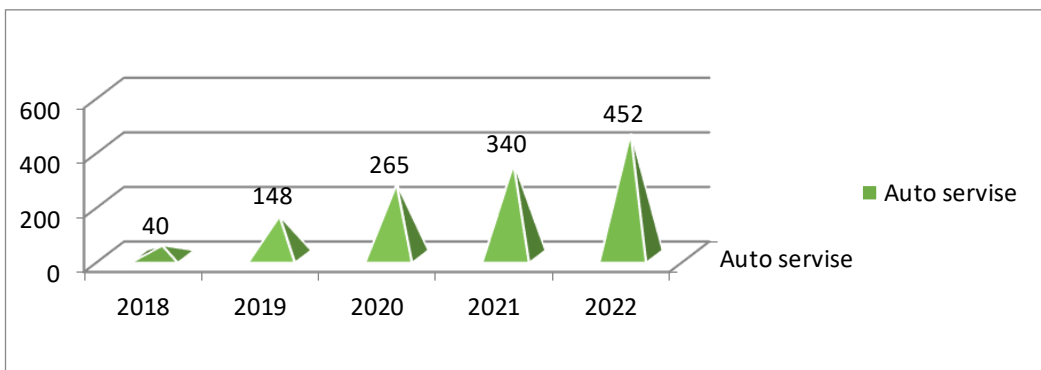


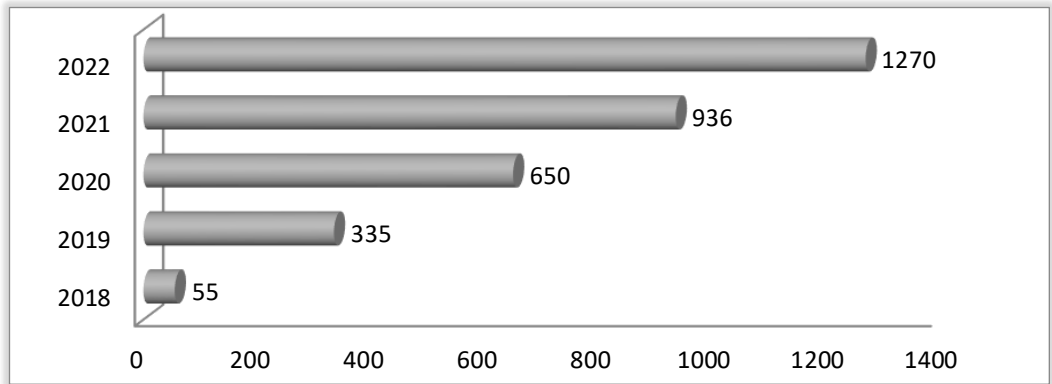
Figure 2: Need of technical staff of car showrooms in Albania

Total number of car service in the territory registered in the National Business Center varies 2900-4600.



Graphic 1: Total number of auto services licensed by the Ministry of Industry and Energy (statistics sector MIE)

The number of car autoservices that have more than 10 employees has increased from 30 to 80 car service.



Graphic 2: Trend of Auto-technical staff equipped with Certificates of Professional Ability

The number of vehicle services is stable, with a slight upward trend.

New vehicles use increasingly advanced technology to increase traffic safety and reduce accidents.

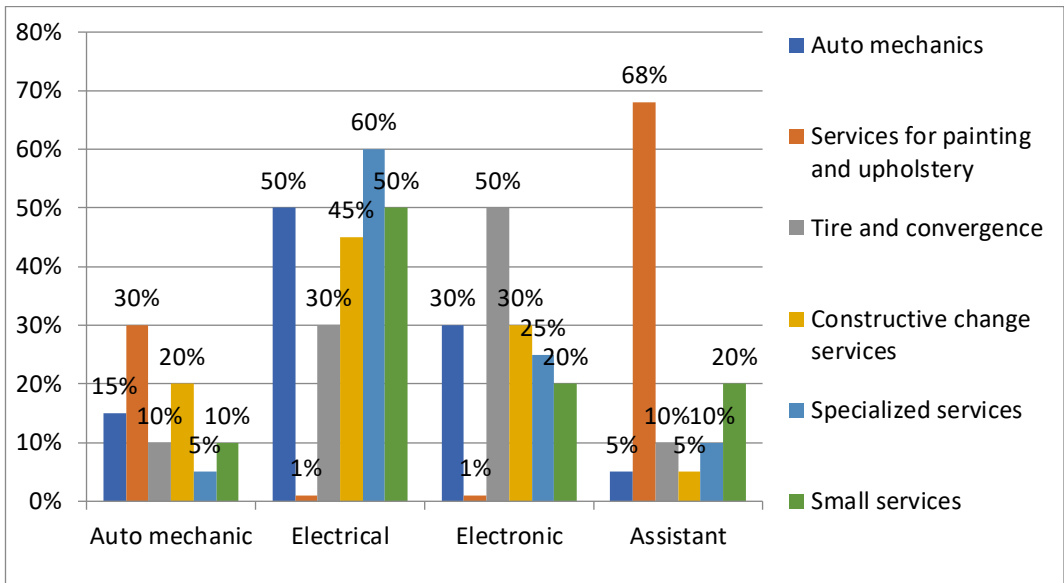
The changes of new vehicles produced in recent years, towards the use of biofuels and the growing trend of electric vehicles [7], in order to reduce air pollution and achieve a sustainable transport, have changed the profiles from purely mechanical to electromechanical, as reflected in the table below.

Discussion

In Albania there has been a steady increase in vehicles although under average per capita [3] the regional. Currently the import of cars is allowed with the obligation of Euro4 and surely this space will be narrowed more and more quickly. The trend of new cars with 0 km is always growing. The technological level of cars currently circulating has increased, the trend is towards cars that feed on alternative fuels as GPL, hybrid, hydrogen and electric.

Albania is moving towards membership in Europe and as in any sector, including that of car repair and maintenance, is obliged to adopt laws and regulations which will soon direct this sector to cars to create less and less pollution.

The curricula of Universities and Professional Colleges that prepare these senior specialists for vehicles must adapt to these requirements presented by the labor market and new trends in production technologies of road vehicles.



Graphic 3: Professions required by the autoservices taken in the study

Analysis

The collected statistical analyzes show an increase in the demand for qualified and certified technical specialists in the vehicle repair and maintenance sector. Currently the same numbers of mechanic profiles are required, but at the same time we find that there is an increasing trend for electrical and electronic profiles as well.

The tendency of Auto Services itself is to reduce their number in total, but the few that will remain will have a larger number of employees. There is also a tendency for dedicated car services to be dedicated to a vehicle brand in order to minimize working hours and process costs.

Conclusions

From these results we conclude that improving the curricula of programs that prepare technical staff is a necessity to follow these changes with high growth in the automotive industry.

To increase the quality of students preparing for auto-mechanics it is necessary to dynamically and functionally integrate teaching with professional practice and experience.

Continuous training of academic staff, laboratory improvements and increased cooperation with entities that provide technological innovations in the field of vehicle repair and maintenance are also important factors for the preparation of skilled specialists for this labor market.

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Exploring Chinese college students' awareness of information security in the COVID-19 era

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Abstract

The focus of this research was to look into the information security awareness of Chinese university students during the COVID-19 pandemic and make recommendations based on the survey's findings and research literature. The quantitative method is applied in this study. 111 Chinese college students were randomly sampled and requested to answer a Likert information security awareness questionnaire. The descriptive analysis of the data in this study is also done with SPSS. The findings revealed that the vast majority of college students know the significance of information security awareness and have basic information security awareness, based on the data collected. However, some students have not participated in relevant training courses, and many college students do not pay enough attention to personal information security, resulting in poor performance in areas such as files and passwords. As a result, effective solutions such as information security training projects are required to address the current deficiencies. The findings of this study have implications for university administrators and policymakers in terms of how to raise students' awareness of the security of their online learning information. The study should use mixed methods and large sample sizes in the future to provide more detailed and comprehensive survey data, and more credible evidence of college students' information security awareness.

Keywords: Information security awareness; College students; Information security

1.0 Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The spread of covid-19 has put pressure on all sectors of society, for example, the use of telemedicine has greatly increased as the pressure on traditional medicine has increased (HealthCare & Somerville). Similarly, in education, the covid-19 pandemic affects more than 91% of students worldwide (Henaku, 2020). As a result, many schools and universities around the

world have adopted online learning and use many online learning platforms and online communication software(Crawford et al., 2020).

Although many schools are transitioning from face-to-face to online learning promptly, various schools are actively using online communication and learning platforms, and the education system is striving to provide quality education to students, however, online teaching is a completely different teaching experience for many teachers and students compared to traditional teaching methods, and different populations have different adaptations to online learning(Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). As a result, more and more problems are identified in the process of online learning (Dumford & Miller, 2018). Specifically, many students' academic performance decreases due to the lack of consultation with teachers(Subedi et al., 2020). There are also many developing countries where students have difficulty affording the equipment to study online, for example, in Colombia, only 34% of students have access to computers for online learning at home(Henaku, 2020). Less than 50% of households in rural areas of Georgia have access to computers(Subedi et al., 2020). Another issue that should not be overlooked is the exposure of the online learning environment to ongoing Internet security threats, which may involve risks such as the destruction of educational assets or unauthorized changes to the information (Chen & He, 2013).

Graf (2002) mentioned that the security of student information in online learning is frequently at risk, such as the loss and exposure of critical information. Online learning programs usually employ security protection mechanisms, yet problems such as manipulation and theft of information by outsiders still occur at times(Graf, 2002). Some researchers have explained the information security threats of online learning from the user perspective and the management perspective, where reckless human behavior is one of the main causes of information security threats in online learning(Chen & He, 2013). For example, when interacting with one another, college students frequently unintentionally exchange personal information that should be protected, and they share student ID numbers and passwords with their friends on social media, demonstrating a lack of awareness of personal information security that may stem from a "childish" student culture(Allen, 2011). Because students are generally nomadic and have less credit history than more mature individuals, college students are regarded to be a group at more risk for information security(Marks, 2007).

The main reason for e-learning security problems involves users not knowing the rules of information security very well, which results in wrong security behaviors and at the same time lack of appropriate guidance(Chen & He, 2013). Moreover, research has revealed that human mistake is regarded as one of the most serious concealed dangers to the security of information assets in businesses(Whitman & Mattord, 2021). The cost of user misbehavior can be higher than the cost of building a security system (Gómez Cárdenas & Sánchez, 2005). Therefore students must consider the

security of their personal information and raise awareness of information security when conducting online learning (Chen & He, 2013). Developing an IT security awareness program is critical to ensuring the security of student, faculty, and academic data (Ellison, 2007).

As a result, the goal of this study is to assess college students' present degree of information security awareness. Also, make recommendations on how to improve college students' information security awareness in order to serve as a reference for the construction of college information security programs.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Information Security

Information security is defined by McDaniel and McDaniel (1994) as concepts, skills, technological solutions, and administrative measures used to prevent unauthorized access, destruction, exposure, manipulation, modification, and loss of information assets. Software, hardware, data, users, processes, and networks are the six elements of information systems; however, users and processes are sometimes overlooked when it comes to information security (Dlamini et al., 2009; Maconachy et al., 2001).

Information security is defined as the capacity of authorized users to access learning resources without being compromised in online learning (Adams & Blanford, 2003). Confidentiality, integrity, and availability are the three essential prerequisites for security (Weippl & Ebner, 2008). Confidentiality refers to the fact that information is not accessible to unauthorized individuals and is not vulnerable to an unlawful disclosure; Integrity refers to the fact that information is accurate and complete and is not subject to unauthorized manipulation or destruction. Availability refers to the ability for already authorized users to access and use information whenever they need it, guaranteeing that it is available.

Many academics have been concerned about information security as the Internet has grown (Höne & Eloff, 2002), In the sphere of education, information security is one of the most significant aspects of education digitization, which necessitates extensive preparation and investment. Due to the stability and public welfare of the education industry, the leakage of its data does not lead to direct economic loss by losing a large number of customers like financial and other industries, but precisely because of the low cost of data leakage of individuals in the education industry, to a certain extent, it will weaken the importance of schools to the information security of online education and may further trigger a crisis of public trust in the information security of online education.

2.2 Information security awareness in the context of education

Information security awareness is defined as the user's realization of the importance of information security (Siponen, 2000) It mainly changes the security behavior of

individuals(Taha & Dahabiyeh, 2021). With the increasingly digital educational environment and the widespread use of online courses during the covid-19 period, it has become particularly important to create a safe and secure online learning environment(Taha & Dahabiyeh, 2021).

Several previous researchers have highlighted the importance of information security awareness(Hadlington et al., 2021; Wiley et al., 2020). Some studies have focused on the information security challenges faced by online learning, including malware attacks, unauthorized access to learning content, etc(Kambourakis, 2013; Shonola & Joy, 2014). Furthermore, the usage of cloud computing services (for example, Google Drive) in education creates information security vulnerabilities because educational institutions have no control over these cloud computing service platforms(Kambourakis, 2013). And schools also have no security control over the personal devices used by students in the learning process (Monrad, 2019). In other words, in the process of online learning, educational institutions are faced with many information security risks that they cannot control. In addition, nowadays, there are many students and teachers who use social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to support teacher-student collaboration in online courses, etc.(He, 2011), however, many teachers and students are careless, so these sites are a major source of information security risks, and personal data posted on social media may be misused(Patel et al., 2012).

Therefore, many scholars have further studied the security awareness of users in educational institutions so that users can reduce the occurrence of insecure times such as information leakage in terms of their own use(Gharieb, 2021). Specifically, Kim (2014) suggests the need for universities to provide information security awareness training to students. a study by Yoon et al. (2012) also shows that both security awareness education and awareness of the seriousness of information security issues have an impact on students' information security awareness. Therefore, schools need to strengthen information security education for students and develop good security habits (Yoon et al., 2012), however, early studies found that only a few universities give information security awareness training to students (North et al., 2006).

With advances in technology and concepts, many developed countries, including the United States, are making efforts to strengthen public awareness of information security and are urging university leaders to take appropriate measures to protect the university's information network (Roach, 2001). For example, in 2014, California enacted the "Eraser Law" - the Student Online Personal Information Protection Act - which classifies content generated by students on social media, online services, and mobile software as personal data privacy, and online service operators are required to remove information posted on web pages by minors within a specified time frame(Wang, 2016). This statute was later borrowed by several U.S. states as a reference for legislation on educational information security (Molnar & Boninger,

2015). In addition, the EU adopted the General Data Protection Regulation in 2016, which has had a global impact and can be applied to institutions that process student data as well as third-party service providers to provide clear regulation of their data operations, organizations are required to collect and use personal data lawfully and to provide appropriate privacy protections. (Steiner et al., 2015). However, studies have shown that the development of information security awareness may face more obstacles in developing countries, and the lack of socio-cultural environment and resources, and knowledge may create a gap between the development of this area and developed countries(Rezgui & Marks, 2008). Therefore more feasible measures are needed to narrow these gaps.

Siponen (2000) mentioned that despite the general recognition of information security awareness, there are fewer studies with depth, probably because of the momentary non-technical nature of information security awareness. Thus the number of studies considering information security awareness is currently relatively limited, especially in higher education settings(Rezgui & Marks, 2008). Overall, scholars have proposed various information security risks, and solutions to mitigate online learning risks, but there is currently a lack of attention and research on increasing students' information security awareness.

3.0 Research method

3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore college students' awareness of information security during their online learning process during the New Crown. A quantitative research method was selected for this study. This is because its purpose is to ask narrow objective questions and generate quantitative data that can be analyzed using statistics (Weippl & Ebner, 2008).

3.2 Participants

The study used a quantitative method. Students' security information awareness was considered as a variable that could be measured by a questionnaire. A convenience sampling technique was used in this study and 111 students from different universities in different regions of China participated in this questionnaire. The researcher used an online questionnaire to conduct the survey and it was conducted in March 2022. In terms of ethical considerations, an information sheet was added before completing the questionnaire to clarify the main purpose of the survey and to seek students' consent to participate in the study. It was also emphasized that participation was completely voluntary and anonymous and that withdrawal from the study was possible at any time.

3.3 Research Instruments and Procedures

In this study, a questionnaire was distributed to investigate the information security awareness of college students. A questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first part was demographic information including the age and gender of the participants and whether they had attended security awareness training, and the second part was questions related to the participants' information security awareness. The questionnaire in this study was designed using the questionnaire established in the study of Kim (2014). These 17 items were tested on students using a Likert scale, and a Likert-type 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was supplied as answer possibilities for all items, with just one response allowed for each item. Data were collected and then analyzed using descriptive statistics. In this study, 17 items were selected for a questionnaire survey based on previous scholars' studies (Kim, 2014), including :

- Require the usage of an anti-virus program;
- Require the frequent upgrading of virus definitions;
- Require the regular scanning of a computer and storage media;
- Require the use of a personal firewall;
- Require the installation of software patches;
- Require the use of pop-up blockers;
- Be aware of the risks of downloading files or programs.
- Recognize the dangers of peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing;
- Recognize the dangers of clicking on links in e-mails;
- Be aware of the dangers of e-mailing passwords;
- Be aware of the dangers of e-mail attachments;
- Back up vital files regularly;
- Be aware of the dangers of smartphone viruses;
- The requirement for a smartphone anti-virus application;
- Understand the features of a strong password;
- Use various passwords for various systems;
- Change your passwords on a frequent basis.

3.4 Reliability and validity of the study

Reliability describes the precision of the measurement, and reliability will be assessed by the Cronbach alpha coefficient, and the reliability result of the questionnaire used in this study was 0.859, so the questionnaire has high reliability and is suitable for distribution to respondents (Cronbach, 1957).

The validity was further evaluated, and the KMO and Bartlett coefficient tests of the sample data using factor analysis in SPSS 26.0 in this study showed a result of 0.796, which to some extent indicates the high validity of the measurement model.

3.5 Data analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 to produce a descriptive analysis of the results, including mean and standard deviation scores, to determine the level of students' information security awareness.

The information concentration of the 17 question items was explored first using factor analysis, and the SPSS output revealed that the KMO value was 0.796, which was more than 0.6, satisfying the prerequisite requirements for factor analysis and implying that the data could be used for factor analysis study. The data also passed the Bartlett sphericity test ($p < 0.05$), indicating that it was suitable for factor analysis (As illustrated in the table).

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.796	
Bartlett's Sphericity	Test of Approx. Chi-Square	763.111	
	df	136	
	Sig.	.000	

Fig. 1.KOM and Bartlett's test

In this study, factor analysis was used to obtain five factors (factor loading coefficients > 0.4) based on the criterion of eigenvalue one, and only those factors with eigenvalues greater than one were considered significant.

The first five components can explain 67.3 percent of the variation with eigenvalues greater than one, according to the findings. A single factor accounts for 16.46% of the variance, a second factor for 13.95% of the variance, a third factor for 13.64% of the variance, and the fourth factor for 12.71% of the variance, and the fifth factor for 10.54% of the variance. To identify the relationship between the factors and the study items, the final data of this study was rotated using the varimax approach. The correspondence between the factors and the study items was then assessed after confirming that the factors could extract the majority of the information content of the study items. By correlating the five factors with the question items, the five factors were named; factor one was email and mobile security, factor two was information system security awareness, factor three was the security of files and passwords, and factor four was cyberattacks, and factor five was browser security. These five aspects represent the current security awareness issues of the respondents.

4.0 Results and Discussion

This section provides the results of the study, which focuses on the analysis of the questionnaires collected from the online survey through descriptive statistics. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of demographic information and questions about whether or not they had attended an information security awareness course.

In terms of the gender of demographic information, 81 (73%) of the participants were female and 30 (27%) were male (As shown in Fig. 2). In terms of grade composition, 9 (8%) were first-year students, 25 (23%) were sophomores, 20 (18%) were juniors, 43 (39%) were seniors, and 13 (12%) graduate students, and 1 (0.9%) doctoral student participated in this questionnaire(As shown in Fig. 3).

	Frequency	Percent(%)
Female	81	73
Male	30	27
Total	111	100

Fig. 2. Gender

	Frequency	Percent(%)
Postgraduate	13	11.7
Fourth-year	43	38.7
Third-year	20	18
Second-year	25	22.5
First-year	9	8.1
Doctor	1	0.9
Total	111	100

Fig. 3. Grade Level

First of all, students were surveyed whether they had attended courses and training related to information security awareness (as shown in the table), and 80 (72%) respondents indicated that they had attended related courses, so it can be found that most college students are educated about information security awareness.

	Frequency	Percent(%)
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Never attended	31	27.9
Attended	80	72.1
Total	111	100

Fig. 4. Attended or never attended

Furthermore, Figure 5 shows the means and standard deviations of the five dimensions of college students' information security awareness, and the data shows that students have a high level of awareness in terms of information system security perceptions but a poor level of security awareness in terms of files and passwords.

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information System Security Awareness	4.4204	0.63199
Email and Mobile Security	3.8198	0.75692
Browser Security	3.7568	1.07209
Cyber Attack	3.7538	0.87005
File and Password Security	3.3183	0.70157
Total	3.7334	.54301

Fig. 5. Mean and Std. deviation

Overall the level of information security awareness among college students is relatively high (M=3.73). Specifically, in the aspect of information system security awareness, the vast majority of students agreed that schools should install relevant information security procedures and the importance of information security knowledge, and the mean score of this dimension was 4.42, which was considered to be the highest mean score, indicating that students' information security awareness in this area is high.

The second dimension is email and mobile security, and the results of the study found that most students are already aware of the information risks of email and the virus risks of mobile devices. Also the average score for this dimension was 3.82, which is also a relatively high score, indicating that students are more aware of information security in this area. However, the score of one of the questions about the risk of email attachments was low, with only 66 (59%) students recognizing the information risk

of email attachments, indicating that many students are still very unfamiliar with the risk of email attachments.

The mean scores for cyber attacks and browser security are relatively close, at 3.75 and 3.76 respectively. However, some students did not seem to have a good understanding of some of these information security items. For example, out of 111 respondents, only about 61 would install software patches, 65 would use a personal firewall and 66 would use a pop-up blocker. This means that nearly half of the respondents are not aware of these items and they do not take effective actions to protect their personal information, which may bring many threats to information security. In addition, in the dimension of cyber attack, the question about checking and scanning electronic devices at regular intervals scored better, with only 7% of people having no relevant awareness. This may be because security software has developed better in recent years and it has become more convenient for users to check the security of their devices. According to the 2013 China Internet User Information Security Report released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), 96.5% of users have installed security software on their computers and 70% of users have downloaded security software on their cell phones. This brings convenient conditions for checking and scanning electronic devices.

The lowest scoring dimensions were file and password security. One of the lowest scoring items was changing passwords for each software regularly, with only 24 people (21%) changing their passwords regularly. Students are also unaware of the dangers of P2P file sharing, with only 36 (32%) saying they are more aware of the risks of file sharing. Also just under half (44%) of respondents said they use different passwords for different software. In the file backup item, 33 (30%) individuals said they do not regularly back up their files. Knowledge of strong passwords and awareness of file downloading risks, which are also in this dimension, performed slightly better, with only 15% and 11% of people not having relevant security awareness, respectively.

In general, students are aware of general security threats and protection procedures. Nevertheless, they do not make sufficient efforts to protect their devices or information and do not follow good information security practices.

5.0 Recommendations

Although students score well in the awareness of information security system, there is still a certain percentage of students who lack the relevant awareness that cannot be ignored, and schools and relevant education policymakers should increase the dissemination of relevant knowledge. At the same time, information awareness education activities should be carried out to make students fully aware of the necessity of information security systems, and relevant knowledge should be updated and publicized at all times.

In the second place, the university should provide relevant information security awareness training to college students, and previous literature has suggested two ways to improve information security, including a sanctions-based approach and information security awareness training (Siponen et al., 2007). This study is concerned with information security awareness training (Siponen, 2000). The purpose of information security awareness training is to encourage and stimulate users to consider information security and the significance of information security measures (Gardner, 2006). In addition, lack of training is regarded as the leading cause of inadequate reaction plans (Coopers, 2013). If college students are not familiar with the school's information security policies and rules, they will not be aware of the potential information risks in the school and correctly maintain personal information security (Kim, 2014). Because problems might occur as a result of a lack of personal knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, training becomes an effective type of intervention (King et al., 2001). Planning, organizing, implementing, reviewing, and following up are the four processes of effective training (Vincent & Ross, 2001). In response to the current situation that students do not have a comprehensive understanding of e-mail risks, it is suggested that each university can carry out relevant thematic training, targeted training, and assessment of college students' general knowledge of e-mail information security, etc., to ensure that students can use online communication platforms such as e-mail under the premise of ensuring their own personal information security.

Furthermore, an effective security awareness campaign should concentrate on how users develop long-term security practices (Okenyi & Owens, 2007). What can be found from the survey is that respondents generally scored low on personal information security behaviors, such as using software patches, using personal firewalls, and pop-up blockers. This indicates that even though students have some awareness of security procedures, they still do not have enough security behaviors in their personal practices. Schools or education authorities should provide targeted training and teaching on the means of personal information protection to ensure that students are able to defend themselves against cyber attacks. Overall, security awareness efforts aim to change behaviors and reinforce good practices among students; awareness does not practice, and the purpose of strengthening information security awareness is simply to focus attention on security, while the skills students acquire during training are based on awareness (Wilson & Hash, 2003). Only by improving students' information security awareness through training can their information security behavior be further promoted.

The worst performing areas of file sharing and passwords need to be given sufficient attention. Few students pay much attention to the security of private passwords, often using one password for a long time and using the same password for multiple platforms at the same time, and without sufficient awareness of file downloading and sharing. This may be due to the popularity of social software, where it has become

easy for students to share their information online, yet this may introduce some computer viruses as well as violate copyright laws because the content shared is not in the public domain(Kim, 2014). To address these specific issues, schools should regularly measure students' security awareness levels to provide targeted training to provide students with the training content they need.

Since it is still during the covid-19 pandemic, information security awareness training does not need to use traditional face-to-face courses at all; virtual training (online courses or video-recorded training) can be used to allow students to attend the training more easily and to control training costs for both the organizers and the students. This is because budget constraints are also a significant barrier to information security awareness programs(Chen, 2009).

Schools should also encourage college students to read books, publications and other materials about network information security through school libraries, mobile phone electronic reading rooms, etc., or arrange online courses on related contents, etc., or provide relevant elective courses, so as to broaden the channels for college students to obtain knowledge about network information security.

In addition, schools need to take effective measures to truly engage students in training, such as making virtual training in information security awareness a graduation requirement, automatically alerting students to personal information security tips when they log into learning platforms or school programs, or holding regular webinars to promote information security knowledge. In addition, information security awareness training programs need to be updated as technology evolves and new security threats emerge so as to maximize the protection of teachers' and students' personal information.

6.0 Conclusion

It is a necessity that online instruction requires students to have a high level of information security awareness. The results of this study showed the level of information security awareness among Chinese college students. The analysis revealed that students generally have some awareness of information security and can take some basic precautions, but their personal practices are not sufficient, with a significant lack of security awareness in file sharing and password security, and a lack of personal awareness of the risks of cyberattacks.

In consideration of these findings, higher education institutions should provide targeted information security awareness to students, such as conducting information security training programs, updating relevant precautionary knowledge, and setting security tips on school websites, in order to help students improve their own information security awareness and prevent threats to their personal information.

However, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, this study was limited to the students' perspective, so future studies should also consider the teachers' and

principals' perspectives. Secondly, the current study was limited to a quantitative study with data from a random sample of 111 college students. Therefore future research could involve a larger sample size to ensure the presentability and generalizability of the data. In addition, interviews are needed to further explore and explain the possible reasons for these findings.

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The Impact of Digitalization and E-Marketing on the Labor Market After Covid - 19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The world economy suffered a downturn during the pandemic covid -19, where thousands of workers found themselves just unemployed and powerless against a new reality. But this is not just one side of the coin. As a result of the closure of the free movement of goods, the economy saw a green light regarding the digitalization of systems, turning it from a trade-class economy, towards E-commerce which is one sectors based on technological developments and opening new jobs on the labor market. Medium and small businesses had a negative impact during the pandemic, and were more unprepared to face the difficulties they found themselves in. Unlike large businesses which already had an open path in E-marketing, where their experience showed that with only a few changes they could withstand trade extensions, with the same results as before. Digitalization is one of the most important components today in world economies, but there is also a dependence on technology development in different countries, where investments in education related to this field are not very extended. The purpose of this article is to present the impact that digitalization in e-marketing has on the labor market after the Covid pandemic - 19. We will also see how human capital with technological capacities has affected the labor market after the crisis Covid – 19. The data will focus on the period before and after the pandemic. We will see how human resources specialized in technology are contributing to commercial activities after the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the needs of the market are showing that we need to invest in education, or professional training courses related to digitalization, in order to be ready for sustainable development.

Keywords: E-marketing; E-commerce ,Labor market; job creation; digitalization

1. Introduction

The digital economy is the worldwide network of economic activities, commercial transactions and professional interactions that are enabled by information and communications technologies (ICT)¹.

Technology in the new century is experiencing an incomparable growth with the past, and therefore the impact it is giving in the field of commerce is very positive. By adapting new technologies, each economic sector is experiencing development opportunities, being at the same time competitive in the market, but also companies that develop in the eyes of loyal customers. The world economy is in a transition from an industrial era to a knowledge-based information age, and the role of ICT solutions is becoming indispensable within the labor force²

In its beginnings, this type of digitized economy, which was based on Internet connections, was called the new economy, however, business leaders are of the same opinion that the digitized economy has more room for business development as a result of the development internet technology.

E-commerce emerged half a century ago, when Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) technology appeared, and a shift towards people being able to shop online began about 20 years later³

In a simpler way, we can say that we have a source of income through the use of the Internet for business relations. The digital economy reflects the move from the third industrial revolution to the fourth industrial revolution.⁴ The digital revolution, or the Third in terms of technological development, was based on the transition of devices from analog electronic systems to digital ones at the end of the 20th century.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is a term coined in 2016 by Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF). It is characterized by the convergence and complementarity of emerging technology domains, including nanotechnology, biotechnology, new materials and advanced digital production (ADP) technologies.⁵

E-commerce refers to the functional aspects of selling products online, such as managing supply chains, getting a storefront set up on a website, or processing transactions and collecting payments⁶

¹ <https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/digital-economyt>

² Hovhanesian, H.; Chobanyan, A. Economy impacts of ICT industry: Case of armenia. *Mark. Manag. Innov.* **2018**, *3*, 260–267.

³ MIVA. The History of Ecommerce: How Did It All Begin? 26 October 2011. Available online: <https://www.miva.com/blog/thehistory-of-ecommerce-how-did-it-all-begin/>

⁴ <https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/digital-economy>

⁵ <https://iap.unido.org/articles/what-fourth-industrial-revolution>

⁶ <https://www.emporix.com/blog/digital-commerce-versus-e-commerce-whats-the-difference>

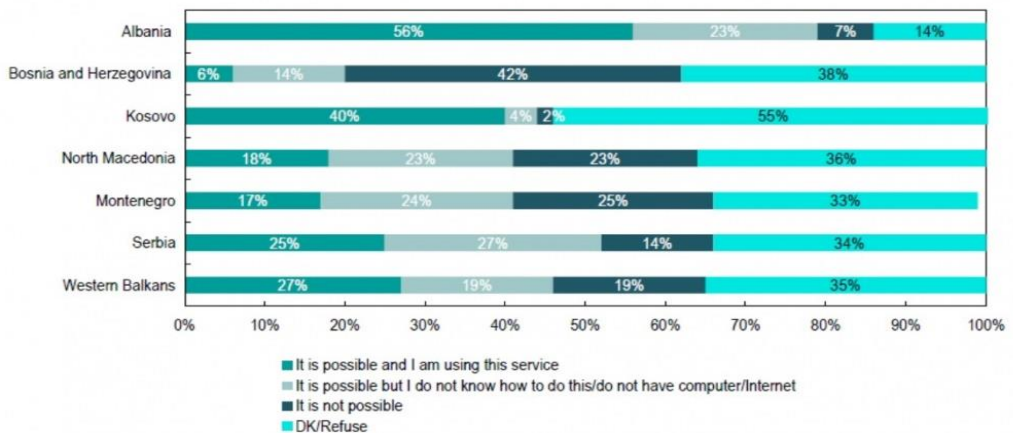
If E-marketing is a function in the aspect of online sales, digital marketing is technology and data processing based on the work of the human factor, which now enables a new level of the way wholesale and retail business is done.

Digital marketing covers the administration of the content of websites, the design related to the involvement and retention of visitors as customers, the analysis of data, the analysis of the experiences of website visitors, as well as the adaptation and rapid implementation of functions to help users. with the final goal of an easier use for customers

Digital marketing focuses on online customers, and improving the experience at every point of their journey on online sites. However, to be successful, the e-marketing market needs high quality websites that attract users¹

Albania, the first in the Balkans for digital transformation, according to the OECD report

Fig.1 Graph of public satisfaction with online availability and uptake of e-services



Source - regional cooperation council, Balkan barometer public, opinion survey 2021(<https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer>)

This is the assessment that Albania has received in the report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD / SIGMA which was based on the performance analysis performed on 52 indicators in 6 different areas of good governance and public administration, in the six countries of the Western Balkans.²

¹ Rouyendegh, B.D.; Ictenbas, B.D. A Fuzzy AHP for Evaluation of eCommerce Websites Performance. In Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Information Management and Evaluation, Ankara, Turkey, 16–17 April 2012.

² <https://www.ocnal.com/2022/03/albania-first-in-balkans-for-digital.html>

This is an achievement in terms of online, administrative services from the government, but there is still a lot of work to be done regarding the digitalization of small medium and large businesses.

2. E-commerce

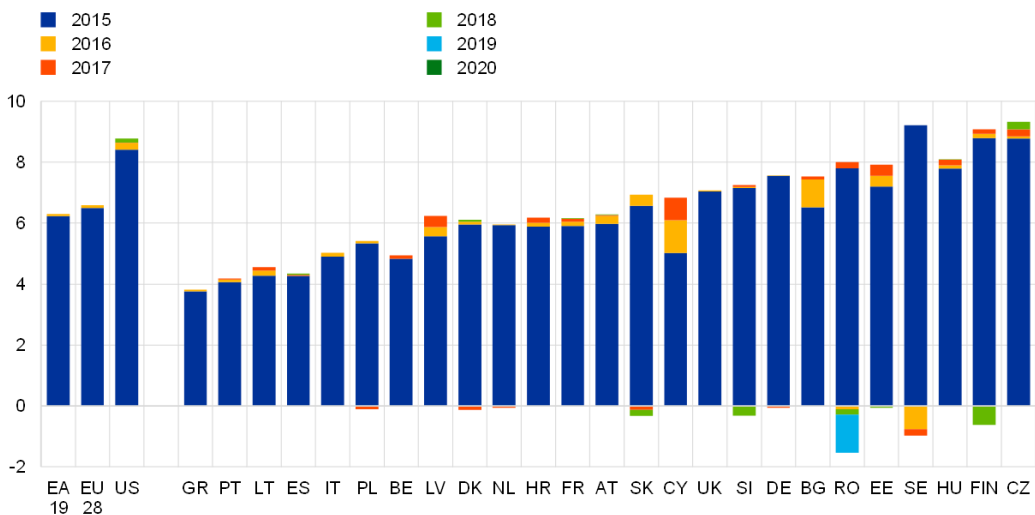
Technology can improve the labor force and can allow employees to create and maintain better networks. The state of a company’s website in comparison to its competitors is a powerful tool for business.

Individuals can search companies by the products and services that they offer and compare them on different platforms, offering a better perspective on how the company could perform in future

According to the European Commission, only 17.5% of small and medium enterprises in Europe sold products online, only 1.4 percentage points more than in 2016¹

Most euro area countries have much smaller value added from digital sectors (as a percentage of GDP) than the United States, with the euro area digital economy about two-thirds the size of that of the United States²

Fig.2 - The digital economy, 2015-2020 (percentage of GDP)



Source: European Commission

¹ European Commission. Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020: Integration of Digital Technology; European Commission: Brussels, Belgium, 2020.

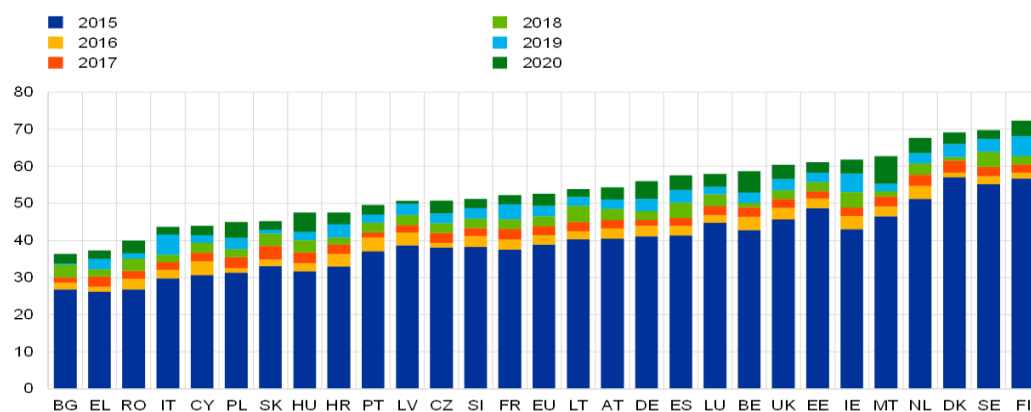
² https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/economic_bulletin/articles/2021/html/ecb.ebart202008_03~da0f5f792a.en.html

Regarding these parameters, the European community has created the index (DESI), to better and clearly reflect the progress and digital development of the economy and society.

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) is an online tool to measure the progress of EU Member States towards a digital economy and society. As such, it brings together a set of relevant indicators on Europe’s current digital policy mix.¹

Digital adoption has increased significantly since 2015, however. The Digital Economy and Society Index has risen from below 40 in 2015 to above 60 in 2020, as shown in Chart 2.²

Fig.3 - Digital adoption in the euro area and EU economies



Source: European Commission.

WE can see that even among the member states of the union there are big differences, where there are three states below the level of 40 of the index, and we can also see a state with a level of above 70 of the index. Regarding connectivity (notably broadband), we must say that most member countries have almost a comparable novel

The changes that occur are in the level of development of human resources, human capital and the integration of digital technology, in the business and public sectors.

The DESI is composed of five principal policy areas which represent overall more than 30 indicators:

Connectivity: how widespread, fast and affordable broadband is,

Human Capital/Digital Skills: the digital skills of the population and workforce,

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/lt/MEMO_16_385

² https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/economic-bulletin/articles/2021/html/ecb.ebart202008_03~da0f5f792a.en.html

Use of Internet: the use of online activities from news to banking or shopping,

Integration of Digital Technology: how businesses integrate key digital technologies, such as e-invoices, cloud services, e-commerce, etc. and

Digital Public Services: such as e-government and e-health¹

To calculate a country's overall score, each set and subset of indicators were given a specific weighting by European Commission experts. Connectivity and digital skills ('human capital'), considered as foundations of the digital economy and society, each contribute 25% to the total score (maximum digital performance score is 1). Integration of digital technology accounts for 20%, since the use of ICT by the business sector is one of the most important drivers of growth. Finally, online activities ('use of Internet') and digital public services each contribute 15%.²

As part of its Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy, the European Commission has proposed a new 'connectivity package' setting strategic (non-binding) objectives for the deployment of so-called 'Very High Connectivity' (VHC) capacity networks³

3. E- marketing

Internet marketing has disrupted conventional marketing practices and this is particularly true for B2C businesses. Rather than the direct mail or cold calls, e-marketing allows the customer to control the communication from the outset.

Take-up of social media

Social media has emerged as a means of managing the customer journey. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn have huge user bases and it's now becoming cheaper and easier for firms to manage customer engagement on the Web. In addition, social media offers an easy way for customers to share content with their networks in return for 'rewards' such as discounts and promotions, to the benefit of both businesses and their customers.

"E-marketing is growing at a dramatic pace and is impacting customer and market behaviors in ways that conventional media cannot. Internet marketing has disrupted conventional marketing practices and this is particularly true for B2C businesses. Rather than the direct mail or cold calls, e-marketing allows the customer to control the communication from the outset."

Here are five key steps to implement an effective strategy for strategic e-marketing:

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/lt/MEMO_16_385

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/lt/MEMO_16_385

³ VHC networks refer to electronic communication networks capable of maintaining network performance at peak hours in down- and uplink bandwidth, resilience, error-related parameters, latency and its variation.

1. Set the goal

Focusing on specific goals allows you to pinpoint the top three marketing activities you will be undertaking. Start with the most important and get it right. Remember, be SMART about it: That is to say, your goals should be:¹

- Specific.
- Measureable.
- Inspirational.
- Realistic.
- Time-bound

2. Identify your target audience.

Organize and put together the list of people you need to reach, why they will be interested, and what information you want to provide. Your target audience consists of potential customers who meet a list of qualifying criteria indicating a disposition to buy your product. Qualifying demographic characteristics can be defined in terms such as: age, sex, income level, industry and job title²

- Which actions your audience has taken, such as following your social media profile, visiting a landing page or buying a product
- What type of problems your audience needs solved
- What benefits your audience seeks
- Where your audience seeks information about your industry
- Who your audience trusts, listens to and follow

3. Ensure consistent messaging.

Create messages for each of your campaigns, and ensure your different messages don't compete for attention.³

- Develop Messaging Guidelines
- Don't Forget Internal Branding
- Provide Employee Access to Logo and Design Elements
- Create a Brand Content Calendar
- Stick to Platforms and Channels that Fit with Your Brand Identity

4. Share interesting content

¹ <https://www.brafton.com/blog/strategy/how-to-create-a-strategic-marketing-process-5-steps-for-success/>

² <https://www.simpltiger.com/blog/how-to-identify-your-target-audience>

³ <https://connected-culture.com/5-messaging-strategies-create-strong-consistent-brand/>

- Share interesting content on social media that engages your target audience and cultivates a positive brand image. There are many types of content marketing that you may choose to incorporate in your strategy — here are some of the most common:¹
- Social Media Content Marketing - With over 3.6 billion global social media users, it's easy to understand why so many businesses invest in social media marketing.
- Infographic Content Marketing - Infographics display content, information, and data in an easy-to-understand, graphic format.
- Blog Content Marketing - Blogs are a powerful type of inbound content and allow for a lot of creativity in terms of their purpose and topic.
- Podcast Content Marketing - A 2020 survey found that 49% of 12-to-32-year-olds in the U.S. had listened to a podcast within the last month, with an average of six listening hours a week.
- Video Content Marketing - According to Wyzowl research, 69% of consumers say they prefer to learn about a brand's product or service through video.
- Paid Ad Content Marketing - Paid ads can help you reach a broad audience and allow you to position yourself in all of the places you want to be seen — paid ads are especially beneficial when paired with inbound marketing.

5. Identify and implement key performance indicators.

Monitor your marketing's successes and setbacks and track your objectives. Tracking the key performance indicators (KPIs) gives you a clear view of what you've achieved so far and allows you to measure your ongoing progress. 5 KPIs You Need to Track².

- **Visitors**
- **Leads**
- **Qualified Leads**
- **Opportunities**
- **Conversion Rates**

¹ <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/content-marketing>

² <https://www.newbreedrevenue.com/blog/5-marketing-key-performance-indicators-you-need-to-track>

4. The impact of digitalization on the labor market.

Digitalization is not only about the introduction of new technologies, but also about the transformation of existing ones. New technologies may change the ways we communicate, shop, travel, learn, entertain ourselves, and work. However, the effects of digitalization go beyond the technological realm. Digitalization influences our daily lives, our habits, our attitudes, and our value

The rapid spread of ICTs has led to major changes in many aspects of society, including the labor market. These changes have been particularly visible in the last decade, due to the emergence of the on-demand/share economy, the rise of e-commerce, and the increasing popularity of mobile devices.

Currently, if we refer to the way to do online shopping, it is much more convenient to search for products online, to compare prices, as well as to connect directly with manufacturers, who now sell both wholesale and retail at the address ours, bypassing a link in the middle chain for the retail suppliers of the products.

Convenience has driven consumer habits, with 87% of shoppers saying speedy and efficient delivery were key factors in making a purchase. And while the growth of e-commerce had been traditionally associated with a decrease in retail jobs in the past, e-commerce has created 178,000 new jobs over a span of 15 years.¹

In the future, we feel the need to be as close as possible to the demands of consumers, who every day are spending more time online, making online shopping a part of life, in this new mode of doing business, we must fulfill the demands as quickly as possible and their wishes, but this requires more skilled workers in technology and digitalization of businesses.

During the pandemic as a result of the unprecedented closure of free movement, consumers faced a situation like never before. Street shops or shopping centers were not more accessible, supermarkets as well, each product was not more accessible as consumers were used to. This brought about the consequence, the increase in demand for online trade.

The increase in take-up has affected digital services and goods alike, as reflected in the corresponding data, usage/subscription statistics in the case of digital services as available through online platforms².

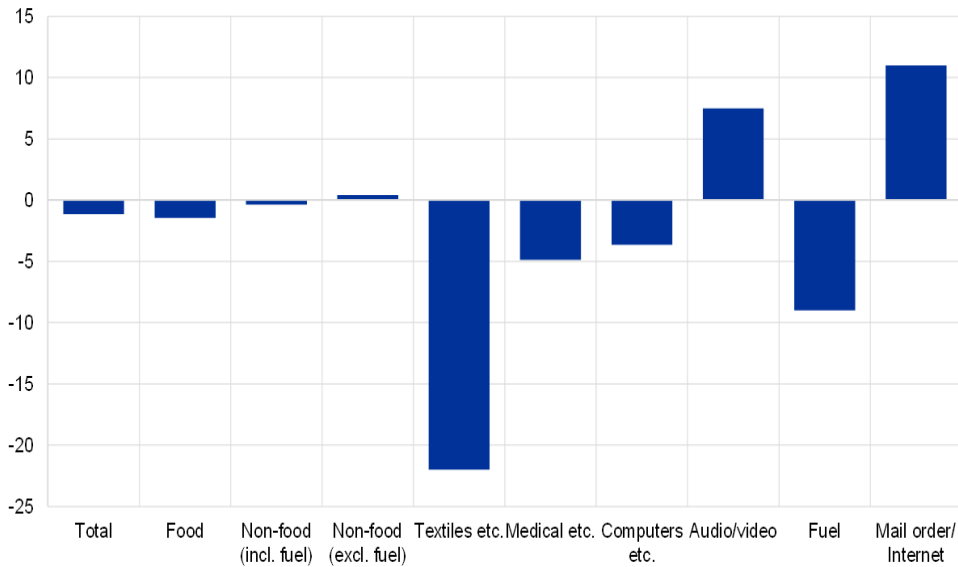
Tech-driven disruption continues, and will continue, to transform the legal industry, placing new demands on traditional counsel and creating new opportunities for new counsel.

¹ <https://firsthand.co/blogs/job-search/what-the-future-of-e-commerce-means-for-employment-opportunities>

² Kemp, S., “Digital 2020: April Global Statshot”, Data Reportal, 23 April 2020

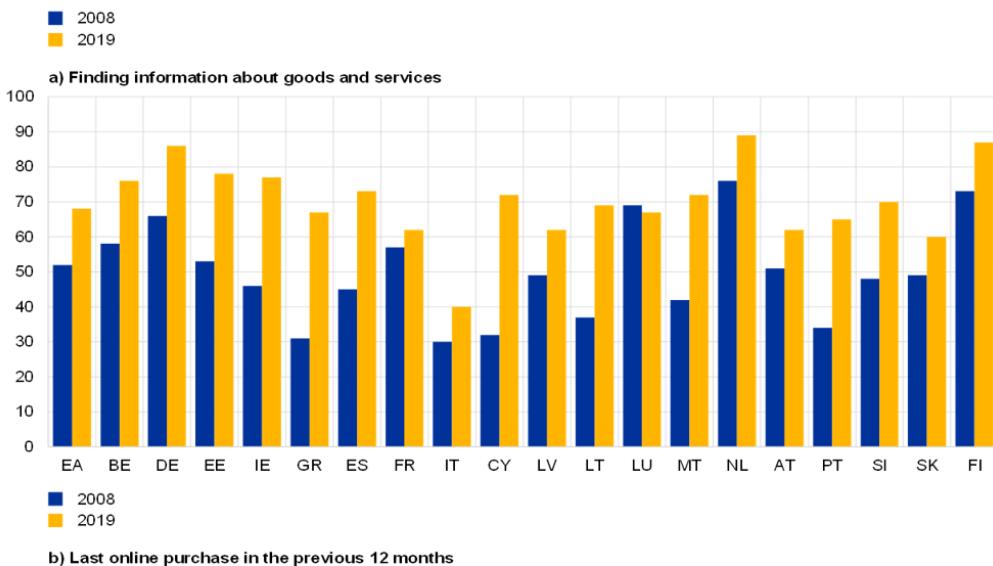
But for the most part, today's new technologies aren't end-to-end solutions. They aren't magically changing the nature of the client relationship, either.

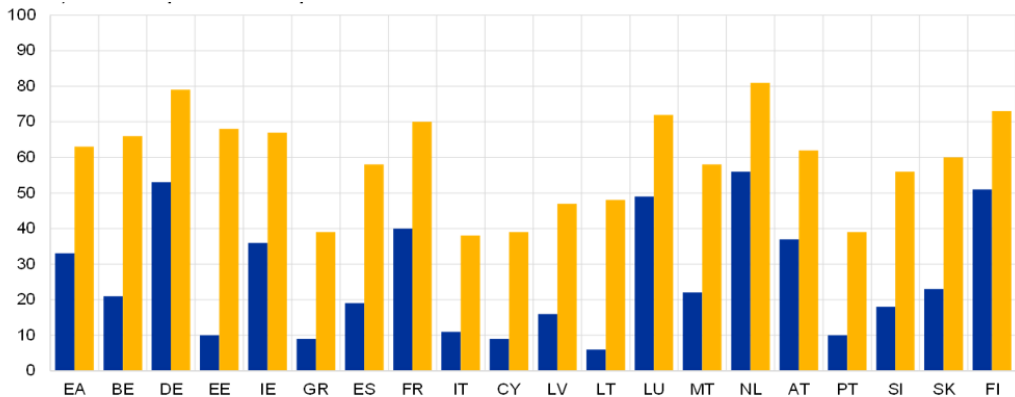
Fig 4. Euro area retail trade – July 2020 compared with February 2020



Sources: Eurostat and ECB staff calculations

Fig.5 Household use of the internet for consumption and information gathering





Source: Eurostat.

Traditional firms are implementing new tech, and doing some on-the-ground analytics. But they aren't stepping up. They aren't asking the tough questions, they aren't engaging their clients to try new approaches, and they aren't telling the world who they really are.

Until this changes, traditional firms will continue to compete on price. And in today's market, with so many alternative service providers willing to reduce their fees for transactional work, good old fashioned wallet-share agreements won't cut it.

5. Job Market.

In 2019, it was found that 70% of consumers preferred to hear about products in the form of content over traditional ads. Sales from e-commerce make up 10% of all retail purchases, with analysts predicting this to increase by 15% year by year ¹.

Content creator

Content marketing is one of the vital areas where online sales are generating income in a non-growing market for businesses. New content its new demand for, creators of content, who can quickly meet the demands for an advertisement to fulfill this content. Professionals such as filmmakers, graphic designers, photographers, bloggers, social media influencers come here.

Remote sales agents

According to a report by McKinsey, about 70%-80% of B2B decision-makers prefer remote interactions with sellers, or even digital self-service, over in-person interactions with sales reps.²

¹ <https://firsthand.co/blogs/job-search/what-the-future-of-e-commerce-means-for-employment-opportunities>

² <https://www.fastcompany.com/90638914/why-remote-sales-is-here-to-stay>

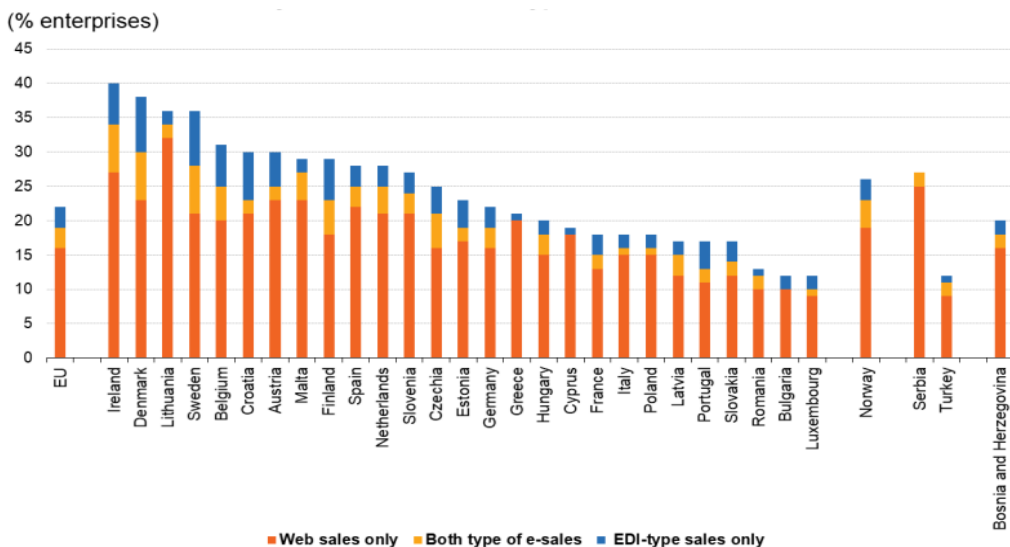
Just by looking at the results we can define a new title for the way sales are changing. Remote sales is the new name of the game. The benefits of remote sales work. First of all, a tendency was noticed that distance sales could not be only a consequence of the pandemic. This way is bringing a new reality, a transformation. Leaders in B2B sales quickly transitioned to B2C, embracing this new reality.

The distances that were now not a factor in the horizon, created spaces for the recruitment of new forces, creating new teams with qualified employees in technology, to achieve business objectives

Also, one of the benefits of online, remote methods is related to the minimization of the distances that sales agents have to travel, both for internal and external sales. And definitely a benefit to be qualified is the scalability factor, which is the achievement of the benefit from the remote services, where software systems help in analyzing data, creating reports, work that takes a lot of time to close a sales agreement.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, global retail e-commerce sales rose to nearly \$4.28 trillion with nearly \$432 billion of that being generated in the United States. Between 2019 and 2021 (the peak of Covid-enforced lockdowns), retail platforms - according to Statista - reported a surge of 22 billion visits in June up from 16 billion visits just five months earlier, in January.¹

Fig. 6 E-sales broken down by web and EDI-type sales, 2020

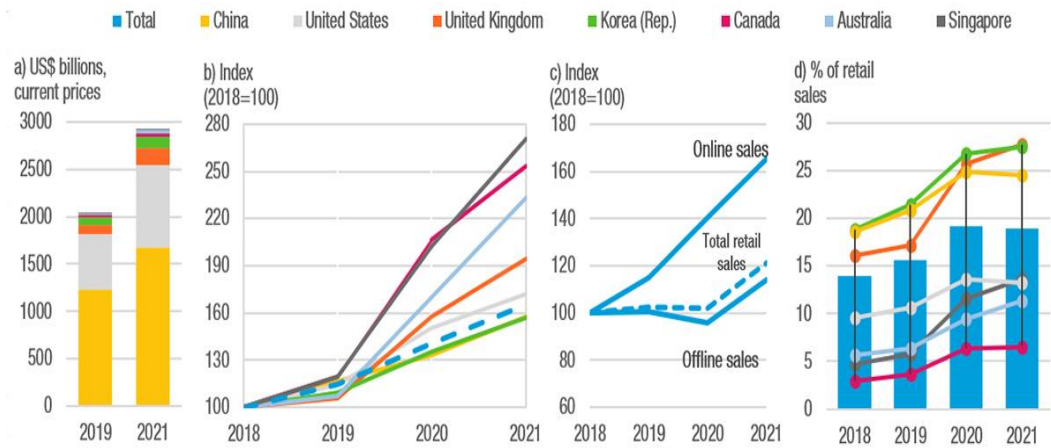


¹ <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/the-future-of-marketing-after-covid-19>

Source

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/isoc_ec_eseln2/default/table?lang=en
nonline data code: ISOC_EC_ESELN2 last update: 17/03/2022 11:00

Fig. 7 Online retail sales, seven countries, 2018-2021¹



Source: UNCTAD based statistics published by Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Canada, China Ministry of Commerce, Kostat, SingStat, the UK Office for National Statistics, and the US Census Bureau.

6. Conclusions

Without a doubt, we can say that technology is progressing with very rapid steps in all directions.

The speed with which consumers are connecting to the Internet to get information about products, suppliers, prices, competition, is always greater and this leads to a fierce competition in an already globalized market.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by the convergence and complementarity of emerging technology domains, including nanotechnology, biotechnology, new materials and advanced digital production.

E-marketing is a function in the aspect of online sales, it's true that its purchase is made for making choices; usually without being well-informed about the actual real needs. Thus, the choice has been made through inferior means like the laziness. The case is still the same.

According to the authenticity, purpose, usage, and the advantages of E-marketing, the demand of e-business has soared. This is because the process is straightforward and easy to manage. It has no reasons to back away from the rest of the E-marketing, as it

¹ <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-boost-e-commerce-sustained-2021-new-unctad-figures-show>

may not be a wise idea to stop this thing while it continues growing. It may not be a bad idea to form a network of e-business: E-commerce operators and buyers.

The pandemic, in addition to finding consumers and many businesses unprepared for a new reality, opened the way to new opportunities that were almost ready, an unimportant port until now. Small and medium-sized businesses, the priority in E-marketing and digitalization of business is restored as a result of the limitation of movement due to the pandemic.

Another factor to be underlined is the globalization of free trade, where through commerce and technology, B2B systems are replacing intermediary links with retailers, enabling the consumer to buy directly from the manufacturer in the B2C system.

Marketing is returning in a revolutionary new way, in contrast to traditional marketing. With constantly increasing numbers, where there are currently approximately 4.89 billion users on the internet and where 93% of them are social media users, it is predicted that in 2027 there will be almost 5.85 billion users.

This growth definitely brings the need for an increase in the unqualified workforce to meet the demand from growing businesses, for the digitalization of services and online sales.

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Toward Sustainable Tourism in Qatar: Msheireb Downtown Doha as a Case Study

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Abstract

Qatar has developed a strategy of sustainable tourism and development, which focuses on highlighting the spirit of the Qatari identity and heritage. This strategy goes hand in hand together with the line of the Qatar National Vision 2030. Hence, Msheireb Properties, which is a real estate development company and a subsidiary of Qatar Foundation, focuses in developing a sustainable tourism strategy. Thus, Qatari cultural heritage presented in the heart of the post-modern futuristic city of Msheireb through the project of Msheireb Museums that are hosted in four traditional houses. Msheireb Properties renovated the four houses in a sustainable way that aimed to create a dynamic relationship between tourism and cultural heritage. Msheireb Properties preserved models of traditional architecture through the establishment of Msheireb Museums. This article discusses the development of sustainable tourism in Qatar and the preservation of the Qatari cultural heritage and identity through the story of two museums in Msheireb, the Radwani House Museum and the Company House Museum.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, Qatar, Msheireb, Doha

An Unplanned Shift to Online Learning: Implications for Students, Educators, Administrators

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Abstract

Considering schools, high school and higher education institutions in particular, as sites of human resource development practice, the authors explore their experiences of a radical and unplanned shift to a 100% virtual learning environment during the COVID-19 pandemic through scholarly personal narratives. Through this methodological approach, the goal was to identify the necessary skills for success in a virtual environment resulting from an unplanned shift. Given the context of the global pandemic and the resulting unplanned educational shifts in teaching and learning, the study details strong practical as well as theoretical implications for human resource development, educational research, and practice. By framing the study using an innovative and critical framework, the participants outline the skills participants report as useful for success in a new virtual environment during a period of unexpected and radical change. These skills also have implications to help further our understanding of nontraditional literacies that are required for teaching, learning, and working in today's technologically dependent world.

Keywords: unplanned shift, online learning, implications, students, educators, administrators

Developing Skills Regarding the Empowerment Concept as the Basis for Assisting Socially Excluded People

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Abstract

The social assistance and social work system in European Union face new challenges related to the emergence of new problems (i.e., increased socio-economic inequalities or intensification of migration processes), and insufficient measures are taken in this area. Intensive migration processes and the uncertain situation resulting from the ongoing military conflicts cause an increase in cultural differences, which intensify marginalization and social exclusion of minority groups, which cope worse with new conditions, and often have problems with accepting the existing social-cultural norms. The Acting in Context by Training the Trainers in Social Empowerment (ACTTE) project was prepared in response to these needs. It is based on the concept of Empowerment, which emphasizes the social strengthening and restoration of the total possible participation of individuals, groups, and communities, which, resulting from various historical, socio-biographical processes, have been marginalized and neglected or excluded. One of the project's tasks was to conduct research. Its methodology was based on the concept of action research. As part of the research, interviews were conducted with the participants. Data was collected on their experiences gained during the training and utilizing the acquired knowledge and skills in professional practice between training sessions. The primary purpose of the interviews was to determine the effectiveness of the working methods learned by the participants and the possibility of using them in various cultural contexts. The results of this research excerpt are presented in the article.

Keywords: empowerment, professional skills, social exclusion, training

Portraits of Women Founders and Leaders of Family Firms in the North of Portugal

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Abstract

Crossing literature on family businesses and gender studies, this paper aims to discuss continuities and ruptures carried out by women in leadership in family firms. Despite female underrepresentation on top positions in firms in general, our findings gathered from the project “Roadmap for Portuguese Family Businesses” (NORTE-02-0853-FEDER-000018), reveal an ongoing transformation regarding intergenerational management succession in family firms. In fact, while it is recognizable that micro, meso and macro-structural gender barriers remain, family businesses have been the scene of intergenerational changes with a notable presence of women in management and corporate responsibility careers. To what extent have female founders and successors express significant changes in the cultural patterns of family businesses, especially when they have high academic qualifications and professional experience? To answer this research question nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with business women/ managers of family businesses regarding their career experiences compared with those of male counterparts. This paper finds that the “masculinist” perspective is shifting due to the crucial role of the qualifications and professional competence of family firms’ female founders and leaders. Likewise, the increasing of academic level from womens in today's society is one of the factors that is at the root of the emergence of sifitings in the cultural patterns of family businesses with impact in the interegenerational sucesion.

Keywords: North of Portugal, Family businesses, Founders and Successors, Qualification, Cultural Models

Youth Organizations in Political Party Systems: Towards A More Engaged Political Youth

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Abstract

The study focuses on the issue of youth political organizations within political parties in the Slovak party system, but also at the European level. The rationale of the paper is based on the absence of continuous research in this area, which would reflect the changes made in recent years in the political map. This is also pointed out in the literature review of the current academic state of art. The main benefits and results can be identified with regard to the objectives identifying the current state of participation of young people in youth organizations, their connection with the parent parties and their impact on further action in the field of state policy and governance. The findings from qualitative interviews and quantitative survey with members of youth political organizations constitute an important basis for further education of quality political staff, which can be understood as a key component of a functioning state, while creating a basis for active participation of young people in these organizations and restarting the discourse in this area.

Keywords: youth political organizations, political parties, party systems, youth participation, youth policy

Factors Affecting the Use and Pricing Strategies of Car Sharing Company Services in Smart City

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Abstract

The contemporary world puts forward the ideas turned into appearance of new way of thinking, which is more sustainable, responsible for the future of the globe and contributing to the comprehensive development of smart city. One of the intensively developing spheres meeting the challenges of modern city is sharing, including the carsharing sector. Carsharing contributes to the several of smart city domains – transportation, ecological environment, convenience of living, new way of thinking of population, economic sphere. The research studies the factors, affecting the use of carsharing services in Latvia and their impact on pricing strategies of the companies. The study provides a PLS-SEM analysis performed in SmartPLS3.7 software. The data were collected via the semi-structured interviews of the companies’ owners and surveying the city residents, ensuring the point of view of two parties. There were formed for constructs: New way of thinking, Convenience, Economic Factors, and Additional values created by carsharing services. The research demonstrated, that three of constructs have significant impact on the use of carsharing services, while New way of thinking has no impact on the use of these services. It is very important, since the carsharing companies count on it in their development strategies, and spent substantial money on it. The additional values created by carsharing are especially influencing factors. Age and Gender factors don’t have any moderating effect on the constructs. The companies use such pricing strategies as cost-based, value-based and dynamic ones. According to this study, the value-based pricing strategy is the most beneficial for carsharing companies. This study has a great practical value for all the parties, involved in the sphere. The recommendations based on the study can improve decision making process within the companies, contribute to decreased pollution, improve the transportation in the city, make the living environment more comfortable and clean.

Keywords: smart city, carsharing services, PLS-SEM, affecting factors, pricing strategies

Acknowledgement

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Peripheral Modernisms. the Interwar Translation of East-Central European Novel in Romanian Literature

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Abstract

Until World War II, the most common qualifiers associated by the Romanian cultural magazines with Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak novels were “modern” and “contemporary.” Obviously, the qualifiers had an advertising role, given that, starting with the late 19th century and alongside the first half of the 20th century, the Romanian literary culture was defining itself mainly through the ideological programme of “catching up with the West.” But what “modern” or “contemporary” really meant when attached to the (semi-)peripheral European cultural production? Did such terms just qualify the expansion of Western literary models in East-Central Europe, or, quite to the contrary, did they label an alternative (local or regional) cultural approach on modernity? The present paper aims at answering such questions by analysing the pre-/interwar critical reception, selection and timeline of the Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Hungarian novels translated into Romanian.

Keywords: modernity, East-Central Europe, peripherality, novel translation, Romanian literature.

Oral Surgery During Covid-19 Epidemic – Albanian Experience for Patient Management Attending Emergency Dental Services

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Abstract

The first two cases of COVID-19 in Albania were confirmed on 8 March 2020 by the Institute of Public Health in Tirana. Strict containment measures were adopted by the Government, during the lockdown and a re-organisation of dental care services in Albania was implemented. The aim of this study was to describe the characteristics of patients who accessed the Department of Oral Surgery of the University Dental Clinic and to report the preventive measures adopted during the lockdown period of 19 March to 18 May 2020. Medical charts from individuals attending the Department of Oral Surgery of the University Dental Clinic in Albania were analyzed. This was a cross-sectional study, conducted in Tirana. For minimizing risk for infection to patients and dental healthcare personnels, several preventive strategies were adopted. Categorical variables were reported as counts and percentages, and differences between groups (men vs women) were evaluated with the chi-square test or Fisher's Exact test when appropriate. All analyses were performed using SPSS v. 26.0 (IBM, NY, USA). The study comprised 209 patients (90 females and 119 males), aged from 1 to 85 years old, presenting different dental and oral pathologies. According to the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania, to avoid the spread of infection, University Dental Clinic took the measurements for a safety treatment for the patients and operators. Precautions, taken for operator, patient and environment are described. Inflammatory pathologies were the common reasons for patients visits in our Oral Surgery Department in this study because of periapical periodontitis, periodontal disease, dental abscess inflammatory pathologies of sinus and salivary gland, followed by dental trauma, bleeding and haemorrhagic epulis working in special conditions. Based on the results of this study, we provided preventive measurements in the management of patients, operators and the environment. Recommendation proposed, could help to improve the quality of assistance for patients with dental disorders and reduce the risk of infection in dental setting during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: SARS-CoV-2; dental setting, triage

Mediation in Labor and Workplace Disputes

Fatime Dërmaku

Abstract

Labour and workplace disputes represent major contemporary problems that affect the parties in the dispute and the community. Conflicts in these relations arise due to multiple factors such as lack of resources, miscommunication, poor work environment, impractical expectations, and personality differences. The consequences of these conflicts affect the quality of work, leading to a reduced work efficiency, an increase of absence at work, loss of motivation and lack of open communication in the workplace. Mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism has been recognized as a beneficial alternative to resolve most civil disputes due to characteristics such as flexibility, confidentiality, efficiency, and neutrality. The use of mediation in civil disputes remains limited despite being recognized as a potential alternative mechanism to litigation. The aim of this study was to consider the potential benefits of mediation in labour and workplace disputes. The methods used in the study are literature review and comparative methods. In conclusion it can be considered that mediation is a mechanism that can be implemented in resolving labour and workplace disputes with significant benefits, and as such it should be promoted and encouraged as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.

Keywords: Labour, workplace conflict, disputes, mediation

Civil-Military Collaboration During the Coronavirus Outbreak : A Case Study in Swedish Context

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Abstract

In early 2020, decision makers in Stockholm were concerned that intensive care units would run out of intensive care beds because of the massive spread of the Coronavirus. Therefore, they decided that a group of doctors, a construction company and the Swedish Armed Forces should build a hospital inside an exhibition hall. This article examines this project as an example of proactive crisis management, collaboration and civil-military relations. Using field-study observations and interviews, this article investigates what was successful and what was not when it came to collaboration during an escalating crisis. An analysis based on Bolman and Deal's four perspectives on organizations and Mintzberg's organizational configurations showed that, despite structural organizational differences, collaboration worked surprisingly well because of a common goal, and similarities in motivation and identity among the actors.

Keywords: *Coronavirus, collaboration, crisis management, civil-military relations*

Health Anxiety Among the Normal Population and Healthcare Professionals in a Highly Disadvantaged Region During Three Waves of the Covid-19

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Abstract

Health anxiety manifests in fearing for our health when we recognize factors endangering it. The COVID-19 pandemic has occurred as such a factor in which millions of people have become infected and lost their relatives. The pandemic initiated by an unknown pathogen has occurred as an obviously health-influencing and -threatening phenomenon. The presence of health anxiety related to COVID-19 is considered to be an adaptive reaction, since it strengthens health behaviour (following epidemiological rules, health-protecting behaviour), but its long-lasting, increased level has created problems by influencing more fields of human life in a negative way and inhibiting people seriously in their everyday activities. Our research goal is the assessment of health anxiety among the population of a highly disadvantaged region in North-east Hungary during Three Waves of the pandemic. We will deal with the health anxiety of healthcare professionals working in this region separately, and we will examine how much the anxiety of people working with seriously ill patients differs from the normal population's anxiety. This study presents the partial results of the complex mental health image research of the adult population of the region. In this unit of the research, we used the shortened version of the WHO Well-being questionnaire and the Short Health Anxiety Inventory. In the online data recording on average 550 persons completed the questionnaire. It is not representative, but it reflects the attitude of the region's population well.

Keywords: health, anxiety, population, healthcare, professionals, disadvantaged region, Covid-19

A Guide to Conducting a College-Wide Needs Analysis: The Process and Key Outcomes

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to analyze and understand the personal and professional development needs of the employees of the College of Human Sciences & Education (CHSE) at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The data for the project were collected by the CHSE Office of Faculty Affairs and Professional Development through a survey administered to the CHSE employees (staff, faculty, administrators, graduate assistants) during the summer 2020 semester and interviews conducted with 34 CHSE employees. The importance of this project comes from the fact that it sought to understand the needs of all college employees, thus helping the stakeholders understand in which specific training to invest based on employees' needs, as well as understand if different types of employees have different needs. By informing professional development programs, these results should ultimately improve performance, quality, and efficiency. Further, we took a comprehensive approach by using both the quantitative and qualitative approach and by focusing on both personal and professional development, inherent in the mission of our college to improve the quality of life across the lifespan. In our presentation, we will describe how we conducted a college-wide personal and professional needs analysis and what we learned in the process. We will discuss the major steps in survey and interview protocol development, quantitative and qualitative data collection, and data analysis, and we will conclude by highlighting major takeaways by presenting the key findings and action steps. Presentation attendees will gain information regarding the needs analysis process, including survey development and testing, the development of the interview protocol, data collection, and data analysis. Session participants will also learn details about the needs analysis findings and understand how we have utilized the findings to improve developmental offerings in our college.

Keywords: college-wide needs, analysis, process, key outcomes

Initial Teacher Training for Social Sciences Teachers at Secondary Level: the Importance of Teacher Coordination

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Abstract

The initial training of future teachers of Social Sciences in Spain, at the secondary education stage, follows a consecutive model, first university education in a speciality related to Social Sciences is obtained, followed by a one-year Master's degree with mainly pedagogical training. This Master, the Master's Degree in Secondary Education Teacher Training, qualifies for the teaching profession and is regularly evaluated by official external agencies. This paper analyses the perception of students taking the Master's degree in Social Sciences, focusing on a problem that is often pointed out as the cause of learning that is not excessively relevant and effective: coordination between teaching staff. The aim is to diagnose the reality of teaching in two different universities in the 2020-2021 academic year. Specifically, the study has been carried out at the University of Valencia and the University of Alicante. The analysis carried out on the basis of the information collected through a questionnaire and compared with other documentary sources such as those from official evaluation agencies confirms the need to review this coordination in aspects such as the contents of the subjects, the relationship between subjects, and the usefulness of the activities. In order to offer students the highest quality education, there is a need to establish a much more cooperative university teaching model, which will make it possible to provide adequate training for future teachers of Social Sciences.

Keywords: Social Sciences, teacher coordination, contents, activities, teacher education

Translation and Cultural Hegemony in Semi-Peripheral Literatures: The Romanian Case

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Abstract

In the aftermath of approaches like *Descriptive Translation Studies* and *World Literature Studies*, the paper looks at translation as a shaping element of global culture and pleads for the inclusion of the system of translations in the study of national literatures. Its premises dismiss organicist literary histories that have long ignored the importance of translations for the dynamics of national literatures, as well as comparative approaches that reduce the interaction between cultures to a number of privileged cases. The paper outlines the fact that, rather than playing a secondary role in the growing of national cultures, translations have been a major source of development. Romanian culture is sampled as relevant since it has been described as a “textbook culture of translation” (Brian James Baer) or “Europe’s translator” (Sean Cotter). Quantitative methods derived from Franco Moretti’s “distant reading” are employed in order to examine the impact of translations on the Romanian novel. However, the paper challenges the assumption that translations represent the only mechanism representative of the interaction among literatures. The data analysis performed on the Romanian literature reveal that in the case of semi-peripheral cultures, where translations are oftentimes controlled by political or cultural hegemonical relations, the map of the most translated authors does not overlap the map of the most influential writers.

Keywords: translations, semi-peripheral literatures, World Literature Studies, cultural hegemony, Descriptive Translation Studies, distant reading, the Romanian novel

Alex Goldiș is an Assistant Professor and Vice Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. He is also Editor-in-chief of the *Metacritical Journal for Comparative Studies*. His work deals with twentieth- and twenty-first-century Romanian literature, digital humanities, and quantitative cultural history. He is the author of two monographs: *The Entrenchments of Literary Criticism: From Socialist Realism to Aesthetic Autonomy* (2011) and *Methodological Updates in the Romanian Criticism of the 1970s and 1980s: Theories, Methods, Critics* (2013) and of chapters

published in collective volumes, among which: “Between Transnationalism and Nation Building: Literary History as Geolocation”, in M. Martin, C. Moraru, A. Terian (eds.), *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018; “Literary Interferences in Subversive East-European Cultures”, in M. Sass, Ș. Baghiu, V. Pojoga (eds.), *The Culture of Translation in Romania*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2018: 85-99; “The Ideology of Ruralism in the Thaw Prose”, in Ș. Baghiu, V. Pojoga, M. Sass (eds.), *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2019.

Considerations About the Importance of Education After the First Wave of Covid-19

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Abstract

While previous studies refer to the impact of the pandemic over academic performance, continuity of studies or teaching abilities, this paper will focus on the variable "importance given to education". For this purpose, we compare society's perspective regarding the importance of education, at the country level and according to the individual situation, both at a pre-pandemic moment (year 2019) and after the first wave of the pandemic (summer 2020). We implement a difference in differences strategy, using representative survey data from 28 European countries: the Eurobarometers 91.5 (June-July 2019) and 93.1 (July-August 2020), which allows us to introduce the regional relative mortality in 2019 or in 2020 with respect to the average 2015-2018. The results show that the pandemic has provoked a deep rift in society, generating two different worlds. One "world" composed by the unemployed, immigrants, those still in school, and those from working class backgrounds, who think that education is no longer one of the country's fundamental concerns. Even more troubling is the fact that at the personal level, in households with children, the unemployed and working class feel that they have other more important concerns. The other "world", made up by the more educated, express an increase in their personal concern for education, Parents with better economic status and more stable jobs have been able to invest more in their children's education during the pandemic and have become more involved in their children's learning. As recommendations, it would be necessary to take advantage of the return to face-to-face teaching to create support and reinforcement groups and prepare professionals to offer educational and psychological attention to students.

Keywords: education, Covid-19, difference-in-difference, mortality

Sustainability Communication Campaigns: A Case Study from Portugal

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Abstract

Public awareness and concern about environmental and social issues is growing. It became urgent to involve population, since anthropogenic climate change has now come of age as a widely recognized global risk and a profound peril to the health and well-being of humans and nonhumans. Sustainability communication campaigns are based on ever-evolving consumer behavior, one of the biggest challenges faced by marketers around the world. In this paper aims to analyze a case study from Portugal.

i4efficiency (Intelligent integration identifier and logistics efficiency) is a project financed by EEA Grants that aims at the effectiveness of urban logistics in two Living Labs in the municipality of Sintra in Portugal, through a Unique Address Identifier (UAI). Urban service logistics include operations such as the delivery and collection of goods, waste processing and also services involving couriers, such as utility meter readings. It is known that the inefficiencies of this process impose more pressure on urban areas, which translates into a significant impact on carbon emissions which, in the case of the municipality of Sintra, is estimated at around 94,000 tonCO₂/year. To solve these challenges in Sintra, the project proposes an integrated approach, contemplating several intelligent logistics solutions, based on collaboration and sharing, which optimize the number of vehicles and resources needed in operations. The success of this projects highly depends on the population involvement. This synthesis of current research will be helpful to both researchers and practitioners that work on sustainability communication campaigns to positive impact on the public, including communications on air pollution, waste management, and natural resources' shortage. As well as those making long-range planning dessimination decisions.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Intelligence, Marketing Strategy, Sustainability, Communication

Social and Pragmatic Communication Disorders in Children Aged 6-11 Years and the Role of Language Therapy

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Abstract

Social and pragmatic communication disorders in children aged 6-11 years are described as language impairments, which affect negatively the development of the child, the creation of social relationships and their academic formation. *Methodology used* in this study is based on the inclusion of 25 children with communication disorders, who are treated in rehabilitation centers. For data collection and processing were used: Social Communication Behavior Checklist (SCBC), Diagnostic Criteria of Communication according to DSM 5. Moreover, from parents and teachers was retrieved information about the child's condition in their everyday life concerning communication. From *the study analysis*, it resulted that children with social and pragmatic communication disorders react with a noticeable improvement while being treated with language therapy. Children improve their communication greatly, 60% of them create complete and clear sentences, participate in discussions with their peers, 50% of them have an improvement of their academic results, 70% of them are more active in discussions and conversations taking place around them. The general conclusions stipulate that the application of language therapy benefits the improvement of social and pragmatic communication disorders in children aged 6-11 years. Therapy is very effective, but has to be adapted for each child accordingly, based on the presented degree of communication difficulty.

Keywords: disorders, socio-pragmatic communication, role, language therapy, children aged 6-11 years.

Smart Education and Sociology

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Abstract

In a moment when the smart society, based on the digital dimension as is the example of society 5.0, is shaping the everyday life of all of us, we discuss contributions that Sociology offers for a definition and implementation of formal and informal education necessary for the personal and social development of communities and some current and future challenges.

Keywords: Smart education, Digital Society, Society 5.0, Sociology, Education 5.0