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## PRINCIPLES OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR CORRECTION PROGRAM CREATION FOR YOUTH DETENTION CENTERS

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The necessity of delinquent behavior correction programs is determined by the prevention of wrongdoing and by the correction of behavior if a crime has been committed. The article aims to generalize the conceptual basis and principles of delinquent behavior correction program creation for youth detention center pupils. To achieve the set aims of the research, methods of scientific literature analysis method, interviewing, and mathematical statistics methods were used. Empiric research results on the effectiveness of various delinquent behavior correction program effectiveness, principles for the creation of effective programs, indicators, which can be used to evaluate the disposition of youth for delinquent behavior, and motives behind crimes were analyzed. Aggression level indicators and delinquent behavior disposition amongst pupils of the Kremenchuk youth detention center. Based on acquired data, a scheme of delinquent behavior correction program creation for pupils of various aggression and delinquent behavior disposition levels was developed.*

**Keywords:** aggression; behavior; resocialization; youth; wrongdoing

### INTRODUCTION

The activity of youth detention centers is determined by the requirement of correcting delinquent youth behavior, which committed wrongdoing. Conditions of education and staying in these youth detention centers are somewhat specific due to the conditions on which the youth end up in these places. The activity of these youth detention centers is regulated by the statement on the educational center of criminal-executive institution (Order of the..., 2013). Their main drawback is that both youth, that has committed minor infractions, and those, who have committed

serious infractions, are in one place. Delinquent behavior – is the behavior of a person or a group, which violates common morals. Delinquency is characterized by a repeated manner of wrongdoing. Alsheikh Ali (2020) has studied, that boys are more dispositional to delinquency than girls. Jurczyk and Lalak (2020) have concluded, that disposition to delinquent behavior is closely related to the aggression level (the correlation coefficient between aggression level and delinquency disposition was 0.5,  $p < 0.01$ ). Delinquent behavior correlation programs are selected by an educational institution and are employed during the educational process,

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including the wrongdoing type, severity or complexity, and other factors (Alpysbayeva et al., 2019). A tendency for repeated offense and other factors indicates, that not all delinquent behavior correction programs, the usage of which is a reason for being in a youth detention center, are effective. Van der Put et al. (2021) research shows, that some delinquency correction and prevention programs may cause criminal behavior, which is the opposite effect. For example, the “Scared Straight” program, which was used to inform the youth about the punishment for wrongdoing, was ineffective. Information program influence mechanism is based on the fact, that youth will learn the negative experience (by watching their arrested kin) and will refrain from unwanted or delinquent behavior. However, many empiric pieces of research have shown the exact opposite effect of the employment of these programs. Camps, which utilize military discipline, are also an ineffective method of behavior correction. Educational programs teaching children not to use drugs, in which, policemen were employed, also had the opposite effect. Reasons for delinquent behavior are mostly attention deficit, and unreliable or partial families (Hoffmann, 2020; Retz et al., 2021). Children from unreliable families, or those, where children cannot find peace with their parents, have the most disposition to delinquent behavior (Azeredo, Moreira, Figueiredo, & Barbosa, 2019). According to data from Garofalo (2020) children from families, where parents committed crimes, are five times more likely to show delinquent behavior. Many pieces of research highlight the strong influence of a family on the juvenile crime rate (Onsando, Mwenje, & Githui, 2021). As such, respectable parenthood with children of age 13 has expedited the decrease in the crime rate of children of age 18 (Goering & Mrug, 2021). With that, Boccio and Beaver (2019) have researched, that a relationship between family structure changes and youth delinquency is only temporary and of low influence. Walters and Espelage (2019) have concluded that the level of parents’ education, the impulsiveness of parents, presence of a previous record in the youth indicate a possible crime in about a year. Burnside and Gaylord-Harden (2019) have learned that low desire for achievements in life, indeterminateness, and hopelessness regarding their future are the risks for repeated offense after a year. Understanding the motives behind crimes allows for research and develop effective correction programs for youth. The term “correction” is understood as a complex of methods, aimed at removing psychological

complications, and correcting social behavior and personality development of youth. Methods for behavior correction should remove existing behavioral problems and expedite the social adaptation of a child. Correctional programs should be developed under personality diagnostic results, reasons, and conditions of each case. As such, a universal correction program is an impossible task, yet effective wrongdoer treatment programs decrease repeated offense frequency by 25-30% (van der Put et al., 2021). Scientific literature includes a lot of results of one or another delinquent behavior correction program, and motives behind committed crimes. However, it lacks conceptual aspects and principles of these programs’ planning. The aim of the research is to research principles of creation and conceptual aspects of the effective delinquent behavior correction program.

### **Objectives:**

To analyze delinquent behavior correction programs in the scientific literature; To generalize the conceptual basis and principles of delinquent behavior correction programs creation for youth detention centers pupils; To develop a delinquent behavior correction program mechanism, which would include individual aspects of delinquent children.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research was conducted with the usage of quantitative approaches to resolve the objectives. These methods were used in the research:

- theoretical literature analysis on these keywords: “delinquent behavior”, “youth detention center pupil delinquent behavior correction program”, “delinquent behavior correction”;
- interviewing (with open-answer questions) of youth detention center pupils, research regarding the correlational relationship between aggression level and behavior disposition);
- statistical methods (Mann-Whitney criteria notion between acquired results);
- analysis, synthesis, and generalization of acquired data.

The research was concluded in three stages:

- I – data search in the scientific and methodic literature, forming the corpus for the research;
- II – conduct surveillance, interview, and questioning of pupils and mentors of youth detention centers;

III – analysis, synthesis, and generalization of conceptual basis and principles of delinquent behavior correction program creation for youth detention centers pupils. Pupils of the Kremenchuk youth detention center took part in the research. Age of pupils – 16-19 years. Participants under the age of 18 years old have given their allowance to take part in the research and allowance to publish the results on conditions of anonymity. Participants, who were younger than 18 years, have agreed with their parents (or single parent) or with guardians to take part in the research. Questionnaires, which were used in the research, do not influence the psychics or psychical state and help to study certain aspects of pupil personality. The will of pupils not to agree to participate in the research was noted during the research. Relevant answers from the pupils – 43, 20 of them are from pupils of age 16-17, while 23 were 18-19 years old. A. Bass and A. Darki's questionnaire was used to determine aggression levels. This questionnaire consists of 8 grades and 75 questions, which gives the ability to estimate the hostility and aggression index. For the delinquent behavior disposition evaluation, an O.L. Orel's method and delinquent behavior disposition scale from the delinquent behavior disposition scale. A study of the correlational relationship between delinquent behavior disposition signs and wrongdoer aggression has been concluded. A difference between aggression disposition indicators and delinquent behavior disposition was calculated through the Mann-Whitney criteria (Volnova, 2016). Pupils, who took part in the research, were categorized by these aspects:

- age (16-17, 18-19 years old);
- type of delict (misdemeanor and felonies);
- family of the pupil peculiarities (full, partial);
- aggression level;
- evaluation of delinquent behavior predilection.

Based on acquired data, these research questions were formed:

1. different age (16-17, 18-19 years), of different family peculiarities differs?
2. How does disposition to delinquent behavior in pupils of age 16-17, and 18-19 differ?
3. Are the type of committed crime and aggression level interconnected?
4. How the type of committed crime and delinquent behavior disposition are interconnected?
5. Is there a relationship between the family type of the pupil and the aggression level?
6. Is there a relationship between the family type of the pupil and the delinquent behavior disposition level?

7. Are the level of aggression and delinquent behavior disposition interconnected?

A differentiation of pupils into subgroups was concluded concerning the abovementioned attributes. On its basis, schemes for delinquent behavior amongst pupils of youth detention centers correction and prevention were suggested.

## RESULTS

### A. Conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction program development

Conceptual aspects of efficient delinquent behavior correction program for pupils of youth detention center development with the help of empirical research and keywords during the analysis of literature. Conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction programs for pupils of youth detention center development were presented in the works of Bochelyuk Zavatska, and Spyska (2016). Conceptual aspects, suggested by the author, are based on the differentiated approach to delinquent behavior correction program development. Shaw (2010) describes the conceptual aspects of crime prevention program basics in detail. The author highlights rational approaches to the concepts of crime prevention, which can be adapted to the delinquent behavior correction program for pupils of youth detention centers development. The concepts of crime prevention are as follows: crime prevention through society development; crime prevention on local levels; situational crime prevention; development and employment of offender reintegration (Tran et al., 2022). As such, reintegration program development is one of the crime prevention concepts, as repeated offenses take a prominent place in the overall crime rate. With this in mind, conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction programs for pupils of youth detention centers' development should be based on reducing or complete prevention of repeated offenses. Conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction programs for pupils of youth detention centers development are based on a differentiated approach to pupil personality development, severity and motives of the crime, skills, removing initial reasons of crime (negative influence of society – in family, in school, age-mate negative influence, other psychological reasons), prevention of crime through self-control development. Conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction program development should be based on the reintegration of youth detention center pupils into society.



## B. Delinquent behavior correction program development principles

An integral indication of Delinquent behavior correction program efficiency is a level of youth resocialization and drop or absence of repeated offenses. United States Department of Justice provides 5 principal recommendations on the correction of delinquent behavior, which influence the education process:

1. Guarantee of behavior and psychic health safety during the correction.
2. Proper financing.
3. Selection of properly skilled staff.
4. Development and selection of according educational programs and forms of education.
5. Returning to the society (resocialization).

Other researchers (Levenson & Willis, 2019; Gagnon et al., 2022) recommend the principles of program development, which will help to reduce

the number of repeated offenses and delinquent behavior – those are principles of safety, hope, autonomy, respect, and empathy. Ritz (2022) highlights these components, principles, and theories, which are aimed to reduce the cases of repeated offense – interest amongst youth as a key, safe environment for crime-keen youth, health safety for the young wrongdoers, informed approach, small-group therapy, skills and professional qualities development, education, supervision and accountability, social control theory, contumacy theory. Experts Dein (2018) and Sumter, Wood, Whitaker, and Berger-Hill (2018) describe the positive influence of religious (Christian) nurture on correction of wrongdoer behavior correction and a decrease in repeated offense rates. Moreover, the scientific literature proves the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of programs, aimed at behavior correction, which are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Effective and non-effective delinquent correction programs according to the review of data from literature*

Effective	Non-effective
Aimed to correct behavior, correctly structured, aimed to change the attitude towards criminogenic actions, formation of proper values and behavior amongst wrongdoers, which are in the high risk zone.	Based on psychological nondirective techniques, use treatment methods, which do not target criminogenic needs.
Cognitive-behavioral models of treatment	Information programs

The effectiveness of delinquent behavior correction programs is based on the individual approach to each person, as the motives of crime and types of crime vary greatly. Motives of crimes are investigated in the work of Bochelyuk et al. (2016). As such, authors have presented these crime motives – motives, in which a human being cannot decide (high level of impulsiveness is present), revenge motives, spite (crime is committed against a person, with whom the conflict was), greed, and wish to possess financial goods, wish to have authority amongst friends, emulation, naive wishes (adventures, bravery). Motive analysis of previously committed crimes allows for employing a proper method in the correction of delinquent behavior. As a sum up of the scientific literature data, these conceptual bases and principles of delinquent behavior correction program creation for youth detention centers were presented:

- diagnostics of crime and delinquent behavior disposition;

- aggression level diagnostics;
- severity and type of committed earlier crimes;
- influence means categorization in accordance to crime severity of pupils, absence, and degree of crime, age, family and other factors, individualization and differentiation of means and methods of work with youth detention center pupils;
- careful approach, empathy when working with youth detention center pupils, feedback on the means and methods employments, which are used on the program, desire consideration and exclusion of ineffective and unwanted means and methods for specific persons;
- program component integrity;
- a systemic approach to the pupil behavior correction;
- making changes to the program when needed or if ineffectiveness or opposite effect appears;

- keeping required period of program employment and changing the program contents in specific periods of process;
- program component addition;
- wrongdoer education, detection of their talents regarding certain professions, guiding them into the realization of individual talents;
- repeated employment of program components after a certain period (including repeated offenses, if after a year – repeat the program employment each year, delinquent behavior, and aggression disposition research each year).

Conclusions of the research in the study of

scientific literature and empirical data allow determining a first direction of effective delinquent behavior correction program search. The next step is the investigation of youth detention center pupil characteristics, for which the programs will be developed. For this, an interview with intention of aggression level evaluation was concluded. According to the scientists' data, it is an informative indicator of delinquent behavior disposition. The interview was also concluded with intention of investigating the delinquent behavior disposition evaluation. Peculiarities of committed crimes, age, family type, and other factors are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristic of pupils, who took part in the research

16-17 years				18-19 years			
Attributes	Types of committed crime	Aggression level	Disposition to delinquent behavior (T-scale)	Attributes	Types of committed crime	Aggression level	Disposition to delinquent behavior (T-scale)
Partial families (n=11)	Misdemeanor n=7 (63.63%); felony n=4 (36.36%)	Aggressiveness – 32±0.34; hostility – 12±0.51	58±0.84	Partial families (n=16)	Misdemeanor n=12 (75%); felony n=4 (25%)	Aggressiveness – 35±0.21; hostility – 15±0.33	55±0.67
Full families (n=9)	Misdemeanor n=9 (100%); felony n=0	Aggressiveness – 27±0.25; hostility – 11±0.44	54±0.33	Full families (n=7)	Misdemeanor n=6 (85.71%); felony n=1 (14.29%)	Aggressiveness – 28±0.47; hostility – 11±0.35	59±0.28



As it can be concluded from the acquired results, partial families have higher percentage of severe crimes (Figure 1).

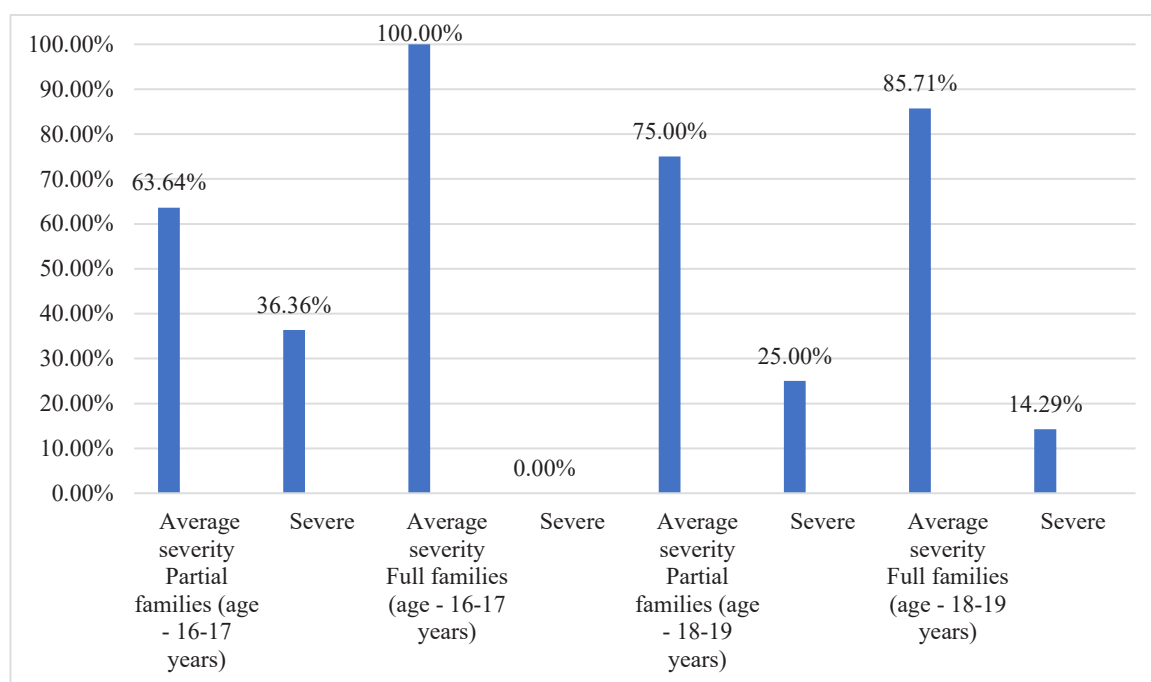


Figure 1. Severity of crimes of youth detention center pupils

While comparing disposition to delinquent behavior between age groups and between pupils from full or partial families, the research questions were answered:

1. Children from full families commit fewer crimes of high severity, than children from partial families (Table 2).
2. Disposition to delinquent behavior in pupil age groups of 16-17 and 18-19 years from full and partial families do not have any statistical difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Figure 1).
3. Aggression level of pupils of age groups 16-17 and 18-19 years from partial families is higher, than in youth from full families ( $p < 0.05$  on Mann-Whitney scale).
4. Comparison of type of crime and disposition to delinquent behavior amongst pupils, who have participated in the research, shows direct relation to pupils, who committed severe crimes and have a higher disposition to delinquent behavior.
5. In pupils, who participated in the research, aggression level was not dependent on the family type ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Figure 2).
6. Disposition to delinquent behavior in the pupil age group of 18-19 years from full and partial families do not have any difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Figure 2).
7. Aggression level and disposition to delinquent behavior in pupils are directly interconnected.

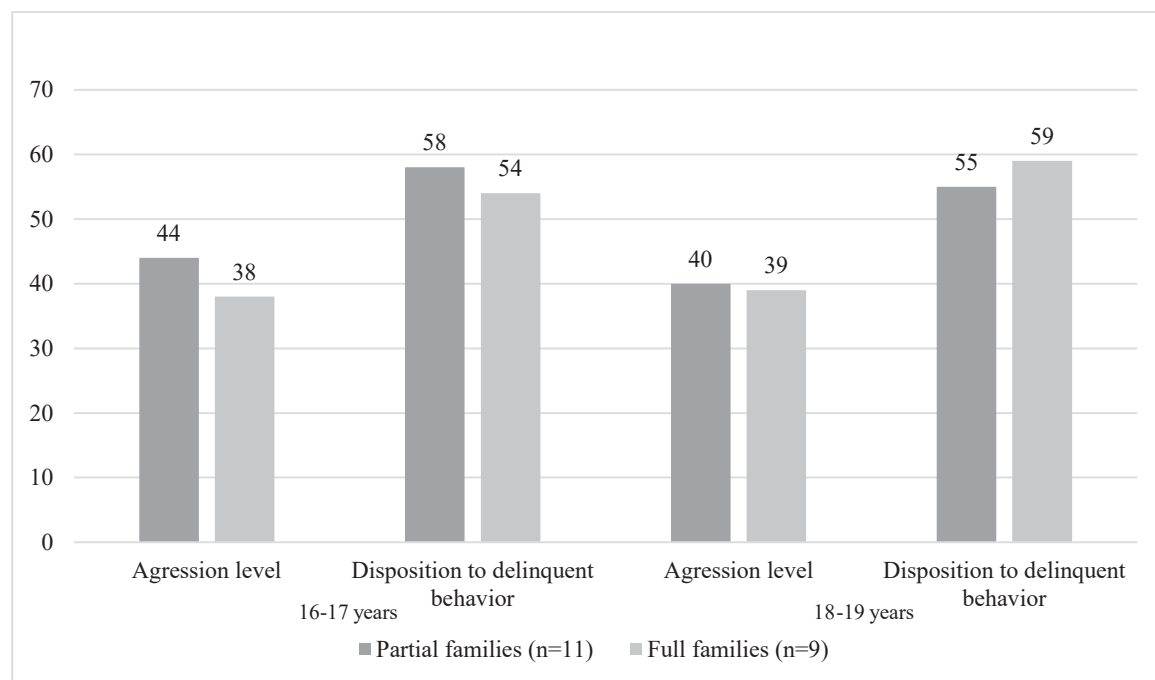


Figure 2. Disposition to delinquent behavior (presented in T-grade on a scale of disposition to delinquent behavior) and aggression level (points) in tutors, who participated in the research

As such, there is a difference between types of the committed crime, while other aspects do not have any substantial influence. This fact may indicate the unrelatedness of youth detention center pupils' disposition to delinquent behavior to the types of families and types of the committed crime. These results may be explained by the peculiarities of the respondent corpus, who participated in the research. It is possible to conclude based on acquired data, that pupils of youth detention

centers, who have participated in the research, do not possess a correlation between aggression level with delinquent behavior disposition and the type of family. With that, pupils of educational facilities possess high aggression levels and delinquent behavior disposition. Research of the correlation between aggression and disposition to delinquent behavior confirms as prognosed, that aggression level is closely related to the disposition to delinquent behavior (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlational relation of aggression level and disposition to delinquent behavior

Pupil age	Correlation coefficient
16-17 years	0.92
18-19 years	0.89

On basis of acquired results, it is possible to categorize pupils into groups in accordance to aggression and disposition to delinquent behavior levels, the severity of wrongdoings, and required ways of behavior correction. The correction program development scheme is as follows:

1. Pupil categorization by age.
2. Age group categorization by the severity of committed wrongdoing.
3. Categorization by motives of the wrongdoing.
4. Categorization (differentiation and, in some cases, individualization) of means and methods of correcting delinquent behavior by aggression levels and disposition to delinquent behavior.
5. Selection of staff to work with pupils of certain groups and for individual work.
6. Categorization of pupils by individual attributes and selection of methods for individual work.
7. Evaluation of delinquent behavior predilection.

## DISCUSSION

Concluded research has enabled us to determine the reasons for certain delinquent behavior amongst pupils of youth detention centers correction programs' ineffectiveness and to analyze the principles of effective program creation. It is analyzed, that for the effectiveness of a delinquent behavior correction program, it is necessary to develop an individualization and differentiation mechanism under certain aspects and personal characteristics of wrongdoers, and their motives behind the crime. Including the complexity of committed crimes, youth aggression level, disposition to delinquent behavior, youth detention center pupils can be categorized into groups and to correct their certain behavior problems or correction of traumas or reasons, why the crime was committed. This expands the research results of van der Put et al. (2021) work on the heterogeneity of correction program effectiveness, which is explained by the complexity of wrongdoer personalities, their desire on the lack thereof to change their life, and other factors. Many experts have worked on the topic of delinquent effective behavior correction program development. It was concluded, that during the delinquent behavior correction process, factors of crime commitment and behavior delinquency should be considered. While summing the numerous pieces of research with different social statuses, severity, and motives of the respondents' crimes, it is possible to categorize and generalize principles, which are to be considered during

delinquent behavior correction program development for a certain group. As such, according to the concluded research, effective means of delinquent behavior correction are trauma treatment, which was received in society, family, and other activities, aimed at self-development and ergotherapy, and the positive influence of religion on behavioral changes (Ritz, 2022; Sadvakassova et al., 2022). As for the effectiveness of safety, hope, autonomy, respect, and empathy principles during the rehabilitation or stay in the youth detention centers, they were described by Levenson and Willis (2019), and Gagnon et al. (2022). It is necessary to account for and use these principles during the development of delinquent behavior correction in youth detention centers. Delinquent behavior correction programs should directly influence the decrease of certain individual and psychological qualities (aggression, disposition of the delinquent behavior) (Aleksandrov et al., 2020; Saduakassova & Svyatova, 2022). Studies on the use of delinquent behavior correction programs show that the effectiveness of their application largely depends on the characteristics of the potential offenders themselves. For example, (Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006) indicate the effectiveness heterogeneity of correctional programs, which were based on cognitive-behavioral or behavioral therapy. Some programs were effective, others were showing satisfactory results, and some had no effect. In this study, this was due to the integrity of the developed program. Level of aggression is a potent factor for delinquent youth behavior prognosis, who are in detention centers (Jurczyk & Lalak, 2020). A stress mitigation strategy has not expedited the reduction of delinquent behavior (Jacinda & Frances, 2022). Many pieces of research indicate the effectiveness of family therapy in decreasing the risks and cases of delinquent behavior after release from a youth detention center (Samper, Llorca, Malonda, & Mestre, 2021). However, parental supervision should be well planned, as according to Jagers et al. (2021), parental control may not only be the protection factor but also be a risk of delinquent behavior during improper parenting. Specialists have repeatedly emphasized that children and adolescents with behavioral problems, a high level of disposition to delinquent behavior, and aggression must be given attention throughout their lives (Retz et al., 2021; Sandugash et al., 2022). As such, delinquent behavior correction programs should be developed for children, which have committed a crime not only before or at the time of youth detention center, but also afterward. Reasons for delinquent behavior should be

determined for the effectiveness of treatment programs. Usually, it is a lack of attention from parents (Hoffmann, 2020), stress (Jaspal, Lopes, Wignall, & Bloxson, 2021), and the criminogenic behavior of parents (Yan, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Beauchaine, 2021). Therefore, the elimination of the causes of delinquent behavior, and maximum correction of these causes is another principle of planning delinquent behavior programs. Families in which juvenile delinquents were raised are often a factor in the occurrence of these delinquencies. It is required to remove the misunderstanding and other factors, which were the reason behind the juvenile crimes, and to include this factor during delinquent behavior correction program development. Working with youth detention center pupils and their parents or guardians is worthy as well. According to Azeredo et al. (2019), children from unreliable families commit crimes more often. With that, the data, acquired during the research, indicates, that disposition to delinquent behavior does not differ from the full or partial family origin. These results may be explained by the peculiarities of the respondent corpus, who participated in the research. With that, Boccio and Beaver's (2019) research results indicate, that a relationship between family structure changes and youth delinquency is temporary and of low influence. It may indicate that family size is not always a primary reason for the crime. Juveniles, raised in full families with a lack of understanding between parents or between parents and children, low level of control, and the long absence of one of the parents due to several reasons, have the same risks of committing crimes, as those, who were raised in partial families. Another possible factor of offenses is the environment of juveniles, which must be taken into account both before the crime is committed and after leaving and during the resocialization of pupils from youth detention centers (Niyetbaeva et al., 2016). It is necessary to include motives of juvenile offenses to develop effective delinquent behavior correction programs, which were described in the work of Bochelyuk et al. (2016). The integrity of means (delinquent behavior motives correction, delinquent behavior origination reason correction, family therapy of abovementioned reasons, individual skills of pupils' development and determinedness to develop positive aspects of personality) and control on program influence result on certain aspects (aggression, impulsiveness, disposition to delinquent behavior) are important for the effectiveness and integrity of the program. It is the integrity of the behavior correction program that has a strong influence on

the decrease of repeated offenses (Lowenkamp et al., 2006). Another effective delinquent behavior correction method, according to the conclusions of researchers, is religion. For example, Montagnet (2022) states, that a connection between religion and offense depends on a crime, while criminologists' interest in religiosity to correct behavior is justified. Parents' religiosity is not a predictor of the prevention of their children's delinquency, but children's religiosity has a positive effect on the prevention of juvenile delinquent behavior (Guo, 2018; Chung et al., 2021). According to the data of Sumter et al. (2018), participation in religious traditions and ceremonies, and affiliation with Christian groups decrease the criminality rate and delinquent behavior. According to Dein (2018), religiousness strengthens psychological health and reduces delinquency. Sumter et al. (2018) also describe a positive influence of religion on delinquent behavior occurrences during resocialization and the ability to live without crime in the future. As such, employment of religion and religion development can be included in the delinquent behavior correction program.

## CONCLUSIONS

Including the numerous recommendations of specialists after concluding empirical research, conceptual aspects and principles of delinquent behavior correction programs were highlighted. Conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction programs are aimed at the determination of positive characteristics of juvenile personalities, which have committed a crime, detection and full removal of delinquent behavior, and previous crimes reasons. Conceptual aspects of delinquent behavior correction program development are based on individualization and differentiation of programs for pupils with the inclusion of several aspects in crime commitment, and other aspects.

Delinquent behavior correction program development principles:

1. A research of youth detention center pupil characteristics and differentiated approach program development.
2. Including the pupil's individual characteristics (family size and relations, crime motives, aggression level and disposition to delinquent behavior, impulsiveness).
3. Integrity of programs (individual and group work in behavior correction, resocialization and positive character aspects development, parent or guardian work after the release of pupils).
4. Systematic appliance of developed programs.

5. Control over the results of the effects of the used methods and programs in general, prevention of adverse effects of the program methods (control over the occurrence of possible undesirable results of work with parents, or unpredictable reactions of pupils to changes in the behavior of parents or guardians) or programs in general.
6. Adjustment of the program's means depending on the results of the impact on the pupils.
7. Focus on the resocialization of pupils.
8. Providing recommendations for the relatives of pupils of the youth detention center, during their stay and after their release.

The application of the above-mentioned principles for the development of delinquent behavior correction programs should have a positive effect, however, it is necessary to conduct longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of various means that are used to correct behavior in complex programs or independently. As the analysis of scientific literature data shows, not every behavior correction program is effective for offender rehabilitation. Information programs and those based on psychological techniques that are not aimed at criminogenic needs are ineffective. Instead, programs aimed at correcting thinking and behavior, forming correct values, and cognitive-behavioral models of treatment are effective. Religion (Christian) practices also positively influence offenders. Conducted research on certain individual aspects of youth detention center pupils (aggression levels, disposition to delinquent behavior, and severity of committed crime) shows, that family size influences the severity of the committed crime. Indicators of aggression and disposition to delinquent behavior did not have statistically significant differences between pupils from full families and partial families. This may indicate the equalization of indicators among pupils who committed crimes of various severity, were brought up in different families, but after committing the crime are in the same conditions. However, other factors may have an influence, such as the length of stay in a youth detention center, the date of the crime, the peculiarities of interaction and mutual influence between students of the detention center, and others. Further research of these factors is required for clarification of acquired data. Restrictions. This research has many limiting factors, such as the number of research participants (43), age of 16-19, one country of research (Ukraine).

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## LEGAL RECORDS OF REAL ESTATE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - PERSPECTIVES AND NEW TENDENCIES

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The problem of the unsettled land registry state of real estate generated the appearance of new problems, as such but also of some other nature, whereby some of them, and due to the sensitivity of the question, covered by their reach, at the level of the most complex issues in the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under the spotlight of such problems, the paper points to possible directions reforms in the field of public real estate records and real estate rights. In order to choose the appropriate recording model, the most significant reform solutions are also presented in the paper; contained in the provisions of the new entity laws on land registers, i.e. of the law on real rights. With the same goal, the paper points out the importance of following rich legal traditions in the matter of establishing rights to real estate. In this respect, special attention is dedicated to the re-updated system of unique real estate records, as a kind of expression of completely different aspirations in this area.*

**Keywords:** *The problem of non-functionality of land registers, land register model of real estate registration, the system of unique real estate records, registration and its effects, legal rules on trust protection.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the entry into force of the new entity laws on land registers (hereinafter: ZZK FB&H/RS) the process of reforming the land registry law has begun. In the most significant reform solutions, legal rules on the obligation to register and its constitutive effect are included, i.e. legal rules on the protection of trust, as a completely new original way of acquiring rights (ZZK FB&H/RS). The aforementioned solutions were created based on the solutions of the German Land Registry rights (German Civil Code – Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch [hereinafter: BGB]). According to the model of successful functioning of land registers, these solutions aim to ensure a stable and functional land register, which would meet the needs of modern legal transactions real estate. With help of the significantly invested

financial resources, some progress has already been recorded in this regard (Povlakic, 2014; Selimovic Halilcevic, 2017). However, by entering on the force of the Law on Survey and Cadastre of the Republic of Srpska (hereinafter: ZPK RS), i.e. by drafting a preliminary draft of the Law on Surveying and Registration of Real Estate of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (further: ZIRN FB&H), the system of unique real estate records has been updated again, as a whole a new and radically different concept of public registration of real estate and rights to real estate. Moreover, the process of implementation of the mentioned system on the territory of Republic of Srpska is in the final phase. Bearing in mind the emerging problems in this process, and the frequent criticism regarding this form of transformation (Mutapcic, Djapo, & Muminovic, 2021), the paper analyzed the relevant legal

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solutions using dogmatic, sociological, teleological, and comparative legal methods (including the provisions of ZIRN FB&H), and then, in order to make an overall value judgment on this issue, their value assessment was also carried out. Also, by applying the mentioned methods, the paper analyzed the most significant land registry principles contained in the provisions of the ZZK FB&H/RS, i.e. in the provisions of the new entity laws on real rights (hereinafter: ZSP FB&H/RS), all with the aim of evaluating their overall reform potential in this area. In order to ensure the establishment of stable and functional real estate registers, ownership, as a constitutional category (in this case as off-book), and as an unsurpassed legal and civilizational value as well, it was completely ignored. Regardless of the unquestionable general interest, manifested through the ideal of stable and functional real estate registers (Medic, 2018), the position of ownership established in this way delegitimizes the implementation of the aforementioned legislative policies. After all, the established directions of legislative action will generate the appearance of a large number of legal disputes, as a result of which legal certainty, as an inviolable social value, for which the aforementioned reforms were initiated, will be further threatened. We will talk more about the mentioned questions, as the subject of research in this paper, in its continuation. The amended solutions of real law, contained in the provisions of the ZSP FB&H/RS, significantly redefined the reform solutions of land registry law. Instead of the legal rules on the obligation to register and its constitutive effect, legal rules on the declarative effect of registration (ZSP FB&H/RS) are re-introduced, which, primarily due to the manner of their implementation interpretation, contributed to the greatest extent to the process of (legal) devastation of land registers. Also, instead of the legal rule on gross negligence (ZZK FB&H/RS), characteristic of German land registry law, the legal rule on suspicion (ZSP FB&H/RS) is introduced, as a kind of expression of a redesigned and, for our circumstances, adapted legislative policy in this area. However, the legislative framework established in this way generated the appearance of different and uneven legal understandings. By applying the legal rules of *lex specialis*, i.e. *lex posterior*, preference is given to one (Mulabdic, 2018) or the other legal text (Babic et al., 2011; Babic et al., 2014; Povlakic, 2010; Weike & Tajic, 2005). Anachronistic legal solutions regarding essentially important issues are problematic for several reasons: first, such solutions potentially create a reform process,

in which, following the example of solutions from the German Land Registry Law (BGB), a search is made for enforceable and consistent reform solutions; secondly, the uneven practice in the process of applying the law, conditioned by the aforementioned legislative framework, would produce additional uncertainty in the otherwise difficult legal transaction of real estate; and thirdly, starting from the above-established (historical) role of legal rules on the declarative effect of registration, and knowing the reform potential of legal rules on the constitutive effect of registration, on the one hand, and legal rules on the protection of trust, viewed through the objective legal rule on gross negligence (ZZK FB&H/RS), on the other hand, it could be reasonably concluded that the legislator gave up on the initiated reform process, i.e., on his abandonment of the multi-decade land registry model. Just like this, the conclusion would best suit the proponents of the system of unified real estate records. However, it is not about abandoning the above-mentioned model, but about a better established legislative framework, in which, based on a more responsible attitude of later acquirers towards off-book legal facts, the implementation of legal rules on the protection of trust is ensured, and in addition, the implementation of off-book rights on real estate, which is the intention of the legislator, can be clearly stated from the legal positions - conclusions presented in the continuation of this paper. Within the framework of the established hypothesis, the paper emphasizes the significance reaffirmation of the land registry model, as the only possible direction of reform in this area, while at the same time respecting our rich legal tradition in the matter of acquiring, canceling, and limiting rights to real estate.

## FUNDAMENTAL LAND PRINCIPLES IN THE LIGHT OF THE REFORMS SOLUTIONS

The principle of registration and the principle of trust are among the fundamental principles of land registry law. By prescribing their content, first through the provisions of the land registry, and then through the provisions of real law, a redesigned legal platform was established to solve one of the most sensitive issues in the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina - the establishment of stable and functional real estate registers. By analyzing such provisions, we will answer the problem of uneven understanding regarding registration and its effect. Also, through additional scientific research, primarily in the domain of new real law solutions, we will determine the

value and correctness of the aforementioned principles with regard to the overall reform process of the land registry law. And finally, based on the research results, we will determine the necessary directions for future legislative action in the matter of real estate acquisition, or to be more precise, in the matter of establishing stable and functional real estate registers.

### **New land registry law - adoption process and content of the most significant reform laws solutions**

The most important solutions of land registry law include the legal rules on the obligation to register and its constitutive effect, as well as the legal rules on protecting confidence in the accuracy and completeness of the land registry. In order to ensure the registration of contracted rights, the legislator prescribed registration as a substantive legal prerequisite for their acquisition (ZZK FB&H/RS). This solution significantly departs from the long-standing legislative framework in the matter of acquiring rights to real estate. According to the provisions of the Law on Ownership Relations from the 1980s (hereinafter: ZOSPO), i.e., the provisions of the Law on Ownership Relations from 1998 (hereinafter: ZOVO), registration, in principle, had only a declarative effect. In addition to the aforementioned intention of the legislator, the reasons for prescribing such a legal solution should certainly be sought in the provisions of the German land registry law, under whose influence it was created. It is known that the land register in German law functions flawlessly, thanks precisely to the decisions on the constitutive effect of the registration, i.e., the decisions on the unconditional application of the rules on the protection of trust (BGB). Even more, the entity laws on land registers were imposed by the decision of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the model of the successful functioning of land registers in the countries of the European Union, primarily in the Federal Republic of Germany, and all with the aim of economic recovery of our country and ensuring its more competitive economic position in the process of attracting large investment projects, not only domestically, but also on a broader, international level (Mutapcic et al., 2021). According to the instructions of the High Representative, the laws were adopted at the sessions of the entity legislative bodies without additional amendments. The usual changes and additions followed only after their entry into force.

In addition to the treated solution, the legislator also prescribed the obligation to register all rights, as well as the registration of all changes related to data from the land register (ZZK FB&H/RS). According to the content of this decision, contractors, i.e., acquirers of real rights on real estate, are obliged to, after they have entered into a contract, i.e. based some right on the real estate, submit the appropriate request for its implementation in the land register. It is correct to conclude that the prescribed registration obligation applies to non-registered holders (those who have already fulfilled the requirements acquisition and without registration), but also to independent, i.e. independent, qualified real estate owners (presumed owners). However, this legal solution is unsustainable from the point of view of the guaranteed freedom of contracting obligations and real relations. The emergence of a contractual or otherwise based mandatory right should depend exclusively on the will of the subjects. Precisely because of the stated reason, this legal solution was the subject of frequent disputes (Matic & Djokovic, 1998; Medic, 2018; Povlakic, 2010). The act of registration should depend on the will of the potential acquirer. By failing to register, the possibility of derivative acquisition is missed. In any case, the possibility of protecting rights is missed in the case of conscientious acquisition of the same real estate by a third party (Mutapcic & Osmanbegovic, 2021), because the legislator, in addition to the aforementioned solutions, also provided the possibility of acquiring rights on the basis of the trust protection. This legal solution belongs to the category of new original ways of acquisition. However, the legal rules on the protection of trust, also as part of the reform solutions of land registry law, were modeled on the solutions of German land registry law.

### **New real law – amended reform solutions**

With the entry into force of the ZSP FB&H/RS, the legal rules on the declarative effect of registration (ZSP FB&H/RS) were reaffirmed. In contrast to earlier real law, these rules emphasize the duty of a more responsible attitude towards off-the-book legal facts. This also provides prerequisites for the application of legal rules on trust protection - by strengthening the material legal position of the previous buyer (off-book owner instead of the independent owner of the real estate), the requirements of our rich legal tradition in this area have been met; this legislative policy also accepted the well-known fact of inaccurate and incomplete land registry entries (we emphasize

again that this fact requires an appropriate way of acting by the courts in the process of applying the law - in our circumstances often contrary to the rules on the protection of trust); ultimately, an appropriate legislative framework was provided for the transformation of the legal rule on gross negligence into the legal rule on suspicion (ZSP FB&H/RS). Therefore, searching for implementable reform solutions, the legislator redefined the legal rules on the obligation to register and its constitutive effect, on the one hand, and then, to ensure the application of legal rules on the protection of trust, as the most potent reform solutions in this area, he introduced the legal rule of doubt, on another hand, as a manifestation of a significantly higher degree of responsibility of the later acquirer according to off-book legal facts. There is no doubt that the aforementioned shortcomings of the land registry law have been eliminated by the legislative framework established in this way. Hence, the prerequisites for a smooth process of reform are provided, which is one of the basic intentions of the legislator. The most significant value of the promoted way of approaching this problem is reflected in one of the conclusions of this paper - the return to the positions of the previous real law is solely in the function of improving the overall reform process and by no means an expression of its abandonment and the introduction of some new model. However, on the basis of diametrically different understandings, in the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the system of unique real estate records has been updated again. We will talk more about the reasons for its introduction, and about the unfathomably harmful consequences of its final implementation, in the continuation of this work.

### **SYSTEM OF UNIFORM RECORDS - historical overview and new trends in the process of its establishment**

In the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the system of unique records has been updated again, as a completely new and radically different concept of recording real estate and rights to real estate. We will talk about the failed attempt to establish it in the period of the former Yugoslavia, and about the harmful consequences of its establishment in new circumstances, not only for the issue of

legal security but also for some other, much more sensitive issues, in the continuation of this paper.

### **An attempt to establish a system of unified records in the period of the former Yugoslavia**

The failed attempt to establish a system of unified records was recorded in the process of implementing the Law on Cadastre and Survey of Real Estate from 1984 (hereinafter: ZKPN). Shortly after its adoption, the republic's legislative bodies realized that the problem, generated due to decades of neglect of the land register and its fundamental principles, cannot be solved by the implementation of such a law (Mutapcic et al., 2021). We emphasize that the implementation of the ZKPN was intended to eliminate the problem of land registers not functioning. We also emphasize that the circumstances, in which the solutions of the ZKPN were implemented, were not burdened with additional problems and difficulties, and because of this the current transformation process is characterized, among other things, as an extremely sensitive legal issue. In order to protect property (in this case as off-book), as an inviolable legal and civilizational value, the legislator backed down in front of the stated values, and gave up the initiated process of implementation of the Civil Code. A simple transformation of one into a completely new concept of recording real estate, and due to the highly pronounced discrepancy between the land registry and the ownership legal status of real estate, it is simply not possible, at least not in a legal and socially acceptable way. However, with the implementation of ZPK RS, the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska took an identical path, but this time, according to the author, with completely different intentions. By updating two diametrically different concepts of recording(s) multi-decade land registry and a system of unique real estate records/, the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina initiated discussions about one of the most complex, and above all, the most sensitive legal issues. We talked about the first one, the land registry, and the prospects for its reaffirmation in our previous presentations. Thus, in the continuation of this paper, we will talk about the second, the system of unified registration, and the harmful consequences of the implementation of the ZPK RS, i.e. the Draft ZIRN FB&H, in the event of its possible adoption.



## **The Law on Survey and Cadastre of the Republic of Srpska - a critical review**

The provisions of the ZPK RS provide prerequisites (we omit the legal ones for the reasons stated below) for the transformation of the land register into a system of unified records, real estate and real estate rights. Such provisions are the subject of our further exposition, primarily from the aspect of legal, but also general social unsustainability, not only of their content but also of the goals, which are realized through their implementation. We emphasize again that the implementation of the disputed provisions encroaches on the right to property as a constitutional right category, and as an inviolable legal and civilizational value, protected by the highest national and international legal acts. This thesis is based on the analysis of the provisions of ZPK RS, presented in the rest of this paper. In the process of reconciling the legal status of the land register and ownership of the real estate, the possibility of registering rights based on legally irrelevant and, from the point of view, ownership positions guaranteed by law, inadmissible evidence, such as the cadastral plan, hearing witnesses, the last state of the property, statements of the parties, etc. (ZPK RS). By implementing such procedures, real property owners could, either due to ignorance of the place and time of the real estate exhibition or due to their objective inability to participate in such procedures (due to past unfortunate events), permanently lose their off-book-based rights. Such a possibility arises from the more widely established legislative framework in the matter of acquiring, canceling, and limiting rights to real estate - through the eventual operation of the principle of trust in favour of conscientious third-party acquirers, the possibility established by law emphasizing the appeal becomes meaningless (ZPK RS). By making an incorrect entry, the presumption of original disposal/acquisition is realized, i.e., the presumption of protection of the later conscientious acquirer of the real estate. Due to the objective impossibility to on the same property two exclusive rights exist at the same time, at the moment the effects of the trust occur, the off-book holder loses his unregistered right. Precisely because of this, the harmonization procedures established by the Survey and Cadastre Act, including, of course, the problematic procedures for the protection of non-registered holders (appeal procedures) should be viewed in the light of the reform solutions presented above, contained in the provisions of the new land registry and real law. In such a way, in addition to the above-mentioned position on the pointlessness of the appeal

procedure, it is also indicated the position on the inexpediency of this method of coordination. The opinion expressed on the impossibility of transforming the land register into a model of unified records, at least not in a legal and socially acceptable way, on the one hand, and the established direction of legislative action through amended solutions of real law, as an expression of a more suitable and, for our circumstances, more functional legislative framework in the matter acquisition of rights to real estate, on the other hand, confirm this legal position. To confirm the above statements, it is important to emphasize that the provisions of the ZPK RS abolish the essentially important jurisdiction of the courts in the process of legal registration of real estate, and extremely complex tasks of the above nature are entrusted to the administrative bodies (ZPK RS). Also, by prescribing the obligation to register (ZPK RS), the question of the applicable law in the matter of acquiring rights to real estate is again brought up to date - by returning to the positions of land registry law, the solutions of real law are neglected.

## **Preliminary draft of the Law on Surveying and Real Estate Registration of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina - a critical review**

The policies contested above in terms of legislative action in the matter of acquiring rights to real estate, i.e. in the part where contrary to fundamental legal values and established legal tradition, it is desired to ensure the establishment of a completely different and, in our circumstances, and for the reasons we stated above, unsustainable of the real estate registration model and real estate rights are also current in the territory of the second entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In terms of their content, the provisions of the ZIRN FB&H are almost identical to the provisions of the ZPK RS. Therefore, respecting the legal positions already presented, in the continuation of this work we will present the most significant criticisms. The possibility of using cadastral records as a basis for the establishment of legal records, then, the possibility of collecting relevant data on real estate based on the factual state of affairs, and then the decision on the very complex procedure of collecting real data on real estate (ZIRN FB&H), provides the prerequisites (we also fail to mention the legal reasons that we have stated before) for the forced confiscation of real estate from their off-book holders. Likewise, the legal rule on the obligation to register, i.e. the legal rule on gross negligence (ZIRN FB&H), once



again brings the question of the applicable law into practice. Also, the unlawful position of the trust principle, established in advance, is ensured by the difficult possibility of implementing the note (ZIRN FB&H). Within the framework of the envisaged solutions, an evident step forward of the legislator is determined and expressed through amended solutions of real law. In such a way, the overall process of land registry law reform is compromised. And precisely such an epilogue favours the advocates of new tendencies in this field.

### **IMPROVING THE LAND REGISTRATION MODEL AS A FINAL SOLUTION PROBLEMS**

Taking into account the indicated historical moments (the failed attempt to implement ZPKN), and certainly the position of ownership guaranteed by the constitution, actualized in the restarted process of transforming the land registry into a system of unified real estate records, we conclude that the real law solutions, as a result of the redesigned legislative framework in the matter of establishing rights to real estate, as the conditional state in which our land registers are located, are the only possible direction of reform in this area. With all this, the possibility of new legal disputes arising in the circumstances of the consistent implementation of the ZPK RS, and possibly also the ZIRN FB&H, should not be ignored, in the event of its final adoption. Only in such circumstances, the competent institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the relevant institutions of the international community, interested in the process of finally solving this problem, would be faced with an almost unsolvable problem. In order to act within the given legal framework, the established directions of legislative and overall social action, to which the research results of this paper refer, are emphasized as the only possible solution. By improving the land registry model based on the solutions of German land registry law, while at the same time respecting our rich legal tradition in this area, it is possible to contribute to solving one of the most complex, and above all, the most sensitive issues in the field of the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is precisely in the solutions of real law that the expression of such aspirations is contained. In the framework established in this way, the thesis about the need to reaffirm the land registry model as the only possible direction of reform action is also confirmed. Anyway, all financial resources used, based on credit or donor arrangements, would be in vain. Not to mention

the most important resource –the human one. The importance of preserving the land registry model is also indicated by the circumstances under which it was introduced, back in 1884. With its introduction, the deed system was abolished as an integral part of the centuries-old rule of the Ottoman state in these areas. This form of transformation also represented the abolition of consensualism, as the dominant principle in the matter of establishing rights to real estate (Ottoman Civil Code), and the introduction of formalism (indispensable written form), and then registration (*modus aquirendi*), as a legal way of acquiring real rights to real estate (Land Ownership Law). Process the sudden transition from one to a completely different concept of public recording of real estate and real estate rights resulted in well-known problems. The contractor's low awareness of the importance of the implementation of contracted rights in the newly established real estate registers, which is a consequence of the impact of the previously abolished deed system, in which real estate rights were acquired at the time of their contracting, caused the appearance of a large number of off-book based rights. It is precisely this awareness of contractors i.e. identified as one of the causes of the unsettled state of real estate in the land register (Mutapcic, 2021). The later redefined legal rules on registration, and certainly unusual, from the aspect of legal rules characteristic of the land registry model, the way of proceeding in the process of applying the law, are just failed attempts to reconcile the aforementioned concepts of real estate registration. However, the re-actualized process of transformation, now already of the land register into a system of unified records, as a completely new and radically different concept of recording real estate and rights to real estate, characterized by the way in which the provisions of the ZPK RS are implemented, i.e. they plan to implement the provisions of the ZIRN FB&H, could result by the appearance of the same problems. The consequences of newly created/renewed problems, and due to the previously indicated sensitivity of this issue, could be even more harmful. Thus, the question of reaffirmation of the land registry model is imposed as a question of multiple social importance. The contractor's low awareness of the importance of the implementation of contracted rights in the newly established real estate registers, which is a consequence of the impact of the previously abolished deed system, in which real estate rights were acquired at the time of their contracting, caused the appearance of a large number of off-book based rights. It is precisely this awareness of

contractors i.e. identified as one of the causes of the unsettled state of real estate in the land register (Mutapcic et al., 2021). The later redefined legal rules on registration, and certainly unusual, from the aspect of legal rules characteristic of the land registry model, the way of proceeding in the process of applying the law, are just failed attempts to reconcile the aforementioned concepts of real estate registration. However, the re-actualized process of transformation, now already of the land register into a system of unified records, as a completely new and radically different concept of recording real estate and rights to real estate, characterized by the way in which the provisions of the ZPK RS are implemented, i.e. they plan to implement the provisions of the ZIRN FB&H, could result by the appearance of the same problems. The consequences of newly created/renewed problems, and due to the previously indicated sensitivity of this issue, could be even more harmful. Thus, the question of reaffirmation of the land registry model is imposed as a question of multiple social importance.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of the unsettled land registry state of real estate generated the appearance of various problems, from those in the domain of legal theory, where, not only regarding registration and its effect, but also by applying the legal rules of *lex specialis*, i.e. *lex posterior*, it tries to resolve the issue of inconsistency between land registry and real law, until the emergence of a re-actualized system of unified records, which again contains diametrically different policies of its scope: on the one hand, social acceptable policies for the establishment of stable and functional real estate registers, as a generator of the overall economic development of our country; on the other hand, legally unsustainable and socially unacceptable policies for the achievement of completely different goals, alien to democratic and legally regulated social communities. Precisely such policies unmask the real intentions of the legislator, and thus, at the same time, discredit the established direction of “reform” in this area. Its unsustainability is certainly confirmed by the failed attempts to implement ZPKN in the period of the former Yugoslavia. The highly pronounced discrepancy between the land registry and ownership legal status of real estate requires a different direction of reform action - by reaffirming the existing land registry model, it is possible to contribute to solving this problem, and real

law solutions are the most suitable way of such action. The research results confirm exactly that. It is to be expected that the Bosnian public, both scientific and professional, will recognize the importance of the promoted way of understanding this problem. The imperative to improve the land registry model is an issue of the greatest social and political importance. As the only possible direction of reform, its reaffirmation would contribute to solving the multi-decade problem in this area. On the other hand, new legal disputes would be avoided. At the same time, unwanted occurrences of a political nature would also be avoided. Also, the choice of real law, as the governing law in the matter of establishing rights to real estate, would contribute to speeding up the overall process of reform, and at the same time would contribute to unification of inconsistent legal understandings regarding registration and its effects. And finally, it is to be expected that the wider reading public, outside the circle of those mentioned above, will recognize and then, in the domain of their scope, contribute to the creation of higher quality interventionist policy in this area.

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## THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE SPREAD OF EXTREME TERRORISM IN KOSOVO THE LEGAL AND CRIMINAL VIEW OF THESE CRIMES

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Terrorism is not a new concept, but it gained prominence when many extreme occurrences occurred, prompting a more in-depth investigation of the subject. Following the Pan Am flight bombing, for example, terrorism horrified the United States government and the entire world's population. This research aims to investigate, using secondary data, how social media was used in Kosovo to spread propaganda for radical terrorism and to analyse the provisions of the Kosovo Criminal Code that were broken by this propaganda. The current study relies on desk research with secondary data analysis, namely the content analysis of reports, articles, and news, and interpretive analysis of the Criminal Code of Kosovo. According to the study, propaganda for the spread of extremism and radicalism was used in Kosovo by showing videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, typically with religious messages about the duty to God for helping brothers and sisters in Syria and, to a lesser extent, by showing videos of Kosovo terrorists directly committing terrorist acts in Syria. In addition, the analysis discovers that propaganda led to violations of paragraphs a, b, and c of Article 139 of the Kosovo Criminal Code.*

**Keywords:** Jihad, Kosovo, propaganda, social media, violent extremism

### INTRODUCTION

The topic of terrorism is not new, but it began to draw more attention when several extreme incidents appeared, and this led to a deeper examination of the subject. Although some occurrences have been more deadly, such as the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut (with 241 fatalities) or the December 1988 bombing of Pan-Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland (with 278 fatalities), none have had the same impact as the Murrah Building bombing (Cameron, 2000, 165). The events of the Persian Gulf War, which took place in 1991 under the

presidency of Iraq's Saddam Hussein (Gulf War ground offensive begins, 2010), and the Al-Qaeda-led 9/11 attacks, which resulted in 25,000 people being hurt and over 3,000 deaths, were another incident that terrified many (Hashim, 2014, 7). Unfortunately, these incidents did not signal the cessation of terrorist operations. Another global phenomenon that has emerged in recent years is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Although this group first gained notoriety in 2014, it was founded in 2000 (Zeri Amerikes, 2014). The Islamic State (IS), led by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, declared itself a self-declared caliphate following the major successes of the Islamist terrorist organization ISIS

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in the summer of 2014 (Hashim, 2014, 7). Several terrorist acts by ISIS have been perpetrated in Europe, including one in Vienna, Austria. Kujtim Fejzulaj, an ethnic Albanian who was born in North Macedonia, committed the attack, which left four people dead and only a few more injured. He was ultimately assassinated by the Austrian police. Later, ISIS took (Bennhold et al., 2020). According to the 2019 EUROPOL Report on the Situation and Trend of Terrorism (TE-SAT), there were 1,004 people detained in 19 EU member states on suspicion of crimes related to terrorism, with Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom reporting the highest numbers. In addition, 10 people were killed and 27 others were injured in EU terrorist attacks (European Police, 2020). In the meanwhile, there is a wealth of information about the condition of terrorism in Kosovo. The Kosovo case is cited in a report on terrorism that the U.S. Department of State released in 2020 (U.S. Department of State). Although the other organizers received fewer terms than the chief organizer (whose identity is not stated in the paper), these punishments are still significant in the battle against terrorism. In the meantime, the Special Prosecutor's Office in Kosovo indicted four returnees in November of the same year on charges of participating in terrorism. Fortunately, there were no known terrorist attacks that year. Using these and other instances, the paper highlights Kosovo as a country that is successfully combating terrorism while adhering to US directives (Avdimetaj & Coleman, 2020). To minimize the threat that might threaten the respective country at any time, various states have compiled data manuals and information on what terrorism is and the tactics that terrorists employ. These states also conduct ongoing investigations and work nonstop to reduce the threat as much as possible. But is this even conceivable today, given all the ways that people might join terrorist organizations? (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2012). Additionally, even terrorists are aware of the techniques used by the authorities to find them. Cyberspace is one place where terrorists feel secure. However, just how may terrorism and its deeds be connected via the Internet? Terrorism has been identified as a reality, but what steps do they take to interact with one another, grow their influence, and spread misinformation? This essay will concentrate on the use of social media by terrorists to attract new members, the activities of terrorists online, and the function of imams in Kosovo. Since 1980, the Internet has undergone a revolution (UNODC, 2012), however, there is a wealth of knowledge on the connection between the Internet and terrorism. and has been extensively explored. The strange

thing about the Internet is how quickly it can spread knowledge to millions of people (Telegrafi, 2016a). This presents terrorists with a perfect opportunity, particularly in terms of recruiting new members and earning money. The Internet provides the chance to utilize it anonymously, without restrictions, swiftly and efficiently across international borders, and with a nearly infinite audience.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study used desk research, which entails the examination of data from available sources such as government statistics, online publications, and the research of other researchers. The use of existing data to obtain answers to research questions that differ from those addressed in the original study is known as secondary analysis of qualitative data. A range of research approaches were used to construct this study. The major scientific procedures used in this study are analysis and synthesis, which will be very useful for analyzing the theoretical views of worldwide and local writers (Curri, 2022, p. 386). A qualitative research technique was used to handle this research paper, which included "conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspective on the idea of how social media has influenced the spread of terrorism" (Berg, 2009). According to Dzogovic (2021), unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods help us to understand certain phenomena exclusively in individual cases or smaller groups (Dzogovic, 2021, p. 105). The same author confirms that what distinguishes content analysis from other methods is that the researcher discovers what is not visible, looking for deeper meanings and implications. Therefore, this approach includes different contexts – power relations, psychoanalysis, economic, cultural, and other patterns (Dzogovic, 2021, p. 117). Collecting primary data through personal interviews, focus group discussions, and the manual distribution of printed surveys, frequently comes at a significant monetary cost and takes a long time. Due to COVID-19 constraints in Kosovo prisons, the current study was unable to employ interviews and focus groups as a source of primary data with radicalized individuals and instead relied on desk research. Desk research employing secondary data can provide significant illumination and answers to current problems under inquiry, just as primary data from typical data-gathering equipment might. Furthermore, the secondary data gathered from desk research is subjected to content analysis (Macnamara, 2018), and document interpretation analysis (Bowen, 2009). To fulfill the second

study's objectives, the current study employs content analysis for research publications, online reports, web articles, and other documentary evidence, as well as interpretive document analysis. Many experts examining the development of extreme terrorism and social media relied on desk research. The current study examines the content of numerous experts' publications on the development of radicalism through social media in Kosovo, as well as pieces published in notable news outlets in Kosovo such as Telegrafi, Gazeta Impakt, and Balkan Insight.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Following a review of the literature, the current study formulates the following research question: RQ1: How did radical terrorist propaganda take place in Kosovo, and which provisions of the Kosovo Criminal Code were violated? The following are the study's objectives:

1. To investigate, using secondary data, how extreme terrorist propaganda was spread in Kosovo via social media.
2. To examine the articles of the Kosovo Criminal Code that were infringed by such promotion.

## HYPOTHESIS

Application of quality methods in investigating and prosecuting crimes related to terrorism, by specialists in this field reduces the frequency of terrorism-related offenses, as defined by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo. The current study uses content analysis to objectively assess the messages included in various works and reports of secondary data using specified guidelines (Berg, 2009). The fundamental unit of text that may be classified into a specific category is the unit of analysis in content analysis. The unit of analysis should be selected to correspond to the nature of the research issue. The texts cited in articles, reports, and news that show how extreme terrorist propaganda was spread on social media should be the unit of study. In January of this year, the population of Kosovo was 1.93 million, with 56.9% of the population using social media, and Facebook reached 910,000 people. The majority of users (61%) are men. The Instagram audience is seven hundred fifty thousand people, with men accounting for 58.1% of the total (Kemp, 2021). Any misinformation that spreads through social media is extremely likely to reach a big audience in Kosovo. Radical imams and terrorist networks mostly use Facebook, Skype, and YouTube, the most popular social media platforms

among Kosovars when the article was published (Çela, 2018). According to, radicalization and misinformation were spread via Facebook, Skype, and YouTube (Çela, 2018). The unit of analysis is the propaganda spread via Facebook and YouTube. To understand the role of social media in spreading terrorism, we interviewed a Kosovo police expert, Mr. Sc. B. Krasniqi, who provided us with a clear picture of how terrorist groups use social media to spread their ideologies. According to Mr. Krasniqi, social media are the ones that are unedited and can express their entire opinion without fear of someone editing or reformulating the idea of a terrorist, while demonstrating it a specific example Mr. Krasniqi claims "The planned terrorist attack on the Pentagon, and more precisely the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, is a horrific example. The items were not picked at random. View aims to send a political message while also instilling terror in the public" (B. Krasniqi, personal communication, 2022). To strengthen our conviction that social media has been the main cause of encouraging young people to join terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra, as evidenced by an interview with a former ISIS fighter conducted by journalist Ylli Rakipi for the newspaper Info Arkiva, while The ex-ISIS fighter says the internet was the main reason he was inspired after footage of children and local Syrians pleading for help was shared, begging everyone to join ISIS forces to protect the land of Sham (Info Arkiva, 2020). We will look at six categories that coexist and impact each other to understand how social networks are utilized to attract young people, key events, the influence of imams in Kosovo, and the recruiting process in general (Gazeta Impakt, 2018). The first category is propaganda, which encompasses recruiting, radicalizing, and inciting terrorism, followed by finance, planning, and execution, including covert communications and open-source material, and lastly cyber-attack (UNODC, 2012). These categories are discussed first for Kosovo, and subsequently, statistics are presented globally. To that aim, the unit of analysis is propaganda's intention, which is the recruiting, financing, planning, and preparation of subjects for cyber-attacks. Propaganda, which is directly related to the recruitment of thousands of young people in the world, is also present in Kosovo. Lyra Çela, in 2018 wrote about channels that promoted Jihad, such as "Al-Muwahhidun Albanian", "Sword of the Most Merciful", "Balkan Shahids", and "Have patience my soul", among others. The "Call to Tawhid" site was used to release content about "holy war", and to denounce democracy



(Telegrafi, 2016 b). All of these channels have been deactivated for breaking YouTube Community Rules. In this sense, the authors of the current study believe that propaganda occurred via distinct YouTube Channels that disseminated videos mostly about the holy war and the destruction of democracy. According to the news outlet Insajderi 2019, instructions, audio, information, and videos were marketed online. All of the web resources explain in detail how individuals may join the common cause with terrorists, which is Jihad. Some documents were released on a YouTube channel, which mostly reported on posts by Kosovo extremist Lavdrim Muhaxheri. Lavdrim Muhaxheri's tweets featured recordings of him protesting the rejection to build a mosque and attempting to attract others by implying that the authorities were anti-religion. Following that, recordings of terrorist Lavdrim Muhaxheri joining ISIS and executing terrorist activities were released on Google and YouTube (Televizioni Klan Kosova, 2017). Based on the content analysis, the authors of this paper conclude that propaganda in Kosovo took place primarily through Google and YouTube channels, first with the message of calling on people to help with the construction of a mosque as a cause, and later, when ISIS emerged, through direct videos showing the commission of terrorist acts by Kosovo recruits in ISIS. In her book *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*, the author (Nacos, 2016), takes an in-depth look at how terrorists use mass media to get attention, disseminate dread and worry among the victims of this type of violence, and threaten more assaults. Because of the conventional news media's hunger for dramatic, exciting, and tragic tales, terrorist incidents and threats have always received excessive publicity. Today, however, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube enable terrorists to interact directly with large audiences all over the world, distributing misinformation, radicalizing and recruiting followers, and supplying know-how to "lone wolves." Governments in democracies, on the other hand, use mass media to rally popular support for anti-terrorism measures (Nacos, 2016). Dr. Arben Qirezi in the analysis done for UNDP-Kosovo describes the radicalization of young people influenced by radical local imams and NGOs that use social media to reach out to disillusioned youth (Qirezi, 2017, 11) extremist beliefs have been pushed in Kosovo using social media, particularly during the Syrian crisis. According to the same research, according to a Free Radio Liberty broadcast, the radicalization of youngsters originated from imams and NGOs

utilizing social media to reach impoverished and vulnerable young people. Based on the content analysis of this secondary documentary evidence, it is possible to establish that social media pushed extremist beliefs to vulnerable and underprivileged youngsters (Telegrafi, 2017a). The current white power movement has evolved into a worldwide, transnational phenomenon. Daniel Byman's comprehensive, authoritative study chronicles important periods in the formation of the white power movement in the United States and throughout the world, then delves into its various elements today. Byman debunks various illusions regarding white power terrorism and shows hazardous gaps in the present policy, drawing on a wide range of sources. White nationalist terrorism has been consigned as a secondary worry in the United States and Europe for over two decades, even though it was metastasizing. This negligence has resulted in horrifying acts of violence ranging from New Zealand to Norway to South Carolina, eroding trust in Western democratic institutions. Because white supremacists' frustrations reflect mainstream discussions and their violence frequently exacerbates division, their political influence can be disproportionately large even if the corpse count is modest. As Byman emphasizes, they are not a staid organization attempting to turn back the clock, but rather a dynamic movement drawing on ideas from throughout the world and utilizing cutting-edge technology, particularly social media. White power terrorists, on the other hand, have several flaws. They are split, have inadequate leadership, and frequently attract the inept and criminal, as well as the dangerous and delusory. The threat can be decreased if governments respond decisively and handle white-power terrorism with the same intensity that they regard Islamic attacks. This will necessitate tough law enforcement, international intelligence collaboration, technology company crackdowns, and other drastic measures. Spreading Hate will be required reading for anybody concerned about this increasingly networked movement, which threatens to grow more violent in the coming years. It considers legislative options as well as summarizes a great corpus of scientific material (Byman, 2022). Based on what has been stated above and a review of the literature on the subject, we have confirmed our hypotheses that Kosovo lacks a quality expert who would investigate every activity of terrorist groups in mass media or social media in spreading their ideologies, such as recruiting young people, as well as the effective implementation of the investigation due to a lack

of a sufficient staff of experts who will control the activities of terrorist groups (Telegrafi, 2017 b). To serve as a motivational element for recruitment, social media was used to graphically convey the conflicts in Syria to individuals living outside the war zone, particularly in Kosovo. Videos of suffering Sunni brothers in Syria were presented in this case to serve as a motivational and recruitment message. In this regard, based on the content analysis of the documentary evidence, it is possible to conclude that the recruiting message was the suffering of Sunni brothers in Syria, rather than the acts of violence depicted in films. Videos were uploaded on YouTube to highlight the threats and calls to action, as well as to express gratitude to Allah for the chance to protect the honor of Muslim females and Muslim children in Syria. According to the content analysis, the YouTube channel was utilized as a marketing medium to recruit and disseminate radicalism with the religious theme of preserving the honor of Muslim females and children in Syria. The theme of safeguarding the honor of Muslim women and children as a vulnerable group was exploited in this respect. In conclusion, based on the achievement of the first study's aim, the authors of the current study believe that the propagation of radical terrorism in Kosovo is mostly carried out through videos on Facebook and YouTube. The major theme utilized for recruiting was the obligation to Allah to preserve the honor of Muslim brothers and sisters in Syria. To a lesser extent, the message of displaying terrorist atrocities as propaganda movies was employed on various occasions. The suffering of brothers and sisters in Syria, as well as the need to serve God's cause and wage the Holy War, were primarily exploited as inspiring propaganda messages. Finally, propaganda was mostly used for direct recruiting and less for terrorist finance (International Monetary Fund. Monetary and Capital Markets Department, 2019). To achieve the second study aim, the current study used interpretive document analysis of the Kosovo Criminal Code to investigate the legal provisions of the Kosovo Criminal Code that were violated by propaganda in social media used to disseminate radicalism (IMF, 2019). According to the interpretation of the Kosovo Criminal Code, Article 139 of the Kosovo Criminal Code was primarily breached in the dissemination of radicalism via social media advertising. Article 139 makes recruitment for terrorism a criminal violation punishable by 5 to 15 years in prison. On the spectrum of all forms of terrorist actions, recruitment to conduct terrorist activities is a specific type of activity. The word

recruiting shall mean the following activities in the context of the above-mentioned incrimination:

- a) calling or encouraging another person to join a terrorist group;
- b) when someone is called to participate in the commission of a terrorist act;
- c) when someone is called to participate in the activities of a terrorist group;
- d) when someone is called to provide funds or material resources for the commission of terrorist acts or other terrorist activities (Saliu, 2014, 234).

The perpetrator of this conduct might be anybody who encourages others to participate in terrorist actions, such as the collecting of finances or other things. This conduct is only performed with a direct purpose (Morina & Arifi, 2019). In response to the second part of the study question, it may be inferred that Article 139, namely paragraphs a, b, and c, was violated. In response to the research question, the current study finds that propaganda for the propagation of radicalism mostly occurred through videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, primarily with the theme of protecting the honor of Muslim brothers and sisters in Syria. Furthermore, by utilizing such films, the recruiters violated Article 139 paragraphs a, b, and c of the Kosovo Criminal Code by committing the criminal offense of recruiting individuals to join the terrorist organization or calling others to do the terrorist act. Following that, the discussion section analyses the findings, compares them to prior studies' findings, explores the significance of the findings for research and practice, and considers the limitations of each study result independently. The current study discovers that propaganda for the spread of extremism and radicalism took place in Kosovo through videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, most of which contained religious messages about the duty to God to help brothers and sisters in Syria, and, to a lesser extent, showed videos of Kosovo terrorists directly committing terrorist acts in Syria. According to Daly & Gerwehr (2006), recruiting occurs via indoctrination with a particularly crafted message, which in the case of Kosovo was the message of assisting Brothers and Sisters in Syria (Daly & Gerwehr, 2006), on the other hand, claims that propaganda is mostly spread through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which in the case of Kosovo was primarily Facebook and YouTube. For that reason, in the case of Kosovo, Twitter was not the preferred vehicle for spreading radicalism via social media. To this end, the recruitment goes beyond receiving terrorist messages, through indoctrination of the recruited person by message, whereby the recruited person becomes a member

of the organization by receiving a preliminary assessment from the recruiter that he is mature and ready to join the terrorist group (Daly & Gerwehr, 2006). Finally, the message employed for ISIS recruiting and propaganda was the responsibility of Jihad, which in the instance of Kosovo was the duty to Allah to wage Jihad to support the brothers and sisters in Syria, videos were the most often used propaganda tactics, which is also true in Kosovo. In terms of the criminal crimes perpetrated by propaganda actions, the current study reveals that urging individuals to perform acts or join terrorist groups was the most common violation in Kosovo (Criminal Law of the Republic of Kosovo, 2019). The current study suggests that policymakers devise strategies for collaborating with social media corporations to limit how communications are transmitted and messages propagate to individuals for indoctrination. In the case of Kosovo, a dedicated human intelligence unit inside the Kosovo Police can be developed to follow social media, and YouTube channels, and build algorithms and codes in Albanian that track certain keywords to prevent the spread of radicalism and extremism via social media.

## CONCLUSIONS

The section that follows provides an overview of the study's findings. It highlights the limitations of the study. This part also includes the study's suggestions and future directions, which may be utilized to strengthen the battle against radicalism and extremism in Kosovo. The study's goal was to assess, using secondary data, how propaganda for radical terrorism took place in Kosovo through the use of social media, as well as to analyze the provisions of Kosovo's Criminal Code that were infringed by such propaganda. The study relied on desk research and secondary data analysis, such as papers, reports, and news items regarding the development of radicalism and social media in Kosovo. The secondary data is also used in the study to analyze the articles of the Kosovo Criminal Code. The Kosovo Criminal Code was cited as documentary evidence in this case. To address the study's major research question, the current study employs content analysis and interpretive document analysis to fulfill two study objectives. Finally, the study discovers that propaganda for the spread of extremism and radicalism took place in Kosovo through videos on Facebook and YouTube channels, in most cases with religious messages of the duty to God to help brothers and sisters in Syria, and to a lesser extent showing

videos of direct commission of terrorist acts by Kosovo terrorists in Syria. Furthermore, the survey discovers that urging individuals to perform actions or join terrorist organizations were the most common violations committed in Kosovo, especially in paragraphs a, b, and c of Article 139 of the Kosovo Criminal Code. Paragraph d of Article 139, which requires someone to contribute cash or material resources for the conduct of terrorist crimes or other terrorist operations, was violated less frequently than paragraphs a, b, and c. Government institutions must eradicate the conditions that lead to anybody being involved in terrorist actions. Issuance of current laws that allow for new scenarios, i.e., new techniques employed by terrorists to achieve their aims, as well as their application in practice, non-application of practices of copying laws of other states and attempts to apply them in another state would result in failure. Laws such as the Criminal Code, the Law on Money Laundering and Combating Terrorist Financing, and the Law on Citizens' Obligation to Join Foreign Wars should be harmonized with other laws such as the Law on Pesticide or Gas Control, the Law on Education, the Law on Customs, Police, and Security Services, the Law on International Legal Cooperation, and many others. As a result, the rules should be mutually supporting rather than conflicting, as this would be abused by terrorist groups. Professional training of law enforcement personnel in the fight against terrorism, i.e. the necessity for specialized, trained, and well-equipped institutions, cannot be expected to result in actual achievement in this regard. Cooperation between the Police, Army, Secret Services, Prosecution, Courts, Customs, other state agencies, various Ministries, and so on should be strong in order to appropriately distinguish their duties, tasks, and responsibilities. Cooperation at the local and regional levels, given that terrorist groups may carry out illegal activities in one state and hide in another, then cooperation with international security institutions and organizations such as NATO, INTERPOL, and others, but also with organizations such as OSCE, EU, EC, UN, UNHCR, and others. Designing a clear, appropriate plan can lead to success in this task, which is expected to be the most significant security challenge for any country in the future decades. The current study's shortcoming is that it may have employed the qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews with returning terrorists in Kosovo to investigate the types of propaganda and messages that were important in their recruiting.

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## NEGATIVE TREND IN THE POSITIONING OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Over the past decade, many studies have been conducted on the ethical aspects of gender equality in international business negotiations. Research shows that, despite women's success in solving global negotiation challenges, their participation is still limited. And while this influence may not be direct, it should be noted that women are generally considered less good negotiators than their male counterparts. In this sense, through analyzing theoretical discourse, this article examines the contemporary practice of business negotiation. The goal is to point out the (un)ethical continuity of the gender division of labor, whereby gender should not prejudice the individual, but rather his negotiation abilities. As the existing scientific literature requires further multidisciplinary research, we believe this article will contribute to a better understanding of the importance of ethical harmony of gender equality as the best strategy and practice for negotiating parties in international business negotiations.*

**Keywords:** *business, gender expression, gender inequalities, international negotiation, power and gender, unethical preference*

### INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

The position of women in society, politics, and the economy, even in today's time of change, democracy, and technological and innovative achievements, is not equal to that of men. Different climates, and geographical, political, and cultural conditions significantly deepen this gap, so even in the most democratic and advanced politics cannot be said that women are equal to men when it comes to the representation of women in socio-political life and its accompanying processes. This fact is consistent and the same in low and developing countries as in high-income countries. However, the nature and extent of gender

inequality vary greatly depending on the economic structure of the country, the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of society in general, and the capabilities of the individual. The dynamics within politics and the economy and the position of women in all of this are very specific. In his analysis, Bakker (2015) states that it is necessary to understand the dynamics within politics and the economy, which will greatly clarify and determine the position and role of women in social and economic processes. Bakker (2015) believes “that the liberalization of social services may have negative implications for the distribution of unpaid work, with women in poor and marginalized households likely

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to bear the brunt". This will put the position of women in society in an ungrateful position. Bilopavlovic (2021, p. 40) points out that today women are more active in all areas of political situations, economic life, and diplomacy. However, the situation is not as it should be, especially in countries in transition and underdeveloped countries. "They [women, op. a.] are negotiators, directors, leaders, business advisors, entrepreneurs, presidents, and prime ministers. Although their representation in the business world is incomparable considering the past, it is still more difficult for them to progress, they do not have equal access to information and they are very little represented in management positions". Thus, the active participation of women in political, diplomatic, and economic life is noticeable. Unfortunately, all this does not imply an equal relationship, position, and opportunities that women have when it comes to the processes of business negotiation and/or diplomacy. Although today women are equally capable and educated, in many countries they achieve their equality with the help of systematic quotas imposed by the state. The causes of such irregularities come from society, the stereotypical educational system, but also the insufficient engagement of women themselves, women's associations, and even trade unions to change the legal regulations (Poslovni. hr, 2012). However, such a relationship violates equality and deprives society of valuable talents. Therefore, the fight against gender stereotypes is a priority because they are rooted in reality and thus affect individual trajectories in different segments of our society, including and positioning women in the world business discourse. This article aims to shed light on gender expression by questioning the position of women in today's social, political, and economic events. A particular goal is to contribute to a better understanding of the role of gender in International Business Negotiations. By analyzing theoretical discussions and relevant reports of international institutions, we try to point out unethical preferences and their characteristics. Our research question is: What is the current trend in the positioning of women in International business negotiations and what factors influence their continued underrepresentation?

### **THE PROBLEMATIZATION OF THE ROLE OF GENDER IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION PROCESSES**

The problematization of gender inequality in the framework of political and social life, business, and diplomatic negotiations can be traced through

two spheres. The first represents the sphere of the woman's position in society and the social roles imposed on women, that is, through the forms of the gender gap. The second sphere is related to the position of women when it comes to the opportunities a woman has to get an education - from finding employment to engagement in positions dealing with political and economic processes and affairs, diplomacy, and negotiation. All of this will greatly affect the issue of gender equality in negotiation processes, precisely because women do not have equal access to elements necessary for related activities. At the same time, the position of women and their determination in society also affects communication, as the central basis of negotiation. Kovacevic (2010, p. 27) states that negotiation is a two-way communication that is... (...) aimed at reaching an agreement between parties that share interests or are in conflict with each other (...) In international relations, negotiation has always had a central place, both in the functioning of nation-states and the relations between them and in international and global systems of collective security that were gradually emerging. In essence, negotiation is at the heart of diplomacy and business processes (international and otherwise). Diplomatic activity and business execution are carried out through negotiation. For Bilopavlovic (2021 p. 22), International business negotiation is a complex process that requires extra effort as it differs significantly from a day-to-day business negotiation. "International negotiators face several challenges when dealing with another culture, as cultural differences are the most sensitive obstacle. Despite the threat to our cultural identity, there is no doubt that the global tide relentlessly insinuates itself into our lives, altering them profoundly and ever wider. More active participation of women in diplomacy and business negotiations has been developing since the 1990s, within the framework of academic education and the establishment of diplomatic schools. The basic idea was to fill the void created by the lack of women in political and economic structures and functions in such a way as to involve as many women as possible in diplomatic and business processes. Lenine and Sanca (2022) state that several studies have been published in the field of the history of diplomacy that problematize the representation of women in business negotiation processes. Their results represent a very interesting cross-section of conditions whose elements still cannot fit into the global social system and order. Enloe (2014, p. 63) states that women as "informal envoys, business representatives, diplomats, and ambassadors are involved in international

affairs of diplomacy, but this is not an adequate measure that would indicate an equal position". The position of women in business negotiation (and any other form of negotiation) is also conditioned by her position in society and the economy in general and depends on the opportunities for a woman to participate in the negotiation process, that is, if she is in a position that allows it. To realize this, women must be provided with adequate education and the support of society and the political system. The roots of these problems lie in the two spheres mentioned above. Trade, finance, and economy, as well as their elements, simultaneously contain gender inequality. Trade policies and agreements affect women's and men's opportunities to access safe and decent employment and benefit from international trade differently. Braunstein (2017) highlights the bidirectional causality between gender equality and economic growth: growth affects gender equality in many ways, but gender also affects macroeconomic outcomes, such as growth, trade, imbalances, and inflation. "The gender structure of markets has two main implications for how gender and trade interact in a country. First, gender inequalities affect trade strategies for competitiveness and second, inequalities will affect whether trade reforms translate into desired economic outcomes".

Shonk (2022) states that "deeply entrenched social gender roles lie at the root of the gender gap", which will ultimately affect the outcome of negotiations. Firstly, will a woman, given her predetermined gender role, have the opportunity to be in positions dealing with negotiations, secondly, if yes - what is the attitude of society if a woman is in the negotiation process? "In many cultures, girls are expected from a young age to be accommodating and to protect the well-being of others" (Shonk, 2022). If these attributes refer exclusively to women, it is concluded that these attributes are not desirable for negotiation processes, because they are in contrast (or partly in conflict) with the more assertive behavior that is characteristic of diplomatic and negotiation strategies. In this sense, "assertiveness (Lat. *asserere*: to appropriate; to assert), a characteristic of behavior or a personality trait that manifests itself in the active defense of one's rights or attitudes (...) 'self-confidence', 'self-confidence', 'self-awareness', 'penetration' "(Hrvatska enciklopedija, n.d.). All these attributes according to social roles, and due to the understanding that women are more accommodating, are not related to women and are not desirable in negotiation

processes. Examples and history show that social roles are rooted in gender inequalities. Most men negotiate for themselves as well as others, while women negotiate more assertively for other individuals than for themselves. This is because it is tough for them to negotiate in their interest while negotiating for others is in line with the traditional female gender role, in which women feel more comfortable doing more for others than for themselves. Thus, women in negotiations effectively reduce the gender gap in outcomes, ultimately leading to women achieving lower economic results in negotiation processes than men. For Bilopavlovic (2021, p. 38) gender identity brings a series of distinctions between the fundamental differences of individuals as an interlocutor. By this, the concepts of male and female negotiating styles have developed. The male negotiation style implies dominant and assertive negotiators who advocate exclusively for their interests and apply distributive negotiation. On the other hand, the female gender in the role of negotiator is intensely collaborative. Avelini Holjevac and Galicic (2005) indicate that women make much better use of the opportunities and chances they get for schooling "or for doing business tasks, they have a better ear for understanding other people's problems, they do not tend to create a hostile business atmosphere, and they more easily respect social, racial, cultural and all other peculiarities of individuals". For Babcock and Laschever (2004), men negotiate their salary twice as much as women and nine times more often than women, regardless of age, level of education, and work experience. They point out, "Women do not initiate negotiations on their initiative, and they pay a high price for this throughout their working life".

"Men in negotiations express their independence and status on the hierarchical scale, while women in negotiations seek support and confirmation of their values" (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Juricev (2014), on the other hand, states that women in negotiations respect the interests and "requirements of the opposite negotiating party, and an integrative approach to negotiation is more suitable for them. Namely, female negotiators are extremely communicative and warm people who positively affect the outcome of negotiations". Therefore, women are significantly more flexible and respect other people's opinions and attitudes more often than men, which puts them in a disadvantageous position when it comes to negotiation processes. In this context, Nidogon Visnjic, Begicevic Redjep and Vidacek-Hains (2018) state that women are less inclined to brag

than men. In doing so, they sometimes diminish their authority and success, fearing they might hurt their colleagues by bragging. Men have no problem glorifying their successes, and women's reluctance is often interpreted as a lack of self-confidence and competence for a certain task. (...) For men, oral communication emphasizes status, while women use it to establish a relationship. However, different groups of women face different economic opportunities and often constraints. Fontana (2016, p. 15) observes that "women are often assigned different roles and responsibilities both in the market economy, politics and society in general, as well as at home (most often very similar). This fact is most pronounced in countries with low (but also in those with high) incomes, "although the nature and extent of gender inequalities are likely to vary, depending on the economic structure of the country, institutions and socio-economic circumstances of the individuals concerned" (Fontana, 2016, p. 15).

This will depend not only on the sectors in which women and men work but also on their skills, family circumstances, consumer needs and the means they have, and the public resources and services they can access. The formulation of equitable policies must consider these differences (Fontana, 2016, p. 16). In the analysis of the World Economic Forum (2022), it is indicated that gender differences in the very processes of work and negotiation are influenced by numerous factors. In the first form, these are long-term structural social barriers rooted in society in the form of socioeconomic and technological transformation. At the same time, the uneven distribution in terms of gender representation is also affected by economic changes. "More and more women are moving into paid work and, increasingly, leadership positions, but globally societal expectations, employer policies, environmental law and the availability of care continue to play an important role in the choice of educational paths and career paths" (World Economic Forum, 2022). Nevertheless, attitudes towards gender roles that promote gender divisions in a society still result in values in which female characteristics are valued less systematically than male characteristics. Eagly (1987, p. 21) observes that "gender role beliefs for female and male gender roles are described as shared, and when it comes to women, they almost always attract attributes such as - caring, warm, cooperative, relationship-oriented."

According to this author, the male gender role is agentic, containing assertiveness, competitiveness, strength, dominance, and profit-oriented attributes. In this context, Eagly and Wood (2012, p. 460)

think that gender role beliefs influence people's behavior through at least two mechanisms. First, gender role beliefs create specific role expectations toward which people behave because role-conforming behavior is socially rewarded and role-incongruent behavior is punished. For Rudman and Phelan (2008) this is marked as a social reaction, "where gender roles do not only describe and show what people (usually) do but at the same time impose what people should do". Mechanisms of social control thus influence gender roles in which people adjust their position according to social forms and processes. In other words, gender roles and social norms determine the division of labor, whereby men and women are assigned to different types of work, often depending on the country's level of development and the local climate's traditions and customs. This is especially visible in less developed or developing countries, where women will take on more unpaid responsibilities and tasks, such as housework, childcare, and caring for elderly and sick family members. Nohe et al. (2022) observe that: "People internalize their gender roles and beliefs so that they become part of their subjective identities. Gender identities, in turn, guide behavior because people tend to behave by their identity." This gender division is also reflected in economic roles. Von Hagen (2014, p. 22) notes that as a result, women and men engage differently in economic activities and benefit from them unequally. However, in their multiple economic roles, women face several specific challenges. Also, Higgins (2012) observes that women are more likely to find themselves "generally in precarious forms of work, that women suffer from time and resource constraints, may lack (access) to skills, information, and networks, are exposed to security and gender-based threats and are more likely to be affected by tax reforms". Geopolitical conflicts and diverse social and climate changes also affect the uneven distribution of women in work and negotiation processes. The worsening crisis and the cost of living are likely to hit women more than men, as women continue to earn at lower levels (World Economic Forum, 2022). In the analysis of the World Economic Forum (2022), different levels of gender differences are problematized, which are reflected in the area of political and economic relations, but also the entire society, and the area of women's participation in negotiation processes. Gender differences in the recovery of the labor market: among workers who lost their jobs under any conditions (pandemic, etc.), during the global drop in the unemployment rate, women

are represented in the highest percentage. Gender differences in unpaid work: based on the analysis of data for 2019 from the 33 countries included in the analysis by the World Economic Forum, which represents 54% of the global population of working age, the share of men in the time spent in forms of unpaid work was only 19 %, while for women it is quite higher and amounted to 55%. Rising costs and childcare impose an asymmetric position on women when it comes to paid work. Gender differences in management positions: According to the World Economic Forum analysis, the share of women engaged in management positions records a constant growth from 33.3% in 2016 to 36.9% in 2022. However, while the share of women in management has increased, women are not employed in all industries in equal proportions. Research shows that, on average, a woman is in a managerial position in those industries where women were already represented to a greater extent (for example, education). Gender differences in political representation: World Economic Forum analysis shows women's progress in leadership in public office. According to the analysis, globally, Germany had women in public office for the longest time, an average of 16.1 years, followed by Iceland for 16 years, the Dominican Republic for 14.9 years, and Ireland for nearly 14 years. The World Economic Forum analysis shows that the global average share of women in ministerial positions nearly doubled between 2006 and 2022, from 9.9% to 16.1%. Furthermore, the average participation of women in parliaments increased from 14.9% to 22.9%. Although increasing, these data indicate that there is still a persistent gap. Gender differences in the accumulation of wealth: According to the analysis of the World Economic Forum in the context of 39 countries, women are at a disadvantage in wealth, that is the accumulation of profits during their work and life. The most prominent contributing factors are gender-based wealth inequality through receiving lower wages, unequal career paths, gender differences in financial literacy, and life events that increase women's wealth and educational conditions. Gender differences in lifelong learning: research by the World Economic Forum shows that women are still overrepresented in education and health, and underrepresented in STEM fields. Enrollment behavior shows that men and women prefer skills that continue (and repeat) traditional patterns, deepening gender gaps. Gender differences in stress levels (at work and in general): based on data obtained by the World Economic Forum, the report reveals

that between 2021 and 2022, reported stress was 4% higher for women than for men. This contributes to the growing global health burden of mental and emotional disorders, disproportionately affecting women's health and well-being (World Economic Forum, 2022). All these differences, which are traditional gender differences that maintain the equal position of women in society and politics in general and of a social and economic nature, determine the issue of gender equality in International business negotiations.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN NEGOTIATIONS

Rubin and Brown were among the first researchers to study the very influence of gender on negotiations and business processes. Their monograph and research (1975) present results showing that women negotiate more cooperatively than men, despite accompanying gender stereotypes. However, the findings of Kolb and Williams's (2000) research that studied individual differences in behavior between the sexes and the associated attributes indicate that the behavior of each actor participating in the process can be predicted reliably during negotiations. Thus, Hederos Eriksson and Sandberg (2012, p. 406) find that women are less likely to enter into negotiations, especially with male colleagues. This accepted idea stems from the fact that aggressiveness is a highly valued business behavior that favors the male gender. Kolb (2009) also problematizes the economic outcomes of negotiation processes and the sex of the negotiator and concludes that the results of negotiation processes of male negotiators are generally superior to those of women, which is related to the hypothesis that women more often set goals of lesser value. It is precisely in these conditions that the difference in negotiations is most pronounced when it comes to women and men. According to gender roles and pre-defined (traditional) patterns, women as such set lower goals where their attributes come to the fore, such as those who are accommodating and oriented towards others. On the other hand, men, as stated by Mazei, Zerres and Hüffmeier (2021), "are not more ready to exchange information and generally make ambitious first offers", which puts them in a more favorable position in negotiation processes compared to women. Fattori (2022) states that men tend to show dominance and leadership in negotiation processes, which favors the economic outcome and which, under certain conditions, precedes



a positive outcome. In this sense, men behave more rationally, “they are more ready to protect their interests and turn negotiations towards their own goals and fulfilling their needs”. Male leadership is also guaranteed by traditional gender roles where women are disadvantaged in all parameters in terms of dominance and expression of leadership. Women’s negotiation style is more compassionate, intuitive, and collaborative. According to Paddock and Kray (2011), women are generally more sensitive and accommodating in negotiations. It should certainly be taken into account that these are some general reflections and that at the same time, there are deviations and examples where women showed more assertive behavior, and men were more accommodating in negotiations. Fattori (2022) notes that all these attributes actually “exclude” women from the negotiation process, and its positive outcome, because it is assumed that, due to their characteristics, the negotiation will go in favor of the other party. Kolb and Williams (2000) state that an effective negotiator is characterized by a male who is independent, confident, active, objective, and insensitive to pressure. Consequently, men are often considered better negotiators than women. This also determines that ‘being a man’ is enough to be recognized as an effective negotiator. Stereotypes are then directed at women, who are put under additional pressure to demonstrate that they deserve their place at the negotiating table (Fattori, 2022). Fattori (2022) states that some feminist theories and positions reject the idea of diversity based on gender, i.e. gender roles, but refer to ideologies and political systems that are directly related to gender inequality in the context of negotiations. Paddock and Kray (2011) indicate that gender stereotypes are effectively activated when individuals negotiate, for example through the phenomenon of expectations, which can influence the process and outcome of negotiations. Individuals then, afraid of being judged according to gender stereotypes, unconsciously lead to stereotypical behavior. At the same time, for women to be more accepted in negotiation processes and in general in international affairs and relations, especially by male colleagues, women ‘adopt’ male characters, they become authoritative and display more assertive behavior. Negotiators do not act individually. Thus, Snyder and Swann (1978) observe that expectations shape both behaviors: both the bearer of expectations and his or her interaction partner. Therefore, every negotiation assumes that the negotiators and the negotiation colleagues enter the negotiation process with

certain expectations. In an analysis of the influence of gender on negotiation processes, Paddock and Kray (2011) cite the example of a male negotiator who expects a female negotiator to fall under the gender role of a woman, not to be assertive, to be oriented towards the other. At that moment, a man and the entire environment expect weakness by the stereotype of women, their emotions, and their characteristics. “Noticing this condescending way of negotiating and communicating, it is possible that it will lead to the woman concentrating harder on the negotiation, which results in a decrease in her ability to understand the issues within the negotiation, and how to solve them.” According to the same authors, expectations in negotiations are related to gender and persistent to the extent that they actively and continuously influence the negotiations and their outcomes.

Fattori (2022) believes that the role of expectations in negotiations is very specific, especially when the negotiating partner deviates from the originally expected role. Also, Fattori observes the possibility of a woman making an assertive first offer in the negotiation process. However, such an offer is not in line with the expectations of her side in the negotiation process. In this context, Rudman (1998) states that negative peer responses to counterstereotypical behavior “can take the form of social and economic phenomena called the backlash”. This feedback effect is evident in organizations more broadly. Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins (2004) show that women who are more successful in stereotypically masculine tasks are personally derogated from more than men. According to the same authors, this is reflected in the distribution of business resources. Research by Heilman and Wallen (2010) shows that men who violate gender norms are perceived as less effective and less respected than women. Brunazzo and Settembri (2012) also point out that negotiations should not always be confrontational, “but cooperative approaches should be preferred mainly when there are ethnic, cultural or economic differences between negotiators”. At the same time, Fattori (2022) indicates that the new tendency to emphasize the positivity of some of those stereotypes that traditionally belong to women, above all empathy, has led to a new interpretation of effective negotiators and helps women at the negotiating table. However, when problematizing the role of gender in negotiation processes and ethical dilemmas, it is necessary to analyze other contexts - the actors themselves, and the ways of communication. Also, other dimensions should be included in the analysis,



precisely because the negotiator's identity is not exclusively bound and regulated only by gender, but also by religion, ethnicity, age and experience itself, status in society, sexual orientation, etc.

## STRATEGIES PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

It is necessary to direct action in two directions to approach the processes of improving women's position in diplomacy and actualize the opportunities for women to find themselves in positions that directly deal with negotiations. The first involves building strategies for improvement, especially in environments where access to data is limited, to simultaneously improve their position in cultures/climates where this was not the case. The second direction involves focusing on gender hierarchies that hinder the work of female diplomats, their career advancement, and participation in international security and economic negotiations while working to ensure that women engage not only in activities related to their 'female roles'. It is a broad concept that includes changing the collective consciousness of individuals and society. Aggestam and Towns (2018) emphasize three urgent questions that must be answered to arrive at precise mechanisms and models of how and in what way to influence gender equality in decision-making and negotiation processes. The first of them is the question of the position of women in contemporary diplomacy and negotiation affairs, their representation, but also their choice in negotiations. Another question is to what extent the so-called toxic masculinity participates in the structure of institutions, institutions, and organizations, obstructing the presence of women, so that women cannot even be in positions that participate in negotiation processes. As a third issue, they state the connection between diplomatic activities and the ideals of *men* and *women*. In this sense, the first question maintains concern for the very number of women in contemporary diplomacy and negotiation processes, without losing sight of its qualitative dimension. Although female diplomats are increasing in some countries and international negotiations, gender equality is still limited to a few countries or regions (for example, Sweden). Chebab (2022) provides the following analysis results:

Of the 4,293 ambassadors currently appointed in the sample (certain positions were vacant during the survey), only 927 are women. This puts the overall proportion of female ambassadors at 21.6% for 2022, a slight improvement on the

20.7% we recorded in 2021 and the 16% we recorded in 2018 for G20 countries. The data shows that Canada and Sweden lead the way in appointing women ambassadors and permanent representatives during 2022 with 50.0% of ambassadorial positions in both countries held by women, i.e. 52 female ambassadors out of 104 in the case of Canada and 53 out of 106 places in the case of Sweden. In Norway, the share of female ambassadors is close to 46.1%, with 35 female ambassadors appointed out of 76 related posts. The second question implies the discovery of gender structures within the framework of institutions or organizations dealing with diplomacy. Duriesmith (2018) observes how toxic masculinity "gives certain attributes, values, and roles to men and women: the former are given rationality, objectivity, decisiveness; others are associated with kindness, empathy, caring, and the need for security". However, this creates an inequality of power that is further reproduced and incorporated into the sphere of diplomacy and negotiation. Diplomacy and business negotiations are certainly not an exception, and the question of women diplomats and women in negotiation business processes and their adaptation to positions and norms is being brought up to date. As a result, in ministries of foreign affairs and international organizations, in institutions and organizations of an economic character, the division of labor is carried out according to gender in a considerable percentage. Chebab (2022) further indicates that the position of women as ambassadors (or where decisions are made and negotiated) is at the top of the list for the Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) when it comes to the global context. In North America (USA, Canada, and Mexico), the percentage is 35.7%, with Canada appointing the largest number of female ambassadors, while in South America (Brazil, Argentina, and Colombia), the percentage of women in ambassadorial positions is 18.8%. Regarding the European Union and Europe, the percentage of female ambassadors is 23.5%, while Europe reaches a share of 29%. The third problem deals with the issue and ways of increasing the presence of women in diplomacy and business negotiation processes in general. According to Cohn (2013), these practices are also shaped by notions of masculinity and femininity. Diversity in diplomatic activity – whether it is a question of commercial or political negotiation, understood not only through the binary category of men and women but also, and above all, through the gendered expectations and performances which structure the institution – broadens our view of international phenomena

by questioning solutions designed for conflicts, as well as negotiations of all kinds. In this sense, the pressure of the peace negotiation agenda examines how masculinity permeates the post-conflict state of power structures related to security and militarism and how female diplomats can disrupt the logic of these negotiations (Aggestam & Towns, 2018). Furthermore, gender diversity also drives the transformation of power hierarchies into their various intersectional manifestations within ministries and international organizations, allowing the emergence of new norms and the direction of the international arena.

It is recognized that economic development and growth through trade openness has a positive effect on the development of states and society, and positively affects the process of women's inclusion in political and economic life. However, Wagner (2012, p. 505) believes that most trade agreements are still gender-neutral, not taking into account existing gender biases and inequalities.

The history of trade negotiations has been marked by economic issues at the expense of social issues, especially gender issues. They were generally considered to be gender neutral, nor do they think that men and women are treated differently, that is, that one of them is put in a less favorable position than the other. Regarding women's employment, the UN Women study (2020) shows that women are more likely to be employed in the informal sector and perform seasonal jobs... (...) in less developed countries, 92% of employed women are in informal employment compared to 87.5% of men. The overrepresentation of women in informal employment, and informal trade is a key issue for developing countries and it can be difficult to design effective policies when jobs and businesses are informal and not effectively regulated by the state. Larouche-Maltais and MacLaren (2019) state that women also take on the majority of unpaid care and housework in the household, "and therefore have far less time and resources than men to take advantage of economic opportunities and new markets for their businesses". At the same time, it is a universal fact that women face discrimination from financial institutions around the world. This will result in lower incomes and less favorable economic conditions. Von Hagen (2014, p. 22) thinks that women generally borrow more from friends and family than men because they do not have access to formal sources of finance. This affects the choice of how and where women will start working, and they are increasingly turning to unpaid work. The same author states that

women perform 76% of the total unpaid work, three times more than men, devoting up to three hours more to household chores than men, ten times more time per day to care, and up to four hours less per day to market activities. Women Entrepreneurs, according to Von Hagen (2014), "are usually entrepreneurs in the fields of service activities – beauty, cleaning, where minimal expenditure is required for development and therefore minimal investment". This is one of the inequality issues that also actively donates to the unequal representation of women in advocacy processes and diplomatic activities. Trade and economic policies affect women and men in many ways. Considering the different impacts on women and men in policy-making, policy implementation, and evaluation helps clarify trade's impact on gender equality. This requires consultation with women and men to analyze relevant data and statistics to understand the current situation and identify inequalities. Research by UN Women (2020) found that there are multiple channels of interaction between gender roles and trade, the impact of which is often country-specific and needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Different economic conditions, degrees of trade liberalization, current gender inequalities, and political inequalities, differ from country to country. At the same time, "a successful strategy or mechanism in one country will not necessarily work in another" (UN Women, 2020). Developed countries' action agendas recognize women's role in the context of producers, traders, politics, and diplomacy, and call for equal and active participation in domestic, regional, and international politics, diplomacy, and trade. However, it is necessary to create such an environment where women can progress in these areas, and the support of women in the processes leading to these areas is stated as imperative. The insufficient representation of women in certain professions, sectors, and positions does not give equal treatment to women and therefore contributes to the processes of international negotiation and inequality in them. In the UN Women survey conducted in 2017, which refers to that year in the context of the European Union, the following conclusions were reached: (...) only 38% of jobs were related to women, although women made up 46% of the total number of employees. Women usually work in the field of human health and social work (79% of employees in these sectors are women), education (71%), accommodation and restaurants, i.e. service industry (54%), wholesale and retail trade (50%) (UN Women, 2020).

Von Hagen (2022) thinks that trade negotiations often reproduce gender structures, that men are overrepresented and women are insufficiently consulted. Trade reforms, policies, and agreements without knowledge of the impacts of trade on gender will not include remedial measures and/or additional clauses. Trade negotiations, for (trade) policy reforms, should consider gender impacts related to technical assistance through possible expansion (or harmonization) of the sector.

The total losses in government revenue due to tariff reductions and compensatory efforts must be a) analyzed and calculated and

b) designed so as not to affect women, children, and the poor disproportionately.

All of this must be done to avoid implicating gender roles in negotiation structures, when it must be understood that it is the state itself that, through its institutions, enables the incorporation and rewarding of existing gender roles and structures. Gender segregation is the predetermined behavior of individuals of a particular social status about the roles of *men* and *women* in the public or private sphere. In this way, the market creates a "selfish negotiation culture" that presupposes the dominant presence of men as a key factor. On the other hand, as Hawkesworth (2019) points out, women are associated with the private sphere of the home, whose role is defined by caring for children, family, and household. Tickner (2006) also argues that these ideals of femininity and masculinity are protected and promoted by the state and the economy itself, establishing "unequal patterns of access and position". Despite progress, International business negotiation remains a distinctly masculine and *masculinized area*, characterized by gendered norms, rituals, and traditions. One of the most important transformations to reduce the gender gap and inequality, which must be made in this area, is women's visibility and active involvement. It is necessary to work on several levels, and it is only by correctly integrating women on the international scene that this gap can be reduced. The key step is to consider all the above assumptions - from gender roles and hierarchy to the position of women in the economic sense, education, lifelong learning, and employment opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

Negotiation is a science, skill, and art. It is a science with its own rules and an art that requires experience, human qualities, and ethical culture. Gender equality is concentrated in Goal 5 of the United Nations' sustainable development. The

goal is to empower women, including equal opportunities and effective participation at all political and economic decision-making levels. The issue of gender equality and the place of women in International business negotiations are essential issues for the development of society as a whole. By reviewing the literature, we determined that the trends of some indicators point to the improvement of educational, economic, and political conditions. Still, this progress is insignificant and uneven throughout the world. However, regarding women's participation in international trade negotiations, there are still significant differences between men and women in terms of unequal opportunities. In addition to the established stereotypical position of women, their limited progress in negotiations was made even more difficult by the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that women follow a career strategy less often than men. However, the research results so far show that existing differences in gender distribution do not significantly affect the success of negotiations, which means that men are not necessarily competent. The evidence shows the opposite - the inclusion of women in global economic negotiations and decision-making is beneficial for their better positioning and achieving better business outcomes. Therefore, we believe that the current trend should be stopped with an equal balance of power, which would ultimately lead to better positioning of women so and better business results and economic growth in general. Finally, this study encourages further research with the need to see more clearly the practical application and effects of institutional regulations that can help remove obstacles to equal participation in International business negotiations. In other words, promoting policies at all levels that enable the full participation of women in these areas will be necessary to correct existing inequalities.

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## SATISFACTION WITH THE USE OF HEARING AIDS IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this work was to investigate the qualitative characteristics of hearing aid users (satisfaction with the use of hearing aids in everyday life) and to determine if there are any differences compared to published research in the literature. The sample of respondents consisted of 50 users of hearing aids, aged from 20 to 88 years. The sample was chosen by random selection from a previously selected sample of 398 hearing aid users. A special questionnaire was constructed for the research. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of variables: gender, age, type of hearing impairment, percentage of hearing loss, degree of hearing impairment, time of hearing aid use, and brand of hearing aid. The second part consisted of variables for the assessment of satisfaction with the use of hearing aids, that is, 15 statements to which respondents had to express their views on satisfaction with the use of hearing aids. This part of the questionnaire was carried out by surveying. The results showed that the majority of hearing aid users wear the hearing aid regularly, they benefit significantly from the hearing aid and it helps them in communication. They have no significant problems when using and handling the hearing aid. The variables gender, age, and time of hearing aid use had no statistically significant correlations with the applied set of variables (claims). Attitudes of hearing aid users can be an important factor in determining benefit and satisfaction with hearing aids.*

**Keywords:** hearing aid, hearing aid users, usefulness and satisfaction with hearing aid

### INTRODUCTION

Research in the literature indicates that hearing-impaired people who use hearing aids are not equally satisfied with hearing aids in their everyday life. There are various factors that affect the individual response, the hearing loss, and the benefit of the hearing aid itself. The subject of this research is the subjective assessment of the use of hearing aids in people with hearing loss in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This country is a geographically

multicultural area in a monolingual community so that the respondents meet the criterion of validity of the measuring instrument - problem questions in the daily use of the hearing aid. The use of a hearing aid creates a very colorful array of disturbances for the users, and in particular, it causes disturbances to communication. The consequences that hearing impairments leave on the individual are also different and specific in psychological and social characteristics, so it can be said that people with

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hearing impairments differ from hearing people in terms of their psychological, mental, and social characteristics due to the consequences of hearing impairments that have a negative impact and on cognitive and emotional development. The time we are in, with the rapid development of information technology, requires a wide range of knowledge and abilities. Decreased hearing ability prevents or inhibits the development of intonation, rhythmic and accentual speech, which are established exclusively by auditory control. Without adequate listening, there is no harmonious, melodious speech, i.e. real social speech that would enable a hearing-impaired person to integrate through spoken communication, and thus education and work in a normal hearing environment. The most common disturbance in people with hearing impairment is the inability to follow a conversation when several people are speaking at the same time and listening with background noise, which is a completely different situation from the one in which the hearing condition is tested audiometrically when determining a hearing aid. Hearing aids are an irreplaceable aid to people with hearing loss. Many people have to wear a hearing aid. The research is motivated by the need to look at the benefits as well as the hindrances that hearing aids provide to such people. It is not enough just to get a hearing aid. To use this aid optimally, it is necessary to relearn to listen, follow the conversation, and understand the spoken message. In all people, there is a connection between audibility and speech intelligibility. When speaking in normal, continuous speech that is familiar to the listener, despite reduced audibility, very good speech intelligibility is achieved. Whereas, during speech that is unknown to the listener, despite good audibility, we get worse intelligibility. Audibility is also better when listening to speech in silence than in a noisy environment, which also affects the reduced intelligibility of speech. In a noisy environment, if the noise is louder than the hearing threshold, it can affect the actual limit to be determined by the noise, and not by the hearing loss. Then the hearing threshold is masked. If the audibility in a quiet environment is 40%, most listeners will manage very well, while with a hearing-impaired person, for example at a party, the audibility can drop to 15-20% due to noise and hearing loss. In this case, speech intelligibility may fall below 50%, so the hearing impaired person has to guess what was said or disconnect from the communication. Intelligibility is very important for hearing-impaired people, which is individual and varies from person to person. Two hearing-impaired people, with similar audiograms, can have completely different

device settings because they do not have the same cognitive abilities. That is why it is necessary to adjust the device according to the user with the aim of achieving the best intelligibility results. Daily maintenance and regular servicing of the hearing aid is necessary for the proper functioning of the hearing aid. Proper maintenance of the hearing aid, as well as regular personal hygiene, are prerequisites for the good functioning of the hearing aid and its service life.

Hearing aids enable better listening quality and thus improve the quality of life of hearing impaired people. Tsakirópoulou et al. (2007) in the study *Hearing aids: Quality of life and socio-economic aspects* indicate that the average first-time hearing aid wearer is close to 65 years. Social isolation and inability to follow conversations are much more common among hearing-impaired adults aged 50 years. The impact of hearing aid use on quality of life also depends on age. Adibi et al. (2013) investigated the quality of life in adolescents and determined that there was no significant relation between the duration of hearing aid use and the improvement in the quality of life. Hearing aids were beneficial for hearing loss students regardless of the duration of the hearing aid usage based on their questionnaires score. Gallagher and Woodside (2018), in their qualitative study, chose three groups of elderly people with hearing loss: regular users of hearing aids; irregular users of hearing aids, and nonowners of hearing aids. Their criterion for the sample was 50 years of age, except for one subject who is 47 years old, but was included in the sample because of his rich experience in using hearing aids, as stated by these authors. Participants who were willing to speak about their hearing loss were contacted via telephone and asked about their hearing loss and hearing aid use to determine if they were suitable for the study, and if so, a suitable time and date was arranged for the interview. They also answered questions related to satisfaction in using the hearing aid. The results of their research indicate that age, severity of hearing loss, and length of time of owning a hearing aid were key factors in the adoption and use of hearing aids. Similar themes emerged from the qualitative analysis regarding the use of hearing aids (complexity of poor hearing aid use and attitudes toward hearing aids) despite the participants they are classified according to different degrees of use of hearing aids (regular, irregular, and nonowners). All groups reported similar benefits and challenges of hearing aids, but self-reported hearing difficulties loss appears to be a major determinant of hearing adoption and use of aids.

Zafar et al. (2020) researched the usefulness and quality of life of hearing aid users on a sample of 50 participants of both sexes who were recommended to use a hearing aid. They used a questionnaire for hearing aids to collect data, which has separate items such as daily use, benefit, residual activity limitations, satisfaction, etc. The minimum and maximum age of participants were 31 and 83 years respectively. The mean age of participants was 64.10±15.88 years. Among which 25 (50%) were males and 25 (50%) were females. These authors concluded that hearing aids have a greater impact on the quality of life and socio-economic aspects of hearing impaired people than expected. This manifests itself in communication problems, but it also affects their health, independence and quality of life in their daily routine. In our research, we did not focus on a specific age, we took a wide range of respondents' ages from 20 to 80 years old to be able to draw some general conclusion. One of our research goals is to identify problems in the use of a hearing aid, which is why we made a literature review that describes similar problems. "Uncorrected hearing loss represents an auditory disability involving reduced speech recognition ability, especially in difficult environments, and reduced ability to detect, identify and localize sounds. This affects the lives of both the hearing-impaired person and significant others. The hearing-impaired person is not always aware of all the consequences. Uncorrected hearing loss gives rise to a poorer quality of life, related to isolation, reduced social activity, a feeling of being excluded, and increased symptoms of depression" (Arlinger, 2003, p. 2520). "The treatment of choice for auditory disability is usually a hearing aid" (Cox & Alexander, 1995, p. 182). „Hearing aids aim to reduce auditory impairment and so minimize activity limitations and participation restrictions" (Kengmana, 2015, p. 15). A hearing aid can enable a hearing impaired person to hear sound in the most effective way. „Performance with hearing aids and the benefit obtained from using them vary widely across users" (Lopez-Poveda et al., 2017, p. 1). "Thinking in terms of a journey related to amplification, one can discern a few crucial junctures. The first is the decision to seek help (*help seeking*). The next step is the decision to acquire a hearing aid (*uptake*). The third is a patient's decision to continue to use an acquired hearing aid, and finally, there is the issue of *satisfaction* with the hearing aid. These four variables (i.e., help seeking, hearing aid uptake, hearing aid use, and satisfaction) may be considered as key elements in a journey" (Knudsen et al., 2010, p. 128).

"Satisfaction and its measurement are important for public policy analysts, healthcare managers, practitioners and users. Despite problems with establishing a tangible definition of "satisfaction" and difficulties with its measurement, the concept continues to be widely used" (Crow et al., 2002). "Satisfaction is commonly described as a pleasurable emotional experience, as an outcome of product performance evaluation against expectations" (Wong, Hickson, & McPherson, 2003, p. 118). Therefore, the pleasant experiences resulting from the evaluation of the performance of the hearing aid represent satisfaction with the hearing aid. Users of hearing aid notice and intervene in case of certain inconveniences during amplification. They can recognize the best performance of the hearing aid. Their views on this are an important factor in determining satisfaction with hearing aids. "The process of selecting and fitting hearing aid devices is only effective and only bring about good outcomes if the individual makes effective use of the device. Therefore, the individuals need to be happy with the outcome" (Aur lio, et al., 2012, p. 69). "As we move towards consumer-driven healthcare, the client's point of view is becoming increasingly accepted as a valid and important indicator of the success of treatment" (Cox, 2003, p. S90). "Monitoring patient satisfaction levels and their perceptions while wearing hearing aids is an important step in the assessment of clinical procedures and care quality goals of health services" (D. P. Silva, V. B. Silva, & Aur lio, 2013, p. 539). "Knowledge of the factors related to hearing aid satisfaction is clinically useful to improve client satisfaction" (Kengmana, 2015, p. 10). In the literature, overall hearing aid satisfaction has consistently been related to the dimensions of cost, appearance, acoustic benefit, comfort, and service (Cox & Alexander, 1999; Kochkin, 2000a cited in Wong et al., 2003). In this context, various researches were done. Some studies include overall satisfaction with the hearing aid, while others combine overall satisfaction with some specific part of the satisfaction. Some studies only refer to the benefits of hearing aids, that is, the results of auditory performance with and without hearing aids. Different measuring instruments were used for different researches, which ultimately resulted in inconsistent research results. Wong et al. (2003), after reviewing 45 studies on satisfaction with hearing aids, state that: "Findings are not always consistent across studies, but in general, hearing aid satisfaction has been found to be related to experience, expectation, personality and attitude, usage, type of hearing

aids, sound quality, listening situations, and problems in hearing aid use. Inconsistent findings across studies and difficulties in evaluating the underlying relationships are probably caused by problems with the tools (eg, lack of validity) and the methods used to evaluate relationships (eg, correlation analyses evaluate association and not causal effect).” (p. 117) The various measures used in research on hearing aid satisfaction make it difficult to draw strong conclusions about overall findings. Therefore, it is important to use published standardized questionnaires which allow comparison across participants and between studies. Furthermore, it has been argued that satisfaction questionnaires with multiple questions are more robust measures than single-scale items. Single-scale measures give a general picture of satisfaction but do not indicate why a client is satisfied or dissatisfied and do not allow the clinician to identify what can be changed to enhance satisfaction (Dillon, 2012 cited in Kengmana, 2015, p. 22).

## METHODS

### The sample of respondents

The sample of respondents consisted of 50 hearing impaired people, users of hearing aids, of all types and degrees of hearing impairment. The respondents were between the ages of 20 and 80. The sample was selected by the random selection method. We contacted the services and from the records of users of hearing aids (registered hearing impaired persons in the researched area), randomly selected individuals who agreed to the interview.

### Measuring instrument and method of conducting research

For the purposes of the research, a special measuring instrument was constructed - a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part consisted of moderator variables, i.e. secondary data about the respondents: gender, age, type of hearing loss, percentage of hearing loss, degree of hearing loss, time of hearing aid use, and brand of hearing aid. These data were collected in the ENT departments, where hearing tests are performed and hearing aids are recommended, and in the Health Insurance Fund, which co-finances the p

purchase of hearing aids. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of variables for assessing satisfaction with the use of a hearing aid in everyday life situations, i.e. 15 claims (one scale) to which respondents had to express their views on satisfaction with the use of hearing aids. This part of the questionnaire was conducted by surveying a sample of respondents. Respondents chose one of the offered answers for each statement offered on a five-point Likert-type scale (I completely agree, I mostly agree, I can't decide, I mostly disagree and I totally disagree). During the examination, the respondents chose their views on the offered choice of answers to our problematic questions. For a clearer insight into the response frequencies in the frequency analysis, we list them here:

1. The hearing aid helps me in communication.
2. I often feel whistling/ buzzing in my ears while wearing a hearing aid.
3. I regularly wear a hearing aid while performing various tasks
4. I have a lot of problems with my hearing aid.
5. I do not feel the benefit of wearing a hearing aid.
6. When wearing a hearing aid, I often get a rash, itch, pain, or accumulation of cerumen.
7. I have difficulties handling the hearing aid.
8. I have problems watching TV and listening to the radio.
9. I have problems when making phone calls.
10. I have to adjust the hearing aid often.
11. Sometimes I have headaches while wearing a hearing aid.
12. When I'm on the street, I can hardly tell from which direction the sound is coming.
13. In a closed room, the hearing aid serves me much better than outside.
14. Hearing aid should be worn by all people with hearing loss.
15. I feel helpless without a hearing aid.

### Data processing

All data were processed by descriptive analysis. Frequencies and percentages were calculated. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between variables. The testing of the results was determined at the level of statistical significance of  $p < .001$ . The data were analyzed with the statistical package SPSS for Windows 20.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The results of the research on the variables that structure the sample and can influence the results of determining the benefits and satisfaction with hearing aids**

Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the moderator variables, as criteria of possible influence on the results of determining the benefit and satisfaction with the hearing aid. Gender is approximately equally represented, with 54%

male and 46% female respondents. The largest percentage of respondents (34%) was between the ages of 3 and 25, followed by 46 to 65 (32%), and the least between the ages of 26 and 45 (5%). Most respondents (44%) had a hearing loss percentage of 61% to 80%. The respondents used the hearing aid for different periods of time (from 2 to 32 years), which was enough time to express their usefulness and functionality. Most respondents (58%) used a hearing aid in the period from 2 to 10 years. The largest percentage of users (68%) opted for the "Widex" brand of hearing aids.

*Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of research results of moderator variables*

Variable	f	%
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	27	54.0
Female	23	46.0
<u>Age</u>		
3 – 25	17	34.0
26 – 45	5	1.0
46 – 65	16	32.0
> 65	12	24.0
<u>% hearing loss according to FS</u>		
40 – 50	9	18.0
55 – 60	9	18.0
61 – 70	12	24.0
71 – 80	10	20.0
81 – 90	5	10.0
91 – 98	5	10.0
<u>Time of hearing aid use (years)</u>		
2 – 10	29	58.0
11 – 20	15	30.0
21 – 33	6	12.0
<u>Hearing aid brand</u>		
Widex	34	68.0
Bernafon	5	10.0
Unitron	3	6.0
Oticon	8	16.0



## Results of answers of hearing aid users to the applied system of variables to determine the benefits and satisfaction with the use of hearing aids

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of respondents' answers to the claims of assessing the benefits and satisfaction with the use of hearing aids. An effort was made to check the extent to which respondents express satisfaction with the use of personal hearing aids. With the 1st claim (The hearing aid helps me in communication.) 64% of respondents completely agree, and 26% mostly agree, which means that they agree in total in 90% of cases. According to Kochkin's research (2005), ninety percent of consumers are satisfied with the ability of their hearing instrument to improve communication in one-on-one situations, and slightly more than eight out of ten are satisfied by its performance in small groups, and according to Kochkin (2010), ninety-one percent of consumers are satisfied with the ability of their hearing aids to improve communication in one-on-one situations. More than three in four are satisfied in small groups (85%). With the 2nd claim (I often feel whistling/buzzing in my ears while wearing a hearing aid.) 34% of respondents do not agree at all, and 28% mostly disagree, which means that a total of 62% of respondents estimate that they do not experience whistling/buzzing when using a hearing aid. According to research by Kochkin (2010), seven out of ten consumers are satisfied with whistling and feedback (69%). With the 3rd claim (I regularly wear a hearing aid while performing various tasks.) 74% of respondents completely agree, and 8% mostly agree, which means that a total of 82% of users regularly wear a hearing aid. According to Kochkin (2005), nearly 9 out of 10 consumers wear their hearing aid. According to research by Kaplan-Neeman, Muchnik, Hildesheimer, and Henkin (2012), eighty-three percent used their hearing aids regularly, whereas 17% were nonusers. The purpose of the study by Bertoli et al. (2009) was to investigate the efficiency of the Swiss hearing aid dispensing system, and to determine factors contributing to successful hearing aid provision. Eighty-five percent used their device(s) regularly, 12% only occasionally and 3% never. Eighty percent were satisfied with their aids. Non-regular use of hearing aids was significantly associated with age, gender, regional language, total duration of use, type of amplification, hearing aid category, hearing loss, and dissatisfaction with and

difficulties in managing the aid. Dissatisfaction was associated with regional language, total duration of use, difficulties in managing the aid, and non-regular use. According to research by Jorbonyan, Foroughan, Momtaz, and Mehrkian (2022), the regular use of hearing aids was influenced by a variety of factors, including education level, hearing aid satisfaction, self-reported hearing impairment, perceived social support, extroversion personality trait, and emotional stability. With the 4th claim (I have a lot of problems with my hearing aid.) 38% of the respondents do not agree at all, and 46% of the respondents mostly disagree. A total of 84% of the respondents estimate that they have no significant problems when using the hearing aid. According to research by Bennett et al. (2020), almost all participants (98%) indicated that they were experiencing at least one of the hearing aid problems. The three most reported problems were related to difficulty hearing in noisy environments, hearing in windy environments, and understanding certain voices. Participants who reported experiencing a greater number of hearing aid problems also reported lower levels of hearing aid benefit, and satisfaction with their hearing aids. Also, according to a study by Bennett et al. (2021), although consumers indicated high levels of hearing aid performance/benefit when responding to multiple choice questions on the website, they described numerous problems limiting their success with hearing aids. Hearing healthcare clinicians must look beyond simply asking whether their clients are satisfied, and instead employ a patient centered approach to audiological rehabilitation, asking clients to demonstrate their skills and knowledge (Bennett et al., 2018b) and probing into the wide range of hearing aid problems that can occur (Bennett et al., 2020) to ensure that each client's individual needs are met. With the 5th claim (I do not feel the benefit of wearing a hearing aid.) 54% do not agree at all, and 26% mostly disagree, which means that a total of 80% of the respondents estimate that they have significant benefits from the hearing aid. According to Kochkin (2010), approximately three out of four consumers are satisfied with the clearness of tone and the sound of their hearing aids (77%) and the sound of their voice (73%). Seven out of ten are satisfied with directionality (71%), the naturalness of the sound (71%), ability to hear soft sounds (69%), and sound fidelity (68%). Two out of three are satisfied with their comfort with loud sounds (67%) and the sound of chewing and swallowing (64%). According to research by Bannon, Picou, Bailey, and Manchaiah (2023), hearing

aid sound quality, fit and comfort, and battery life were related to both benefit and satisfaction. With the 6th claim (When wearing a hearing aid, I often get a rash, itch, pain, or accumulation of cerumen.) 40% of respondents do not agree at all, and the same percentage mostly disagree. A total of 80% of respondents estimate that they do not have the listed side effects. Bertoli et al. (2009) in 18.5 % of cases cited unpleasant side effects (e.g., rashes, itching, pain, builds up wax) as the reason for not wearing a hearing aid.

With the 7th claim (I have difficulties handling the hearing aid.) 48% of the respondents do not agree at all, and 36% mostly disagree, that is, a total of 84% of the respondents estimate that they have no difficulties when handling the hearing aid. According to Bennett, Meyer, Eikelboom, and Atlas (2018), hearing aid management is an area of difficulty for the majority of hearing aid owners, indicating the need for clinicians to improve the efficacy of hearing aid management training delivered. With the 8th claim (I have problems watching TV and listening to the radio.) 28% of the respondents do not agree at all, and 34% mostly disagree. A total of 62% of respondents estimate that they have no problems watching TV and listening to the radio. According to Kochkin (2005), slightly more than eight out of ten consumers are satisfied by its performance while watching television, and according to Kochkin (2010), more than three in four are satisfied while watching television (80%). With the 9th claim (I have problems when making phone calls.) 14% of respondents do not agree at all, and 34% mostly disagree. A total of 48% of respondents estimate that they have no problems when making phone calls. It is indicative that 38% of respondents are undecided and that 14% have a problem with calling. This indicates that the problems are still significantly present. According to Kochkin (2005), seven out of ten are satisfied with their hearing aids on the telephone, and according to Kochkin (2010), about three out of four consumers (73%). With the 10th claim (I have to adjust the hearing aid often.) 24% of the respondents do not agree at all, and 36% mostly disagree, which is a total of 60% of the respondents who estimate that they do not need to adjust the hearing aid often.

With the 11th claim (Sometimes I have headaches while wearing a hearing aid) 40% of respondents do not agree at all, and 30% mostly disagree, that is, a total of 70% of respondents estimate that they do not have headaches while wearing a hearing aid. With the 12th claim (When I'm on the street, I can hardly tell from which direction the sound is coming.) 4% of respondents do not agree at all, and 34% mostly disagree. This means that 38% of respondents estimate that they do not have a problem with sound orientation, but 36% of respondents are undecided and 26% have these problems. According to Kochkin (2005) about three of four consumers are satisfied with their instruments outdoors, while participating in leisure activities, and in the car. According to Kochkin (2010), seven out of ten are satisfied with the directionality of the sound (71%). With the 13th claim (In a closed room, the hearing aid serves me much better than outside.) 12% of the respondents completely agree, and 36% mostly agree, which is a total of 48% of respondents who evaluate the better functionality of hearing aids in a closed room. Also, 32% of undecided respondents point to doubts about the good functionality of hearing aids in an open space. According to Kochkin (2005) half of the consumers are satisfied with wind noise and their instruments in noisy situations), while according to Kochkin (2010), about six in ten consumers are satisfied with use of their hearing aid in noisy situations (61%) and wind noise (58%). Bertoli et al. (2009) in 52.0 % of cases cited noisy disturbing situations as the reason for not wearing a hearing aid. Kim et al. (2022), in hearing aid satisfaction, observed that the most satisfactory factors were clarity of sound (53.5%), people's trust in their hearing aid (61.7%), and listening from a quiet environment (72.8%) in the domains of sound quality, hearing aid features, and listening environments, respectively. With the 14th claim (Hearing aid should be worn by all people with hearing loss.) 72% of respondents completely agree, and 18% mostly agree, which is a total of 90% of respondents who evaluate the usefulness of a hearing aid. With the 15th claim (I feel helpless without a hearing aid.) 52% of respondents completely agree, and 20% mostly agree, that is, a total of 72% of respondents consider the need to use a hearing aid to be extremely important.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of respondents' answers to the claims

Claims	I completely agree		I mostly agree		I can't decide		I mostly disagree		Do not agree at all	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	32	64.0	13	26.0	2	4.0	1	2.0	2	4.0
2.	3	6.0	7	14.0	9	18.0	14	28.0	17	34.0
3.	37	74.0	4	8.0	1	2.0	3	6.0	5	10.0
4.	2	4.0	2	4.0	4	8.0	23	46.0	19	38.0
5.	1	2.0	1	2.0	8	16.0	13	26.0	27	54.0
6.	2	4.0	3	6.0	5	10.0	20	40.0	20	40.0
7.	3	6.0	0	0.0	5	10.0	18	36.0	24	48.0
8.	3	6.0	2	4.0	14	28.0	17	34.0	14	28.0
9.	2	4.0	5	10.0	19	38.0	17	34.0	7	14.0
10.	3	6.0	3	6.0	14	28.0	18	36.0	12	24.0
11.	1	2.0	5	10.0	9	18.0	15	30.0	20	40.0
12.	3	6.0	10	20.0	18	36.0	17	34.0	2	4.0
13.	6	12.0	18	36.0	16	32.0	8	16.0	2	4.0
14.	36	72.0	9	18.0	3	6.0	1	2.0	1	2.0
15.	26	52.0	10	20.0	8	16.0	4	8.0	2	4.0

### Results of correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to test the association of moderator variables with the total set of respondents' answers to the claim about satisfaction with hearing aid use. Variables "gender", "age" and "time of hearing aid use" in our research did not have statistically significant correlations with the applied set of variables (claims), which can be concluded that they do not affect the assessment of satisfaction in the measurement space of variables. According to the study by Aurélio, et al. (2012), it was found that the subjects were very happy with the use of hearing aids, although satisfaction was not related to the variables: age, gender, time of use and device type. In general, participants with higher daily use are happier. According to research by Mondelli, Rocha, and Honório, (2013), no significant differences were evident between hearing aid satisfaction and sex. The importance placed on services/costs and personal image varied between age groups. According to research by Kaplan-Neeman et al. (2012), of the users, 92% were satisfied to some degree with their hearing aids. Background variables that were significantly associated with satisfaction

ratings were hours of hearing aid use per day, fitting mode (binaural vs. monaural), age, and degree of hearing loss. In the study by Kim et al. (2022), it was found that age, level of education, hearing aid purchase price, bilateral amplification, wearing time, and hearing aid fitting and fine tuning on a regular basis significantly influenced hearing aid satisfaction. According to Bannon et al. (2023), satisfaction was related to age. Younger respondents, those who were students, reported more satisfaction. Also, hearing aid users with more hearing aid experience reported more benefit. The variable "Time of hearing aid use" in our research had a positive correlation with the variable "Percentage hearing loss according to FS" ( $r = .402$ ). The variable "Percentage hearing loss according to FS" had a statistically negative correlation with the variable "I often feel ringing in my ears while wearing a hearing aid." ( $r = -.508$ ) and with the variable "I have a lot of problems with my hearing aid." ( $r = -.390$ ). It can be concluded that different percent hearing loss affects the fact that the respondents feel ringing in their ears while wearing a hearing aid and that they have a lot of problems with their hearing aid. According to Kochkin (2005), with respect to listening situations, satisfaction was related

to severity of hearing loss in 13 of 15 listening situations, and according to Kochkin, (2010) the more severe the hearing loss the greater the difficulty of achieving utility in many listening situations. According to Mondelli, Rocha, and Honório (2013), correlation was evident at all levels between user satisfaction and amplification. Decreased satisfaction was observed in individuals with severe and/or profound hearing loss. Satisfaction of hearing aid is decreasing inversely proportional with increasing of hearing loss (slight- profound degree) (Turan, Unsal, & Kurtaran, 2019). According to Bannon et al. (2023), hearing aid users with greater self-perceived hearing loss reported more benefit. The variable "Hearing aid brand" in our research has a statistically significant correlation with the variable "I have to adjust hearing aid often" ( $r = -.374$ ), i.e. respondents express displeasure with frequent adjustment of their hearing aid. According to a US-based national survey by Kochkin (2003), about three out of four consumers are satisfied with the ability of hearing instruments to "improve their hearing". When it comes time to repurchase, roughly half of all hearing instruments are "fired," meaning the consumer switches brands or attempts to switch brands with the hope of increasing the utility (benefit relative to price) derived from their hearing instrument. According to Kochkin (2005), only 44% indicate they would repurchase their current brand of hearing instrument next time around; a large percentage (43%) indicated they were unsure what they would do when it came time to replace their instruments, and according to Kochkin (2010), 48% of consumers would repurchase their current brand of hearing aid. Brand loyalty between 1991-2008 increased by 4%, which still indicates that when it is time for wearers to replace their current brand of hearing aids, they are very likely to shop for something better than what they have. "It appears that hearing aid consumers somewhat attribute their ongoing hearing aid problems to the brand or model of device that they own" (Bennett et al., 2021. p. 9). According to research by US-based MarkeTrak, satisfaction with hearing aids is high. The rate of satisfaction with hearing aids increased from 74% in 2008 to 81% in 2014 and 83% in 2019 (Powers & Rogin, 2019). EuroTrak data are similar, i.e. satisfaction with

hearing aids at 70% (Bisgaard & Ruf, 2017). Data from the MarkeTrak 2022 survey indicate most hearing aid owners report regular quality-of-life benefits from hearing aids, even more than in previous surveys. The increased likelihood of hearing aid benefits might be attributable to modern hearing aid features advancements. Hearing aid satisfaction rates have been relatively stable over the years, indicating that more than 80% of hearing aid owners are satisfied with their devices. Hearing aid satisfaction rates do not appreciably vary by fitting channel; hearing aid owners fitted in person, fitted remotely, or self-fit are similarly likely to report high satisfaction with their device (Picou, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

The results of the research showed that the majority of hearing aid users regularly wear a hearing aid, that they benefit significantly from the hearing aid, and that it helps them communicate. They have no significant problems when using and handling the hearing aid. A smaller percentage of users have no problems with telephone calls and have better functionality of hearing aids in a closed room and have no problems with sound orientation. The variables gender, age, and time of hearing aid use did not have statistically significant correlations with the applied set of variables (claims). Attitudes of hearing aid users can be an important factor in determining satisfaction with hearing aids. Users of hearing aids can directly influence the actions of experts (persons dealing with diagnostics, selection of hearing aids, and rehabilitators) with their experiences. This mutual interaction contributes to experts encouraging users to use hearing aids regularly. A high level of satisfaction can be achieved with regular use of hearing aids. The level of individual satisfaction in everyday communication affects the acceptance of hearing aids. In the results of the research, we did not determine the existence of a difference compared to published research in the literature. We did not find any significant correlations in the moderator variables we used with the satisfaction of use. However, in a qualitative sense, research that will monitor the consequences on social behavior and the general quality of living with a hearing aid is desirable.



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## THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN ENSURING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: A STUDY ON THE INTERSECTION OF COMMUNICATION AND CHILD RIGHTS

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*This research paper examines the relationship between communication and child rights. Effective communication is crucial for ensuring that children's rights are protected and promoted. Through communication, children are able to express their views and needs, which is key to realizing their right to freedom of expression and participation. Communication also plays a critical role in protecting children from abuse and neglect. When children are able to communicate with trusted individuals, they can report any illegal actions and protect themselves from further harm. In education, communication is essential for realizing children's right to education. When children have the opportunity to communicate with their teachers and other school community members, they can learn in a better environment and actively engage in the learning process. The paper is realized in accordance with the communication which is essential for realizing children's rights in various areas and it is important to provide children with opportunities to communicate and express themselves.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Child Rights, Effective Communication, Child Development, Protection, Freedom of Expression, Education.

### INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is an essential aspect of human interaction and plays a crucial role in ensuring the rights of children (Reddy & Gupta, 2020). In today's fast-paced world, where information and ideas are constantly exchanged, it is imperative that children are equipped with the necessary communication skills to express their needs, opinions and perspectives (Brodin & Renblad, 2020). However, despite its significance, effective communication is often overlooked

in discussions surrounding children's rights. The intersection of communication and child rights is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires further exploration. The problem of inadequate communication skills and support for children has been documented in various studies, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to communication development (Cuevas-Parra, 2022). This study aims to examine the relationship between effective communication and children's rights, and to identify the challenges that hinder the realization of these rights. This study would be based on a thorough review

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of existing literature on the topic and include an analysis of the current state of communication and child rights in a particular context. The results of this study would be used to identify potential solutions and make recommendations for future research in this field. The findings of this study would provide valuable insights into the importance of effective communication in ensuring children's rights and the need for ongoing support and advocacy in this area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the relationship between communication and child rights is extensive and encompasses a wide range of topics, including child protection, education, and child participation. In this section, we will provide an overview of the existing literature and discuss the role of communication in ensuring children's rights. Effective communication refers to the process of exchanging information, ideas, and feelings between individuals in a clear and concise manner, with the goal of achieving mutual understanding (Reddy & Gupta, 2020). It requires active listening, clear and concise messaging, empathy, and the ability to tailor communication styles to the audience. In order to be considered effective, communication must result in the intended outcome and be understood by the recipient in the way it was intended (Shen, Jianwei, & Sandy, 2020). Effective communication is essential in various areas of life, including personal relationships, the workplace, and community building, as it helps to build trust, resolve conflicts, and foster understanding (Allen, 2016). Children's rights are the basic rights that are entitled to every child regardless of their race, religion, gender, or nationality (Lutfiyya & Bartlett, 2020). These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. The Convention sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children, and it is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989). Some of the key rights outlined in the Convention include the right to life, the right to education, the right to freedom from violence and abuse, the right to participate in cultural and leisure activities, the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the right to be heard and have their views taken into account in decisions that affect them (Sakharina & Daud, 2020). It is important to note that children's rights are

not absolute, and can sometimes be limited in the interest of the greater good, such as the protection of public safety (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). However, in such cases, the limitations must be proportionate and the least restrictive possible, and children's rights must always be respected, protected, and fulfilled to the maximum extent possible.

Child protection is a critical issue, and communication plays a critical role in protecting children from abuse and neglect. When children are able to communicate with trusted individuals, they can report any illegal actions and protect themselves from further harm (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020). Effective communication can help children to identify and report abuse and neglect, and it is essential for ensuring their safety and well-being. Effective communication skills also allow children to articulate their needs and express their views, which can empower them to seek help and support (Gubbels, Assink, Prinzie & Van Der Put 2021). Additionally, children who have access to safe and supportive environments that promote communication are more likely to feel confident and secure in their ability to report abuse or neglect. In order to support children in communicating effectively and protecting themselves from harm, it is important to provide them with opportunities to learn communication skills, such as active listening, expressing themselves clearly, and asking for help. It is also important to create safe and supportive environments where children feel comfortable talking about sensitive topics, such as abuse or neglect, and where they know that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon (Donagh, 2021). In education, communication is essential for realizing children's right to education. When children have the opportunity to communicate with their teachers and other school community members, they can learn in a better environment and actively engage in the learning process (Ribeiro, Cunha, Silva, Carvalho, & Vital, 2021). Effective communication between children and teachers can help to build a positive and supportive learning environment, which is essential for children's educational success. Effective communication in education can also help to address and resolve any problems or concerns that may arise in the classroom. When teachers and students have open lines of communication, they can work together to address any challenges and create solutions that are in the best interest of the child (Walker, Johnson & Randolph 2021). For example, if a child is struggling with a certain subject, they can communicate their difficulties to the teacher,

who can then provide additional support and resources to help the child succeed. This type of communication also fosters a sense of trust and understanding between the teacher and student, which can lead to better academic outcomes for the child (Ogg, Clark, Strissel & Rogers, 2021). Furthermore, communication can play a crucial role in promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment for all children. When children feel comfortable and supported in the classroom, they are more likely to be engaged and participate actively in their education (Abu Bakar, Baharun, & Hasanah, 2021). Teachers and school administrators who prioritize communication and actively work to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment can help to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed. Overall, it is clear that effective communication plays a critical role in promoting and protecting children's rights in the context of education. By fostering a positive and supportive learning environment and providing children with opportunities to communicate and participate in their education, it can be helpful to ensure that all children have the chance to succeed and reach their full potential (Mahoney, Weissberg, Greenberg, Dusenbury, Jagers, Niemi, Schlinger, Schlund, Shriver, VanAusdal & Yoder, 2021). The full potential of a child refers to the highest level of development and achievement that a child is capable of reaching in various domains such as physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. It encompasses the child's innate abilities, skills, and talents, as well as the opportunities and experiences they have access to that can support and enhance their development (Baria & Gomez, 2022). A child's full potential can be influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, family environment, socio-economic status, and access to education and resources (Volodina, Weinert, Washbrook, Waldfogel, Jiyoung Kwon, Wang & Perinetti Casoni, 2022). Through developing a positive and supportive learning environment, children can be given the best chance to reach their full potential and lead successful, fulfilling lives. Child participation refers to the active engagement of children in decisions and activities that affect their lives (Borg & Samuelsson 2022). It is a fundamental aspect of child rights, as recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states that children have the right to express their views and have those views taken into account in matters affecting them (Ziroat & Zebiniso, 2022). Child participation is essential for promoting and protecting children's rights, as it allows

children to have a voice in decisions that impact their lives and helps to ensure that their rights are respected (Adxam, 2021). When children are given opportunities to participate, they can develop their confidence, self-esteem, and decision-making skills, and they can also build relationships with other children and adults. There are many different forms of child participation, including participation in family life, education, and community activities, as well as participation in decision-making processes at the local, national, and international levels (Malikovna, 2022). To support child participation, it is important to create inclusive and child-friendly environments that encourage children to express their views and actively engage in the decision-making process (Mukhammadjonovna, 2021). Child participation is another important aspect of child rights, and communication is essential for realizing this right. Children have the right to express their views and to participate in decisions that affect their lives (Ahunovna, 2022a). Effective communication can provide children with the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes that impact their lives, and it can help to ensure that their voices are heard (Ahunovna, 2022b). The literature review highlights the importance of effective communication for ensuring children's rights. Communication plays a critical role in child protection, education, and participation, and it is essential for ensuring that children's rights are respected and protected. However, it is important to note that communication can also pose challenges for children, particularly for those who are marginalized or have disabilities (Ryan Idriss, 2021). In such cases, children may face barriers in communicating their views, needs, and experiences, which can result in their rights being violated. It is therefore important to consider the diversity of children's experiences and the ways in which they communicate when designing policies and programs related to child rights (Hasanah, Suyatno, Maryani, Badar, Fitria & Patmasari, 2022). This includes ensuring that children with disabilities have access to assistive technologies and other forms of support that enable them to communicate effectively (Krasniqi, Zdravkova & Dalipi, 2022). Additionally, it is important to recognize the role of parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults in supporting children's communication and their ability to assert their rights. In addition to communication barriers, it is also important to consider the impact of language and cultural differences on children's ability to communicate and assert their rights (Wilson, 2020).

Children who speak a language other than the dominant language in their community may face language barriers that prevent them from effectively communicating their views and needs (Peace-Hughes, Cohen, Jamieson & Tisdall, 2022). It is crucial to recognize and address these language barriers and to provide children with support and resources to overcome them. The literature review underscores the importance of effective communication in ensuring children's rights. However, it also highlights the challenges that children face in communicating their views and needs, and the need to consider these challenges when designing policies and programs related to child rights. Effective communication is essential for ensuring that children's rights are respected and protected, and it is critical to continue to explore and understand the relationship between communication and child rights (Reddy & Gupta, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

For this research paper, a qualitative approach is used to explore the relationship between communication and child rights (Tankosic, Ivetic & Vucurevic, 2016). This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of the experiences and perspectives of children and other relevant stakeholders, and it provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the complex issues related to child rights and communication. In order to undertake a thorough examination of the correlation between communication (Tankosic, Ivetic & Mikelic, 2017), developmental traits, and the rights of minors, it is imperative to implement a suitable research methodology that utilizes the aforementioned tables (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4) as its foundation. The methodology entails the following steps: An analysis of the Table 1: Examples of Actions for Ensuring Children's Rights - would be an important step in understanding the ways in which children's rights can be ensured. This analysis would involve reviewing all items in the table and categorizing them into different groups, according to the specific rights that they pertain to. An analysis of the Table 2: A thorough analysis would be conducted in order to determine the connections between various developmental characteristics and communication needs of children. This analysis would involve reviewing all items in the table and categorizing them into different groups. Analysis of the Table 3: The next step would be the analysis of the Table 3, which displays the connection between communication and children's rights. This analysis would involve reviewing

all items in the table and identifying key links between communication and children's rights. Analysis of the Table 4: The final step would be the analysis of the Table 4 which depicts the intersection between developmental characteristics, communication needs, and children's rights. This analysis would involve a detailed review of all items in the table and identification of key connections between the three aspects. In general, the utilization of such an approach facilitates the ability to correct and systematic analysis of the connection between communication, developmental characteristics, and children's rights (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). This analysis aid in a better understanding of the key links between these aspects and facilitate the identification of areas where additional activities are required for the protection and improvement of children's health and well-being.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

During the early childhood stage, which is from birth to six years of age, children experience rapid physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). This period is crucial for the formation of a strong foundation for future development and learning. A strong foundation for future development and learning is crucial for children, as it lays the foundation for their future success and well-being (Müller, Howard, Wilson, Gibson & Katsos, 2020). A solid educational foundation, which includes the development of communication skills and active participation in their education, can help to ensure that children are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the future. This includes critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and the ability to work effectively with others (Song, Lee & Lee, 2022). In addition, a strong educational foundation also helps to build children's confidence and resilience and promotes their overall well-being. Children who have a positive and supportive learning environment, and who have opportunities to communicate and participate in their education, are more likely to have better educational outcomes and a more successful future (Crompton, Hallett, Axbey, McAuliffe & Cebula, 2023). Therefore, it is important to prioritize and invest in a strong foundation for future development and learning for children, as it will have a lasting impact on their future success and well-being (Gubbels et al., 2021). Effective communication plays a significant role (Tankosic, Grbic & Krivokapic, 2019) in



supporting and enhancing children's development during this stage.

The Table 1 provides a list of ten fundamental rights that must be ensured for every child. In the left column, there is a brief statement of each right, and the right-hand column provides examples of actions that can be taken to fulfill that right. The ten rights listed are: access to education, protection from abuse and exploitation, access to healthcare and nutrition, access to clean water and sanitation, promotion of social and emotional well-being, freedom of expression and access to information, legal protection and access to justice, safe and supportive environments, recognition of diverse needs, and participation and empowerment

of children in decision-making processes (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989). Each right is accompanied by several examples of actions that can be taken to ensure that right. Examples are important for communication because they help to clarify and illustrate complex or abstract concepts, making them easier to understand. When discussing a topic that may be unfamiliar or difficult to conceptualize, providing examples can help to make it more relatable and tangible to the audience. These examples give an idea of the types of measures that can be taken to protect and promote children's rights (Nottingham, Stockman & Burke, M 2022).

*Table 1. Examples of Actions for Ensuring Children's Rights*

Ensuring Children's Rights	Examples
Provide access to education	Building schools, providing teachers, offering scholarships, and eliminating gender disparities in education
Protect from abuse and exploitation	Establishing child protection policies, prohibiting child labor, preventing child trafficking, and enforcing laws against child abuse
Guarantee health care and nutrition	Offering immunization programs, providing nutritious food, ensuring access to clean water, and preventing malnutrition
Ensure access to clean water and sanitation	Right to protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation
Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity	Building water wells and sanitation facilities, promoting hygiene practices, and providing safe water and sanitation in schools
Promote social and emotional well-being	Providing mental health services, promoting positive parenting, addressing social exclusion, and preventing bullying and violence
Uphold freedom of expression and access to information	Ensuring access to information and education, promoting child participation in decision-making, and protecting freedom of speech
Establish legal protection and access to justice	Enforcing laws protecting children's rights, providing legal aid, and establishing child-friendly courts
Foster a safe and supportive environment for every child	Providing safe and nurturing family environments, preventing accidents and injuries, and protecting children in emergencies
Recognize and respond to the diverse needs of all children	Addressing the needs of children with disabilities, promoting inclusion and diversity, and protecting the rights of minority groups
Promote the participation and empowerment of children in decision-making processes	Providing opportunities for children to participate in community activities, promoting child-led initiatives, and empowering children to advocate for their own rights

Table 1 provides the examples of actions that can be taken to fulfil each right help to translate the abstract concept of “children’s rights” into concrete and tangible actions that can be taken by policymakers, organizations, and individuals. The following Table 2 provides an overview of the key cognitive, behavioural/physical, social/emotional, and communication needs (Bajrami, Ibri & Sabotic, 2022) of young children during this stage of development. By understanding these needs, parents, caregivers,

and educators can support children’s growth and learning by providing an environment that is conducive to communication and positive development (Murphy & Risser, 2022). Through creating a supportive atmosphere that encourages communication and promotes healthy growth, parents, caregivers, and educators can address the key needs of young children and lay a strong foundation for their future development and learning.

*Table 2. The main developmental characteristics in early childhood (from birth to 6 years old)*

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Cognitive Development</b>	<b>Physical/Behavioral Characteristics</b>	<b>Social/Emotional Development</b>	<b>Communication Needs</b>
Birth to 1 year	Rapid brain growth and development Begin to develop object permanence and spatial awareness	Physical milestones (e.g., crawling, walking) Developing fine and gross motor skills	Forming attachment with primary caregivers Emotional expression (e.g., crying, smiling)	Start to develop receptive language skills Begin to understand language and respond to familiar words and sounds
1 to 3 years	Development of memory and problem-solving skills Increased attention span and ability to focus	Physical milestones (e.g., running, jumping) Developing coordination and balance	Increased social interaction with peers and adults Development of self-awareness Shows emotional expression (e.g., anger, joy)	Expanding language skills Developing expressive language skills Using gestures and words to communicate
3 to 6 years	Improved memory and attention span Greater ability to understand and use symbols Begin to understand cause and effect	Physical milestones (e.g., throwing and catching a ball, riding a tricycle) Developing fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil, cutting with scissors)	Increased social interaction with peers and adults Development of empathy and understanding of others' perspectives Forming relationships with peers Shows emotional expression and control	Expanding vocabulary and language skills Developing more advanced communication skills (e.g., asking questions, using humor)

Communication plays a crucial role in the development and well-being of children, especially during their early years (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). Good communication skills are an important aspect of personal and professional development. They involve the ability to listen, understand, and express oneself effectively (Tankosic et al., 2017). Good communication skills help to build relationships, convey information, and collaborate with others, making them essential for success in both personal and professional settings (Tankosic et al., 2016). Whether it's giving presentations, negotiating deals, or building relationships, strong communication skills are a valuable asset that can open doors and bring opportunities (Cuevas-Parra, 2022). By improving one's communication skills, individuals can enhance their personal and professional lives and achieve their goals. Good communication skills not only help children build strong relationships with others but also give them the confidence to express themselves and their needs (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). With the right communication skills, children can

navigate the world around them, find solutions to problems, and build a foundation for a successful future. Furthermore, effective communication is crucial in enabling children to understand their rights and to advocate for themselves when necessary (Murphy & Risser, 2022). In this way, communication is a powerful tool for promoting and protecting the rights of children and ensuring their well-being. Table 1 highlights the cognitive, behavioural, social-emotional, and communication needs of children during the early years. These needs are interconnected and impact each other, with communication being an essential aspect of children's overall development. Table 3 connects communication with children's rights. Effective communication is crucial for children to express their needs and experiences, and for their rights to be respected and protected. Children have the right to express their views and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). Communication is key to realizing these rights and ensuring that children's voices are heard.

Table 3. The Connection between Communication and Children's Rights

Developmental Stage	Communication Needs	Relevant Child Rights
Infancy (0-2 years)	Begin to understand and use simple language, learn through vocal cues and gestures	Right to survival and development, right to protection from abuse and neglect, right to an education that promotes early childhood development
Early Childhood (3-6 years)	Developing language and communication skills, learning through play and social interactions	Right to survival and development, right to protection from abuse and neglect, right to participate in family life, right to an education that promotes early childhood development
Middle Childhood (7-12 years)	Continuing to develop language and communication skills, forming relationships and social networks	Right to participation in family life, right to an education that promotes development, right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, right to freedom of expression
Adolescence (13-18 years)	Developing identity and independence, seeking out peer relationships, engaging in more complex communication	Right to participation in family life, right to an education that promotes development, right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, right to freedom of expression, right to privacy

Moreover, communication plays a crucial role in the development of children's social-emotional skills and their ability to build relationships with others. Children who are able to communicate effectively are more likely to experience positive relationships with their peers and family members, which is essential for their overall well-being and development (Walker et al., 2021). Table 3 provides an overview of the connection between communication and children's rights. The table includes various aspects of communication and how they relate to children's rights. For example, the first row highlights the importance of effective communication for ensuring that children's rights are respected and protected. This includes the right to express their views and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Gubbels et al., 2021). The next few rows in Table 3 delve into the different forms of communication and their relationship to children's rights. For example, the use of technology, such as assistive devices, is crucial for children with disabilities to effectively communicate and have their rights respected (Al-Dababneh & Al-Zboon, 2020). The role of trusted adults, such as parents and caregivers, in supporting children's communication is also noted. Language and cultural differences also play a role in children's ability to communicate and assert their rights, and these are addressed in the table. Children who do not speak the dominant language in their community may face language barriers that prevent them from effectively communicating their views and needs (Brodin & Renblad, 2020). The relationship between communication, developmental characteristics and children's rights is complex and vital for protecting and promoting the health and well-being of children (Gubbels et al., 2021). Table 2 demonstrates

how various developmental characteristics such as cognitive, physical and emotional, impact a child's communication needs during early childhood, from birth to the age of six. The Table 3 highlights the connection between communication and children's rights, such as the crucial role of communication in protecting children from violence, promoting economic development and ensuring access to healthcare. However, without adequate support and communication tools, children may be deprived of their rights, such as the right to be heard and participate in decision-making (Convention on the rights of the child, 1989). Table 4 shows the intersection between various developmental characteristics, communication needs and children's rights, highlighting how different developmental characteristics such as cognitive and emotional are closely linked to a child's communication needs. It also shows that children's communication needs are key to safeguarding their rights, and these rights are compromised if children lack adequate communication skills or support (Kong, Noone & Shears 2022). Opportunities for children to engage with their peers refer to situations or activities that allow children to interact and communicate with other children (Gubbels et al., 2021). This can include opportunities for play and socialization, such as participating in sports or hobbies, or attending school and participating in group activities. Engaging with peers can be particularly important for children's social and emotional development, as it helps them to develop their communication skills, build relationships, and learn from others (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). Additionally, engaging with peers can provide children with a sense of belonging and support, which can be crucial for their overall well-being.

*Table 4. The Intersection of Communication and Children's Rights*

<b>Communication Need</b>	<b>Children's Right</b>
Effective communication	Right to be heard and have their views taken into account
Access to information	Right to education
Communication support for children with disabilities	Right to participation and inclusion
Protection from harmful communication	Right to protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation
Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity	Right to culture and language
Safe and supportive communication environments	Right to a safe and supportive environment

Table 4 highlights the keyways in which communication intersects with children's rights. Effective communication is essential for ensuring that children's views are heard and considered, which is a fundamental aspect of their right to be heard (Gubbels et al., 2021). Access to information is also important, as it relates to children's right to education. Children with disabilities require communication support to participate fully in society and assert their rights, which is essential for fulfilling their right to participation and inclusion (Crompton, Hallett, Axbey, McAuliffe & Cebula, 2023). The protection of children from harmful communication is essential to ensure that they are protected from violence, abuse, and exploitation, which is a key aspect of their right to protection (Gubbels et al., 2021). The respect for cultural and linguistic diversity is also important for children to be able to fully exercise their right to culture and language. Finally, it is crucial to create safe and supportive communication environments for children, to support their right to a safe and supportive environment (Grbic & Tankosic, 2022). Overall, these tables (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4) emphasize the importance of recognizing and supporting children's communication needs in their development, and the need to research and support effective communication skills so that children can effectively express their opinions and needs, and their rights are respected. From the Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, it is evident that additional efforts are needed in regard to the development of appropriate communication skills and support for children in order to ensure their rights and well-being. This entails supporting and nurturing the cognitive, physical, and emotional developmental traits which are crucial for children's communication needs. Furthermore, research and development of communication tools that can assist children in effectively expressing their opinions and needs, to protect their rights, is necessary. Additionally, educational and awareness campaigns are required to empower the understanding of the importance of communication (Tankosic et al., 2017) in protecting children's rights, as well as supporting political and social initiatives that tackle these issues. Engagement from all relevant sectors, including government, rights protection organizations, health institutions, educational institutions, and civil society is needed to protect and enhance the health and well-being of children.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the relationship between communication, developmental characteristics, and children's rights is crucial for ensuring their well-being and protection. Through the application of the methodology based on the tables, it has been demonstrated that there are significant connections between these three aspects and that they have a direct impact on each other. To improve communication and children's rights, it is essential to take concrete measures that address the identified issues and gaps. Some potential measures that could be taken include increased investment in communication and language development programs, better training and education for caretakers and parents, and the development of policies and legislation that protect children's rights and ensure their access to effective communication. By taking these steps, we can ensure that children have the necessary tools and resources to develop their skills, express themselves effectively, and have their rights protected and respected. However, the relationship between communication and child rights can also be complex, as barriers to communication can impede children's ability to have their rights respected. The intersection of communication and child rights is therefore an important area of study, as it provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving children's ability to have their rights protected and respected through effective communication. Future research could further advance our understanding of the relationship between communication, developmental characteristics, and children's rights and provide valuable insights into how to improve the health and well-being of children.

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## THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR FINANCIAL PLANNING BEHAVIOUR

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*This study analyses financial education and its impact on the behavior of young people in Kosovo during their financial planning. It also provides a theoretical overview of financial education, financial planning, and financial experiences. The study was conducted using quantitative methods, with primary data collected through an online questionnaire. The statistical tests used are MANOVA, ANOVA, Paired T-Test, the Chi-square test for goodness-of-fit, and factorial and reliability analysis. We find that the level of education has a positive effect on money management and the creation of a personal financial plan; employment status and sources of income have an essential impact on controlling the financial situation; financial experience has a positive effect on making personal financial decisions. All empirical analyses are original and based on the authors' calculations through econometric models and other research methods. We highlight the importance of financial education in schools.*

**Keywords:** financial education, financial planning, financial behavior, consumer behavior, youth

### INTRODUCTION

Personal financial planning is the development and implementation of total, coordinated plans for achieving general financial objectives (Maman & Rosenhek, 2022). Private wealth management is also increasingly being applied to this process, particularly when it involves portfolios and more significant investment properties. Most people have a great need for personal financial planning. They have some primary financial goals they want to achieve. To help meet their goals, the public is constantly offered a variety of investments, insurance coverage, savings plans, tax devices, retirement plans, trusts, charitable arrangements, and the like, but these financial instruments and

plans are often presented in a partial manner (Sundarasan et al., 2016). Furthermore, the wealth of our society, along with increasing education levels, creates a situation where more and more people can benefit from financial planning techniques (Waliszewski & Welch, 2021). Everyone should try to improve their financial knowledge. Better financial knowledge makes us more confident about getting a mortgage or investing in our retirement savings. And this helps us understand what developments in the financial markets mean for our work or business. But improving our financial knowledge takes a lot of work. The financial system is vast and complex, which makes it virtually impossible to know where to start learning or where to

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go next (Khoirunnisaa & Johan, 2020). Also, the language of finance is often confusing. Financial literacy is low even in advanced economies with well-developed financial markets. On average, about one-third of the global population is familiar with basic concepts of everyday financial decisions (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2011). This statistic hides gaping weaknesses of specific population subgroups and even lower knowledge of specific financial topics. Furthermore, there is evidence of a lack of trust, particularly among the female gender, and this has implications for how people approach and make financial decisions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The idea of the influence of the financial education of young people on their behavior in financial planning has been the focus of attention in many studies. One of the main studies of the last decade that analyzed financial education and financial behavior among young people is a study conducted by Scheresberg (2013). This study used data from the National Financial Literacy Survey (2009) to examine financial knowledge and financial behavior in a sample of approximately 4,500 young adults aged 25 to 34. According to the findings of this paper, the author finds that the majority of young people lack basic financial knowledge. Financial literacy is particularly low among certain demographic groups, such as women, minorities, and people with lower incomes or less education. However, a high level of education is not a guarantee of financial literacy. The results of this paper show that respondents who display higher financial knowledge or higher confidence in their mathematical knowledge of personal finance have better financial results: they are less likely to use more expensive borrowing methods, high and are more likely to plan for retirement or have savings set aside for emergencies. Aprea and Wuttke (2016) describe financial literacy as “the potential that enables a person to effectively plan, execute and control financial decisions”. According to Atkinson and Messy (2012), financial literacy is based on three distinct but interrelated dimensions: knowledge, behavior, and attitudes. Lusardi (2012) states that financial literacy means “people’s ability to process economic information and make informed decisions about financial planning, wealth accumulation, debt and pensions”. Financial decisions relate to how people spend, save and invest money. Knowing how to manage personal finances better plays an essential role in the digital economic age. Financial literacy

is linked to financial stability, which, in turn, leads to a more efficient economy (Singh, 2014). From a lack of financial education, a person may unconsciously make inappropriate financial decisions and be less able to cope with unexpected economic shocks (Hung, Parket, & Yoong, 2009). In line with this finding, Van Rooij, Lusardi, and Alessie (2012) provided evidence that financial knowledge and calculations are related to many financial decisions, such as those related to saving, spending, investing, and borrowing. Grohmann (2018) found that higher financial literacy led to improved financial decision-making. This also relates to the findings of Chen and Volpe (1998), stating that low level of education and financial knowledge would limit the ability to make decisions. Chijwani and Vidyapeeth (2014) strengthened the results of previous studies, showing that a low level of financial knowledge can lead to financial decisions that can negatively affect personal financial conditions. From the above studies, evidence shows that people who are more financially literate are better able to make financial decisions. Garg and Singh (2018) showed that financial literacy among most young people worldwide is still low and is a cause for concern. This finding is consistent with the study of Yakoboski and Bichsel (2019), which provided evidence that individuals with high levels of financial literacy are more likely to have the ability to withstand financial shocks, are more likely to save regularly for retirement, and have less likely to be in debt. Evidence for the lack of financial knowledge has also been found among children (Te’eni-Harari, 2016). Financial behavior is a collection of financial decisions that people make frequently in their daily lives, such as when they buy a product, make a loan payment, transfer money to a savings account, or sell stocks (Xiao, 2008). Further, financial behavior is a strong predictor of financial well-being in young people’s lives, and it shows in how they manage their personal financial resources by taking action. Credit card payment habits, loan financing choices, and the ability to budget income and expenses are examples of financial behaviors (Mandigma, 2013). It has been repeatedly demonstrated that young people were not always capable of making sound financial decisions. Young people who can make sound financial decisions will not face financial difficulties in the future and will demonstrate healthy financial behaviors. Therefore, the way a young person behaves will significantly affect their financial well-being (Ameliawati & Setiyani, 2018; Gutter & Copur, 2011).



Financial literacy is a form of education in financial matters (Huston, 2010; Klapper, Lusardi, & Panos, 2012). Hilgert, Hogarth, and Beverly (2003) defined financial education as financial knowledge, also seeing it as the basis of appropriate financial decision-making. Previous studies have shown that financial knowledge affects financial behaviour (Babiarz & Robb, 2014) and (Woodyard et al., 2017), financial intention (Priyadharshini, 2017) and financial decisions (Asaad, 2015; Parker, 2012). To measure the level of financial knowledge, subjective financial knowledge or perceived knowledge and objective financial knowledge were used. Subjective financial knowledge is how people perceive themselves in terms of what they know and how they would rate their level of financial knowledge (Allgood & Walstad, 2016; Khan et al., 2017; Raghavan & Mishra, 2011). Objective financial knowledge is that which is actually stored in memory and is measured by assessing people's levels of understanding of various components of financial markets and products, such as accounting, assets, debts, savings and investments, value of money, inflation, compound interest, and risk diversification (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2014).

### **Understanding Financial Education and Financial Planning**

According to internationally accepted definitions, financial education is a process that should enable better knowledge of financial products, concepts and risks, as well as the development of skills for adaptive selection and making sound decisions regarding financial products and services, and the management of personal finances, which ultimately contributes to increasing the population's well-being (Swiecka, 2020). Financial education is closely related to financial inclusion, so higher financial literacy, better information, and willingness to make wise and sound financial decisions should generally contribute to higher financial inclusion. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines financial literacy as: "a combination of awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior necessary to make sound financial decisions and ultimately achieve individual financial well-being" (OECD, 2022). *Why should we be financially literate?* - The reason is that anyone can fall victim to financial fraud: it is not only the young but also the elderly who, in particular, are often the targets of certain types of fraud. New fraud schemes appear all the time, aiming to trick people into taking actions

that result in them losing their money. By taking steps that involve decisions such as creating a spending plan, controlling consumer borrowing, and preparing emergency and retirement funds, financial uncertainty can be reduced, and financial goals can be made attainable. Financial literacy is essential in modern society. Young people are growing up in an increasingly complicated world where they will undoubtedly have to be responsible for their financial spending at all times. Financial education of young people at an early stage is important to reduce social and financial vulnerability, to reduce the risk of debt-induced poverty, placing a financial burden on parents/carers, which can lead to many people leaving studies in case they lose family support for any reason. Furthermore, improving financial literacy can potentially strengthen the efficiency of financial markets (Dahiya, Özen, & Kisan, 2023). Young people who are more informed about financial risks and opportunities can contribute to developing more functional financial institutions. Moreover, promoting a saving culture among young people will lead to the development of the financial situation, in general, to ensure that the financial sector makes an effective contribution to real economic growth. Not all young people continue their education at the university level, especially those with poor financial conditions; therefore, it is important that financial knowledge is learned from high school. *Financial awareness* - In global economic development, financial awareness is one of the necessary elements to create financial stability. Financial awareness is part of financial education and is an important factor that affects perceived knowledge which ultimately affects financial decision-making (Khan et al., 2017; Mason & Wilson, 2000). *Financial experience* - The experience of owning a financial product or sharing the experiences of owning a financial product with others is another factor that affects the improvement of financial education. Frijns, Gilbert and Tourani-Rad (2014) found a positive and significant causal effect of financial experience on financial education. So, someone with good financial experience also has good financial knowledge. *Financial goals* - Financial goals play an important role in measuring a person's financial knowledge. Creating financial goals can be done by setting time-based goals, for example, short-term, medium-term, and long-term. In addition to setting goals, we also need to think about how to achieve these goals, whether it's saving or taking a step forward to address debt.



*Financial decisions* - Well-informed and well-educated individuals should make better decisions about financial matters for their own well-being and to help the community promote economic development (Hogarth, 2002). Lack of financial knowledge can lead to making poor financial decisions that can have negative effects on an individual's financial wealth. According to Grohmann (2018), higher financial education leads to improved financial decision-making. There are several studies that have researched youth financial education and financial planning. We have compiled a summary of the existing literature on the impact of financial education on financial planning and below we present the studies which have been carried out by different authors. In their study about the specifics of Russian and Swedish clients, their financial planning, and the impact of illiteracy on financial planning behavior, Dzutsev (2016) found that young people in Sweden have a higher level of financial literacy, and plan their income, compared to Russia, where young people do not have enough knowledge to plan income, and who also have a higher level of confidence lowers towards financial institutions. Meyers (2020) did a study about the current state of financial literacy and youth financial literacy in the United States. According to this, formal education does not guarantee better acquisition of financial knowledge by students. Thus, formal education is not the only way to acquire financial literacy, which presents an opportunity for all young people to develop their financial skills through other means. Ameer and Khan (2020) conducted a study about the impact of financial socialization and financial literacy on the financial behavior of New Zealand adults. They found that different experiences of financial socialization in men compared to women are associated with higher financial knowledge and higher financial confidence. Those educated in finance and economics had higher financial knowledge and financial confidence in managing their personal finances. Dewi et al. (2020) investigated and measured the financial level and its variables within the academic community in Indonesia and found that lecturers in the academic community need to improve their knowledge, skills, and perceived awareness about managing their money and how they make decisions about investments and loans. Suyanto et al. (2021), conducted a study about the financial behavior of college students and looked at the factors that can influence their financial behavior. According to the study, financial experience affects students' financial management.

However, it has less impact on improving their knowledge due to minimal experience. A study by Danes and Haberman (2007) examined financial knowledge among teenagers by gender and found that Male youth reinforced their existing financial knowledge, while female youth learned significantly more in the area of finance in which they had no knowledge prior to the curriculum. Budiwati (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of financial education on financial management behavior with self-control as an intervening variable. The author found that the higher the financial education of the management, the better the self-control of the management in spending or consumption based on the planned needs. Sabri et al. (2021), examined how financial knowledge, financial behavior, socialization, and financial stress affect the level of financial well-being of young people. The study findings revealed that financial knowledge, financial socialization, financial behavior, and financial strain, according to the results, were found to be important and only financial strain had a negative relationship with financial well-being. Mohamed (2016) did a study evaluating the impact of financial exposure through educational channels on the financial standing of university students. The author found that young people exposed to financial knowledge during their university studies have better financial knowledge than those who were not. The paper concludes that financial education at an early age can reduce financial illiteracy and significantly alleviate financial difficulties among young people. Gavurova et al. (2019) looked at the relationship between financial education and the rationality of female students in Slovakia. The findings revealed that men's financial education is higher than women. Based on the results, teenagers are less financially educated than students over the age of 22. Interesting is the finding regarding the relationship between financial education and the number of family members; students from families with more members are more financially literate than students from families with fewer members. From the summary of the existing literature, we can conclude that financial education affects income planning, as well as experience affects financial management. Financial education at an early age can reduce financial illiteracy and significantly alleviate financial difficulties among young people. In addition to financial education at school, financial knowledge can also be acquired from the family, experience in managing personal finances, conversations with friends, and the Internet.

## METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

### Research questions and hypotheses

This study was carried out with quantitative methods and primary data. The main purpose of this paper is to show the impact of the financial education of young people on their behavior in financial planning.

The research questions of this study are:

1. Does the level of financial education affect the creation of a financial plan?
2. What impact does education level have on money management?
3. Does employment status and sources of income have a significant impact on controlling the financial situation?
4. Does work experience influence personal financial decision-making?
5. What impact does the education level and employment status have on personal savings intended for investment?

The hypotheses built for this study are:  
H1: The level of education has a positive impact on money management and creating a personal financial plan.

H2: Employment status and sources of income have a significant impact on controlling the financial situation.

H3: Work experience has had a positive impact on making personal financial decisions.

H4: Education level and employment status have a significant impact on personal savings intended for investment.

### Data collection and sample selection

This research was conducted using quantitative methods and primary data. According to Dzogovic,

quantitative research involves the use of computer methods to study human behavior. The instruments of this approach are mathematical, and the backbone is measurement. Because these measures are expressed quantitatively (as percentages or numbers used to generalize over large samples), they provide a basis for observing and recording data that can be analyzed quantitatively (Dzogovic, 2022). The data were collected through an online questionnaire. For the design of this questionnaire, we based it on other works that have used different approaches (Dzutsev, 2016; Nano, 2014). The selection of the sample was done randomly. The questionnaire contained 21 questions with Likert scale options to choose from different levels of agreeableness. The questionnaire was distributed through electronic platforms, specifically through social networks and email lists. The questionnaire was left open for data collection for 20 days. Only the respondents under 25 years old were considered for the study. The number of respondents in the questionnaire was 226. The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using the SPSS program, through the following tests: 1. Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA), 2. Analysis of variance (ANOVA), 3. Paired T-test, 4. Chi-square test for goodness of fit, 5. Factorial and reliability analysis. Through these statistical tests, we test if the hypotheses can be accepted.

## ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS, HYPOTHESES TESTING AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The testing of the hypotheses of this study was carried out through the application of these statistical tests: multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA), analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-test of dependent samples, chi-square test for goodness-of-fit, factorial and reliability analysis.

Table 1. MANOVA - The Influence of Education Level on Money Management and Creating a Personal Financial Plan

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.899	964.748 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	217.000	.000	.899
	Wilks' Lambda	.101	964.748 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	217.000	.000	.899
	Hotelling's Trace	8.892	964.748 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	217.000	.000	.899
	Roy's Largest Root	8.892	964.748 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	217.000	.000	.899
P1	Pillai's Trace	1.007	55.267	8.000	436.000	.000	.503
	Wilks' Lambda	.188	71.004 <sup>b</sup>	8.000	434.000	.000	.567
	Hotelling's Trace	3.293	88.923	8.000	432.000	.000	.622
	Roy's Largest Root	2.941	160.269 <sup>c</sup>	4.000	218.000	.000	.746

Table 2. MANOVA - The Influence of Education Level on Money Management and Creating a Personal Financial Plan

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Money management education (Q6)	295.412 <sup>a</sup>	4	73.853	133.482	.000	.710
	The importance of creating a personal financial plan (Q7)	32.633 <sup>b</sup>	4	8.158	60.085	.000	.524
Intercept	Q6	525.702	1	525.702	950.154	.000	.813
	Q7	164.727	1	164.727	1213.191	.000	.848
P1	Q6	295.412	4	73.853	133.482	.000	.710
	Q7	32.633	4	8.158	60.085	.000	.524
Error	Q6	120.615	218	.553			
	Q7	29.600	218	.136			
Total	Q6	2025.000	223				
	Q7	394.000	223				
Corrected Total	Q6	416.027	222				
	Q7	62.233	222				

*The first hypothesis:*

H0 – The level of education has no influence on money management and the creation of a personal financial plan.

H1 – The level of education has a positive impact on money management and creating a personal financial plan.

According to the significance value result in Table 1, Multivariate Tests, P-value = 0.000 < 0.05, where the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, the level of education has a positive impact on money management and creating a personal financial plan. Effect size = 0.567 or 56.7%

Based on the econometric results of the Wilks' Lambda test, we can conclude that there is a significant difference in the size of the effect between the level of education, money management, and the creation of a personal financial plan. The size of the effect between the level of education, money management, and the creation of a personal financial plan is 56.7%, which indicates an average level of influence between these two variables. Money Management - Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, effect size = 0.710

Creating a personal financial plan - Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, effect size = 0.524

According to the results in Table 2, the level of education had a greater positive effect on money management than on creating a personal financial plan. Experience in managing personal finances is the main factor that has influenced the level of education to have a positive impact on money management. Also, other factors that have influenced the size of the effect between the level of education and money management are the experiences and information gained from school, family, conversations with society, the Internet, TV, radio, etc. An effective management of money will have positive effects in creating an adequate personal financial plan and which will help in allocating financial resources to safe investments.

*The second hypothesis:*

H0 – Employment status and sources of income do not have a significant impact on controlling the financial situation.

H2 - Employment status and sources of income have a significant impact on controlling the financial situation.

Table 3. *Econometric Results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)*

How much do you think you control your financial situation?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	112.973	4	28.243	129.795	.000
Within Groups	48.089	221	.218		
Total	161.062	225			

Table 4. *Econometric Results of The Tukey HSD Test*

		Subset for alpha = 0.05				
Tukey HSD <sup>a,b</sup>	Employment status	N	1	2	3	4
	Employed	89	2.65			
	Self-employed	31		3.00		
	Unemployed	31		3.29		
	In search of work	37			4.00	
	Student/trainee	38				4.50
	Sig.		1.000	.052	1.000	1.000

According to the econometric results of the variance analysis in Table 3, we can conclude that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted since the level of significance is at the standard level ( $P\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). So, employment status has a significant impact on controlling the financial situation. Through the results of the Tukey test in Table 4, the independent variable is divided into 4 groups. Group 1 includes employees whose average score in checking the financial situation is lower. Group

2 includes the self-employed and the unemployed, who do not have a big difference between themselves, and their average in checking the financial situation is higher than the average of the employed. Group 3 includes people who are looking for work because they control their financial situation better than the average of groups 1 and 2. Group 4 includes students/trainees whose average control of their financial situation is higher than the average of the first three groups. situation?

Table 5. *Econometric results of the T-Test between dependent samples*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Sources of income	2.38	222	1.552	.104
How much do you think you control your financial situation?	3.29	222	.823	.055

Table 6. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
			Std.		95% Confidence				
		Mean	Deviation	Std. Error	Interval		t	df	Sig. (2-
			n	Mean	Lower	Upper			tailed)
Pair 1	Sources of income - How much do you think you control your financial situation	-.910	1.003	.067	-1.043	-.777	-13.521	221	.000

Table 7. Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Sources of income & How much control you feel you have over your financial situation	222	.814	.000

According to the results presented in Table 5, it can be proven that all respondents declared that the primary source of their income is wages (42.3%), while the secondary source is business income. Also, the average value of the second variable (control of the financial situation) is 3.29, which means that 51.8% of respondents control their financial situation on average. The significance value (2-tailed) in the 95% confidence interval is less than 0.05 ( $p=0.000$ ) (Table 6), where the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, sources of income have a significant impact on controlling the financial situation. The correlation between the source of

income and control of the financial situation is 81.4%. In this case, it can be said that people who have more secure sources of income will have a higher level of control over their financial situation and vice versa because the correlation between them is high (Table 7). Salaries, income from businesses, and remittances are the categories of income that have the greatest impact on increasing the level of control of the financial situation.

#### *The third hypothesis:*

H0 - Work experience has no influence on making personal financial decisions.

H3 - Work experience has a positive impact on making personal financial decisions.

Table 8.1. The Chi-Square Test of Goodness-of-fit - The Impact of Work Experience on Personal Financial Decision-Making

#### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Percentiles		
						25th	50th (Median)	75th
Who influences your financial decisions?	452	2.46	.840	1	3	2.00	3.00	3.00



*Table 8.2. The Chi-Square Test of Goodness-of-fit - The Impact of Work Experience on Personal Financial Decision-Making*

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Family	103	150.7	-47.7
Company	40	150.7	-110.7
No one	309	150.7	158.3
Total	452		

*Table 8.3. The Chi-Square Test of Goodness-of-fit - The Impact of Work Experience on Personal Financial Decision-Making***Test Statistics**

Who influences your financial decisions?	
Chi-Square	262.757 <sup>a</sup>
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 150.7.

As illustrated in Tables 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3, the number of observations is 226. The average value of this variable is 2.46 units. The standard deviation is 0.840 units representing the average value of how much the data has deviated from the arithmetic mean. The minimum value is 1 unit, the maximum value is 3 units and the median of this variable is 3.00 units. The expected value for each year

of work experience in making personal financial decisions is 150.7. Since Asymp. Sig.= 0.000 < 0.05, then the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. So, work experience has had a positive impact on making personal financial decisions. The value of the Chi-Square coefficient is 262.757, which shows the difference between the sample and the population.

*Table 9. Number of Factors with Respect to Eigen Value and Percentage of Variance Explained*

Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared			Rotation Sums of Squared		
Component	Loadings		Loadings		Cumulative %	Loadings		Cumulative %
	Total	% of Variance	Total	% of Variance		Total	% of Variance	
1	15.822	79.112	15.822	79.112	79.112	11.506	57.531	57.531
2	1.619	8.094	1.619	8.094	87.206	5.935	29.675	87.206
3	.985	4.926						
4	.515	2.575						
5	.241	1.203						
...	...	...						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

*The fourth hypothesis:*

H0 – Education level and employment status do not have a significant impact on personal savings intended for investment.

H4 – Education level and employment status have a significant impact on personal savings intended for investment.

In the table with Eigen values (Table 9),

two factors have been obtained from 20 independent variables. The first factor explains 57.531% of the total variance of personal savings destined for investment. The second factor explains personal savings intended for investment with a variance of 29.675%. While the two factors together explain the total variance at 87.206%.

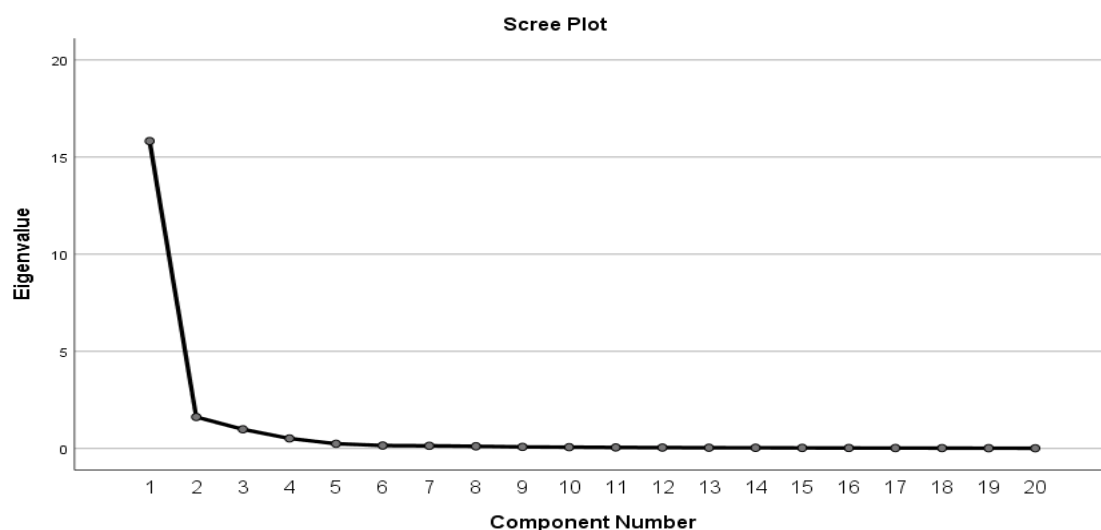
*Table 10. Factorial Analysis of The Impact of Education Level and Employment Status on Personal Savings Intended for Investment*

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.938
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	9831.619
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

As illustrated in Table 10, since the coefficient of the KMO test is  $0.938 > 0.50$  we can say that the data set is suitable for factorial analysis (Chi-Square = 9831.619, Sig. =  $0.000 < 0.05$ ).

Considering the fact that the significance of the Bartlett test is less than 0.05, it means that this model is statistically significant and we have high correlations between the independent variables.



*Figure 1. Factor Analysis Chart*

Based on the factorial analysis graph (Figure 1), we can see that after the second factor, the graph line will begin to lose the trend to a considerable extent, and we can limit the number of factors in this analysis to 2 or 3 factors. Based on the cumulative values of the common variance, we can conclude that the variables that have the highest variance are as follows: employment status 97.1%, the most important things in life (happy family, social success, work, wealth ) 95.8%, non-acceptance of the application of extreme cases (concealment of taxable income, customer fraud, bribery, use of the organization's equipment for personal purposes and late payments) 95.7%, ways of life insurance (personal business, work with stable earnings, full or partial help from parents) 94.6% and security in money management 94.1%. According to the results of the rotation matrix, the variables that are categorized in the first factor are change of permanent residence or additional education for advancement in work (93.2%), ways of securing life (personal business, work

with stable earnings, assistance full or partial parenting) 92.7%, employment status 90.9%, sources of income 88.4% and savings reserves to cover expenses 87%. While the variables of the second factor that have the highest variance are: not accepting the application of extreme cases (concealment of taxable income, customer fraud, bribery, use of the organization's equipment for personal purposes, and payment delays) 95.9%, the most important things in life (happy family, social success, work, wealth) 95.4%, security in money management 80.5% and education level 65.6%. Based on the statistical results of the reliability analysis, we can see that the number of observations processed in this analysis is 216 and the independent variables that have the greatest weight in the total variance of the factorial analysis are as follows: change of permanent residence or additional education for career advancement, means of life insurance, employment status, sources of income and savings reserves.

Table 11. The Results of the Reliability Analysis For The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.975	.989	5

As illustrated in Table 11, the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.975 and based on this value we can conclude that the independent variables of the first factor have a very high degree of reliability. Based on the correlation matrix (Table 12),

it can be observed that all the independent variables of the first factor have a very high correlation between themselves, and through a high level of correlation, an important prerequisite of the reliability analysis is met.

Table 12. Correlation Matrix

	Chng. of perm.res. or add. edu. for job adv.	Ways of life insurance	Employment status	Sources of income	Savings reserves
Change of permanent residence or additional education for job advancement	1.000	.970	.949	.911	.977
Ways of life insurance	.970	1.000	.950	.905	.979
Employment status	.949	.950	1.000	.943	.949
Sources of income	.911	.905	.943	1.000	.924
Savings reserves	.977	.979	.949	.924	1.000

Table 13. Calculated values of the variables in the first factor

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Change of permanent residence or additional education for job advancement	8.66	25.918	.970	.961	.972
Ways of life insurance	8.61	25.811	.969	.966	.972
Employment status	7.93	20.292	.969	.944	.965
Sources of income	8.08	20.393	.938	.903	.972
Savings reserves	8.27	21.762	.975	.974	.961

As illustrated in Table 13, all the values calculated in the reliability analysis through Cronbach's Alpha model are reliable measures and are very close to the general value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.975. All variables of the first factor have a very high level of reliability and

their ranking based on the level of reliability is as follows: sources of income, change of permanent residence or additional education for job advancement, Ways of life insurance, employment status, and savings reserves.

Table 14. Descriptive statistics of reliability analysis

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
10.39	35.457	5.955	5

As illustrated in Table 14, the value of the general average for the first factor is 10.39 with a variance of 35.457 and a standard deviation of 5.955. Based on the results from Anova (Table 15), we can see that all independent variables of the first factor affect personal savings intended for investment (sig. = 0.000 < 0.10). So according to these results, sources of income, change of permanent residence

or additional education for job advancement, ways of life insurance, employment status, and savings reserves are the ones that most affect personal savings intended for investment. So, the level of financial education and employment status have a significant positive impact on personal savings intended for investment.

Table 15. Econometric results of reliability analysis

ANOVA					
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Sig
Between People		1524.667	215	7.091	
Within People	Between Items	89.606	4	22.401	.000
	Residual	153.194	860	.178	
	Total	242.800	864	.281	
Total		1767.467	1079	1.638	

Grand Mean = 2.08

## DISCUSSION

The focus of this scientific paper was to analyze how the financial education of young people has an impact on their financial planning behavior. In recent years, many scientific studies have been carried out by different authors such as Dzutsev (2016), Meyers (2020), Mohamed (2016), Gavurova, et al. (2019) where the objective of their study was how the level of financial education impacts financial planning and the realization of various financial and real investments. The empirical findings of our study consist in the fact that the level of financial education of young people in Kosovo is high and this has a positive impact on money management and the creation of a personal financial plan, and these findings are comparable to the studies of other authors. According to the study by Dzutsev (2016), young people in Sweden have a higher level of financial literacy and plan their income better compared to Russia, where young people do not have enough knowledge to plan income, and also have the lowest level of trust towards financial institutions. The findings of the study by Meyers (2020), show that formal education does not guarantee better acquisition of financial knowledge by students. Thus, formal education is not the only way to acquire financial knowledge, which presents an opportunity for all young people to develop their financial skills through other means. While Mohamed (2016) in his study states that young people who were exposed to financial knowledge during their university studies have better financial knowledge compared to those who were not exposed. The study concludes that financial education at an early age can reduce financial illiteracy and significantly alleviate financial difficulties among young people. Gavurova, et al. (2019), have concluded that in Slovakia the financial education of men is higher than that of women. Based on the results of this study, it is found that teenagers are less financially educated than students over the age of 22. Interesting is the finding regarding the relationship between financial education and the number of family members. Students from families with more members are more financially literate than students from families with fewer members. All these empirical findings of other authors' studies are comparable to the econometric results of our study, giving greater relevance to the theoretical and practical contribution of this study.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with the objectives of the study, the theory, the methodology, the results of the data analysis, and the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the level of education has a positive impact on money management and creating a personal financial plan. So, the more that young people in Kosovo are educated and qualified, the higher the positive effect on the effective management of money in order to make efficient decisions for personal investments. Employment status and sources of income have a significant positive impact on controlling the financial situation. So, the econometric results of this study show that when young people are employed or self-employed and have a secure source of income, and this will have a positive effect on controlling their financial situation and making effective decisions for personal investments. The increase in the level of qualification of young people in correlation with the employment status and sources of income will affect the increase in work experience which has positive effects on making personal decisions for financing. So, when young people have more work experience, it is easier for them to make decisions effectively in fulfilling their personal financial plans. The results of factorial analysis and reliability analysis show that sources of income, change of permanent residence or additional education for job advancement, ways of life insurance, employment status, and savings reserves are characteristics among young people in Kosovo that have a positive effect on personal savings intended for investment. Through this study, we recommend that the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Kosovo should design a curriculum plan to include the subject of financial education at all school levels so that pupils and students become familiar with the concept of financial education and can apply it in their practical life in the future. Also, all pre-university educational institutions should cooperate with various local and international organizations to realize seminars, workshops, and other ways to spread financial education to young people in Kosovo.



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## CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF LAW AND DIGITALIZATION: CASE STUDY OF CONTRACT LAW

*Scientific review paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper focuses on highlighting the weaknesses and lack of legislation for the electronic notarization of electronic contracts, not only in Kosovo's business field. The idea of electronic notarization is new in Kosovo and is considered a complex task for the regulation of contractual obligations, which condition the modern activities of e-business. The dynamics and dimensions of e-business development strongly influence the change in the techniques of concluding formal contracts at a distance through information technologies. New legislative practices in the modern world are successfully managing to eliminate or reduce these obstacles, which unintentionally complicate and slow down contractual legal relations between business partners. Notary services are no exception to this trend. Despite the positive trend, the legislation in Kosovo seems to be only in its beginnings, and as such it does not enable and guarantee business partners the electronic notarization of contracts, but unfortunately, there is no debate and no concrete initiatives so far. The first phase, which would better regulate this field, concerns the standardization through the validation of these contracts in the territory of Kosovo through criteria that prove and guarantee the accuracy of the contract.*

**Keywords:** e-business, electronic contract, electronic notarization, law, validation

### INTRODUCTION

IT technologies are present in almost all public relations areas requiring the same active development in the legal field. The increase in the dynamics of the movement of people, capital goods, and services remains stable, reliable, and safe only by guaranteeing at the same time a high quality of new service with a quick reaction through legal regulation. In these conditions, even the notary as a public support service has managed to transform into an advanced legal institution. The understanding of the importance of the development of digital

technology in modern society in the field of a notary by giving this institution the initiative, at the expense of the parties, without attracting budget funds, has managed to create a complete legal-electronic infrastructure that increased the security of important legal information as well as the speed and quality of receiving notarial services. The basis for this infrastructure is usually common (unique) notarial information systems (López Jiménez, Ditmar, & Vargas Portillo, 2022). The common information system of public notaries usually acts as a reliable repository for every notarial document. On the other hand, it serves as a unique high-tech tool that changes the nature of

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all notarial activities. In certain countries, the final transition to electronic document management was implemented in recent years. In this function, almost all notarial acts are registered in the registers within the common notarial information systems in electronic format. The creation of such electronic systems guarantees and allows the provision of operational control of important legal information and prevents fraudulent actions with notarial documents. As a result, these systems stabilize and accelerate the circulation of civil services. Thanks to the development of electronic notaries, clients receive services in a convenient way from “one window”. Therefore, for the authentication of real estate transactions, the notary obtains data from the necessary registers and then sends the authenticated contract for ownership registration. In addition, electronic forms related to business matters are notarized in almost the same procedure. Thus, notary offices have rightfully acquired the status of suitable offices for the verification, registration, and notarization of many services, which are also acceptable from a territorial point of view around the world (Lubis et al., 2022). In this way, the notaries have become an electronic governing partner, which is efficient and effective. As such, within the framework of electronic interaction with other sectors, the notary can cooperate with the Tax Administration, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Central Bank and commercial banks, municipal property services, and other important bodies in the country (Ahto, Pöld, Tarmo, & Vallner, 2011). In the countries that have not developed this segment, the notary system must soon build and implement the common electronic notary system, closely related to the civil status office and Business Registration Agencies. This way, the notarial system will have accurate data of all parties and commercial companies, thus creating a reliable database that can also be used by the service of bailiffs.

## THE NOTARY SYSTEM IN KOSOVO

The notary activity in Kosovo began in 2004 as a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), where Swiss notary experts supported the UNMIK Department of Justice in drafting the Law on the Notary System in Kosovo. The support lasted until mid-2006 and included the drafting of the law, the discussion of the law among relevant actors, the drafting of legislation, etc. (IHN, 2017). The second phase of the project (2008-2011) was supported by the Ministry of Justice in implementing the law on notaries. The

Swiss support consisted of the drafting of relevant secondary legislation, the training of 200 notary candidates, and support in the organization of the examination process for notary candidates. In September 2011, the Ministry of Justice certified the first 48 Kosovar notaries (including 3 non-Albanians and 10 women (Telegrafi, 2011)). Phase 3 of the notary project (2012 to 2014) aimed to consolidate the notary system in Kosovo. In addition to training the first group of 48 licensed notaries and the Chamber of Notaries, this phase created the final structure for entering the profession and training within the service. Moreover, the aim was to harmonize the legal framework related to the notary service. The organization and functioning of the notary as a public activity in Kosovo, including the working conditions and methods of notaries, are regulated by Law No. 03/L-010 for the Notary of Kosovo (Law No. 03/L-010, 2008). This law entered into force in November 2008 to form the Notary system in Kosovo, which would contribute to advancing the justice system in general. Considering the political, social, and economic circumstances, without a doubt the creation of the notary system is considered one of the biggest successes that Kosovo has achieved after 1999. However, especially in the last two or three years, it turns out that this system should be reviewed anyway understanding of the completion of the legislation and the range of services it should offer. The introduction of the notary service in the legal system of the country is regulated by the creation of norms that regulate the work of notaries. The entirety of these norms can also be called by the common name the Kosovar notarial law, which is part of the country's legal system where the notary is incorporated. In determining the definition of notarial law, the types and characters of the norms that regulate the activity of notaries are distinguished. The Law on Public Notary in Kosovo contains norms that regulate the organization of the notary service, the status of notaries, the conditions for performing the public notary service, the appointment of notaries, the termination of the public notary service, the functions and responsibilities of public notaries and the supervision of the work of public notaries. The above-mentioned norms constitute organizational notarial law. The drafting of notarial acts, their legal effect, and evidentiary power are also regulated by the Law on Public Notary of Kosovo so these norms represent notarial procedural law. These norms regulate the procedure to be followed by every notary about official actions. They are equivalent to the norms that apply to proceedings in civil,



extrajudicial, and administrative processes. The Law on Notary contains norms that regulate the form, content, and other elements of notarial acts for legal matters. The notary is obliged to recognize and implement the provisions of other laws and regulations in his work (Law on Obligatory Relations, Law on Property-Legal Relations, Law on Inheritance, Law on Business Companies, etc.). These are norms of a material-legal nature that are applied during the drafting of notarial acts and notaries need to know them so that these acts produce the desired legal effects and have the formal and material originality of a public document. So, notarial law or notary covers a wide range of different branches of law. This includes substantial norms, procedural norms, and organizational norms. In Kosovo, the responsibilities of public notaries are defined by the Law on Notaries, the Law on Obligations, the Law on the Family, the Law on Out-of-Contestation Procedures, the Law on Commercial Companies, etc. In general, it can be said that the responsibilities of public notaries are mainly from the following areas: jurisdictions in the field of family relations; jurisdictions from juridical relations; jurisdictions in the field of inheritance; competencies in the field of notarization - legalization, solemnization, storage of documents and securities, etc. Based on the provisions of the Kosovo Notary Law, the notary is authorized to perform the following tasks: compile and certify public notarial documents; certified notarial documents, drawn up by a party or by a third party; accept documents for cash, payment orders, checks, public bonds, securities, as well as other assets; Furthermore, in terms of the out-of-contestation procedure, it commences the following works: undertakes actions in the out-of-contestation procedure: the drafting of the notarial testament; inheritance review; deciding on the inheritance in extrajudicial procedure; evaluation of the public sale of movable and immovable assets in extrajudicial proceedings, and especially in cases of voluntary sales; storage of inheritance documents, money, securities, and valuable assets and, performing other duties assigned by law. The Law on Public Notary of Kosovo provides the form of a notarized document for legal actions, the conclusion of which produces significant legal effects or involves parties that need special protection. The parties to the contract and the entire legal system are interested that, through these provisions, legal actions are formulated clearly and without objections by persons capable and authorized to perform these legal actions. Thus, the

rights and obligations of the parties are balanced and clearly defined, so that there are no legal disputes during their implementation or without eventual problems recorded in the relevant public registers. The form of notarial processing is provided for several transactions in Kosovo law as the form "ad solemnities" or the condition of their validity. Failure to perform these legal actions in that form results in the invalidity of the legal action. If the parties did not bind the legal action in the form of a "notarized document", after having executed it in its entirety or its main part, the question of authentication of such work may arise. The goal of the legislator is the provision of the highest quality legal services by an impartial third party, which would aim at greater legal certainty and the avoidance of disputes. This leads to the conclusion that the form of the notarized document is mainly provided for the public interest, without which authentication would not be possible. In 2021, the Kosovo Parliament approved Law No. 08/L-022 for electronic identification and trusted services in electronic transactions (Law No. 08/L-022, 2021), through which are regulated and standardized the electronic identification methods and schemes, conditions of use of electronic signatures, electronic seals, electronic time stamps and devices, registered electronic services for court procedures, etc. Moreover, the conditions for issuing and using qualified certificates for the certification of services and authentication of the website, and trusted services in transactions or electronic documents have also been regulated. In this way, essential preconditions have been created for the notarial system to gradually enable the transition to electronic services. In reality, this law has been harmonized by Regulation (EU) No. 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 23, 2014, for electronic identification and trusted services for electronic transactions in the domestic market, which repealed Directive No. 1999/93/EC. Following the arguments, the Kosovo notary system does not offer services for the notarization of formal electronic contracts. This in particular represents one of the most serious problems and obstacles for business entities that develop activities in the territory of Kosovo. If we analyze the dynamics and the increasing volume of businesses in the country, then it results that the notary system must move in terms of the regulation and electronic notarization of these services. To advance this public service, it seems the Ministry of Justice has started to move in the direction of revising the primary and secondary legislation, strengthening the supervision system,



digitalization as well as increasing the security of the notary system (Gazeta Shqip, 2021). The current notarial system in Kosovo, at least until now, has excluded the possibility that notarial contracts can be concluded in electronic form, which seems too prohibitive and contrary to the reforming tendencies of this aspect of legislation to the needs of electronic market operations.

## **BINDING AND VALIDITY OF ELECTRONIC CONTRACTS**

Legally valid electronic contracts are a prerequisite for the development of electronic commerce and other civil transactions. In addition, to obtain a wide acceptance of electronic contracts, as a requirement is the legal validity of digital signatures including the further development of electronic commerce (Dahris et al., 2022). Based on international sources and comparative legislation, electronic contracts can be concluded in any way that they clearly express an agreement or an acceptance of the negotiating parties or, in this sense, the operation of electronic intermediaries (Gambino & Stazi, 2021). Of course, to avoid uncertainty, the legislation of the majority of European countries is mostly defined in the implementation of Article 9 of the Electronic Commerce Directive, which protects the parties from the unwanted or accidental conclusion of contracts. For a contract concluded in this way to produce a legal effect, the parties must offer each other the possibility of controlling all points of the contract, especially the price and the possibility of correcting errors after which an agreement can be reached and, contractual effects take place (European Commission, 2022). Normally, contemporary legislations regulate and allow the conclusion of an electronic contract, not only through the Internet but also through other information systems. For this contract, UCITA uses the term “computer information transaction” (Prasad & Pallavi, 2022). The UNCITRAL Model Law defines the same legal term as activities of a commercial nature undertaken through the exchange of information created, stored, or transmitted by electronic, optical, or analog means, including EDI 61 by electronic mail, telegram, telex, fax, etc (Osmanovic, 2022). In the terms used the economic and IT meaning and connotation prevails. By the principle of contractual freedom and consensual, the UNCITRAL Model Law and all comparable legislation, including international sources, unequivocally now recognize the validity of electronically concluded contracts. The Directive on electronic signatures requires

member states to provide advanced systems for electronic signatures that have the same legal effect as traditional signatures (Fairfield & Selvadurai, 2022). Hence, in Kosovar law and other comparable legislations, the electronic form is equated with the traditional written form only when this is expressly a condition for the validity of the contract. And, even in situations where a handwritten signature is required. Exceptions to this principle are most often made by certain contracts and other legal actions that still need to be bound traditionally and which are most often referred to as contracts that transfer rights over real estate (except lease rights), contracts where the objective law expressly requires the form.

## **IMPACT AND EFFECTS OF THE UNIQUE ELECTRONIC NOTARY SYSTEM**

The unique electronic notary system is a complex of software and hardware designed to provide efficient work for notaries and their interaction with state agencies of notaries and with the Ministry of Justice of the country. The interaction provides the population and business entities with high-quality legal notarial services, timely and reliable reporting for notarial actions, state registration as a subject of intellectual property, etc. (Halleux, Hendricks, Maliene, & Nordahl, 2023). The transition from traditional notarization to notarization of documents in electronic form is not just a matter of assigning electronic signatures and seals to a notarized document or storing writing for organizations. It is considered to be a modernization process that changes the way of performing the notarization service and the form of notarized documents followed by changes in other relevant procedures and processes. For electronic notarization, changes are required not only in the relevant legal provisions and notarization processes but also in notarization practitioners (notary practice organizations, notaries, secretaries, etc.) and notarization applicants must also make major changes in their approach and skills (Lubis et al., 2022). Electronic notarization is the certification of the document by a notary using electronic means. One method of this is to use digital signatures and seals to authenticate and confirm validity with digital certification (Gracale & Mekka Putra, 2022). Electronic notarization is the process in which a notary attaches an electronic signature and notarized seal using a secure key to an electronic document (PDF or Word). An electronic document exists as electronic data in computer-readable form rather than as words

on a page of printed paper. Some examples of electronic documents are: word processing documents, e-mail messages, Portable Document Format (PDF) files, and scanned documents in an image format, such as popular Adobe software and websites, etc. An electronic document, such as a mortgage agreement, has the same properties as a paper version but is created and maintained electronically, usually through a computer program or a website (Björk, 2002). In many documents, the terms “E-Notary” and “Digital Notary” are the same. Consequently, it is understood in the sense that the Public Notary certifies documents electronically. One method of electronic notarization is digital use. It can be understood that the “digital transformation of notarial activities” is a fundamental change in the way of organization, design, implementation, and management of the provision of the notarial service. Wang (2011) argues that processes and activities based on digital technology create greater value and efficiency (Wang, 2011). The main functions of the electronic notary must be the certification and execution of acts of a legal nature that are carried out in electronic form. To perform notarial acts in electronic form, a software package for notarization is necessary, which must be installed by each person who is authorized to perform some notarial acts in electronic form. To perform notarial acts in electronic form, it is necessary to be equipped with a digital signature and the possibility of setting a time stamp in the performance of notarial acts (López Jiménez et al., 2022). Furthermore, false documents in notarization activities are a problem, especially those that prove the ownership and the right to use the property. Notaries mainly use skills and knowledge to identify fake documents when handling notarized documents. Thus, notaries must have direct contact with paper documents, using their senses to look for security marks or traces of forgery. If electronic notarization is carried out without data on the real owners and on the origin of the property from land management agencies, there is a high risk of forgery, thereby compromising the work of notaries and the security of transactions (Bui Nguyen & Phan, 2022). Similarly, the situation of forgery of notary applicants is also on the rise, while the notary database is not linked to population data. Thus, notaries still have to rely on checking paper identity documents to determine the authenticity and forgery of the papers. This is the main reason for rejection when setting up electronic notarization.

## CONCLUSION

Our society is relying more and more on an economic system that is mainly based on the mechanism of contracts. At the moment, our society from an economic point of view is changing into an even more contemporary information society. One of the most important indicators showing this change is the growing digital economy. But, although the economic community still does not have confidence in electronic contracts, their further development will not be able to disclose their full potential and benefit to us. More and more countries are adopting legal frameworks to ensure electronic commerce and electronic notarization, driving the need to secure and recruit personnel who have legal and IT skills to become electronic notaries. This article highlights the urgent need for certain countries, including Kosovo, to take concrete actions to regulate primary and secondary legislation in the field of enriching the assortment of notary services. They also include the need for a unique integrated platform from an electronic point of view in public institutions. This complex platform must be based on registries that ensure justice in electronic notarization, authentication of the user's identity, and encryption of data transmission by blocking and preserving the signature process. Electronic notarization (e-notarization) in its most basic and common form is the process of a notary placing his or her electronic signature or digital certificate on an electronic document. The digital signature or certificate is generated by a complex mathematical formula (algorithms) that includes coding and decoding (encryption) technology. The basic elements of notarization, including the personal appearance of the signatories at the notary office, still apply. But, instead of a paper document and a physical notary stamp, the notary puts the identifying information digitally into a document as electronic information in a computer-readable form. The electronic notary must be part of a public system that performs a certain function of authenticating an electronic document with an electronic seal. In this way, he is given the right to guarantee the authenticity of documents and legal force by placing a special “time stamp” on the electronic document jointly with the electronic signature of the public notary, including performing the necessary notarial actions in electronic form. The time stamp serves as proof that the document existed at some point and

enables the necessary changes to be made. The notary is an organized, quite compact, and transparent system that is related to the administrative-territorial state division. The activity of the public notary is focused on performing the necessary functions of public law, being entirely impartial. The public status of the notary's archive can be done electronically. The main goal of notaries is to guarantee the legal security of civil circulation using various technical and legal means, including modern technologies. In the implementation of information technology, the notary can use the verification of the authenticity of notarial documents and powers of an attorney coming from a certain person, such as a notary of the electronic system and a notary with a unique character. Moreover, through IT, it is possible to authenticate copies of electronic documents necessary for court proceedings, transfer documents in electronic form through a notary, keep minutes of joint stock company meetings, use video programs in various processes that are then authenticated by a notary, creating files with documents in electronic form, etc. A register of notarial acts can also be kept in electronic form by duplicating the results of storage in notarial chambers. Through IT, the consideration of disputes in the courts will be much faster and easier because the evidence is submitted electronically. However, to ensure information and data security for electronic notarization, it is necessary to take security measures at several levels, such as network, user verification, and database. At the same time, verification and data encryption must have a mechanism for authorization of access. And, codification of information and data related to access to services and information must guarantee the security of the website's operation.

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## AUDIOLOGIC PROFILE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WITH ADENOID HYPERTROPHY AND HEARING LOSS

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of the study was to compare pre-treatment and post-treatment pure tone thresholds and tympanometric findings in preschool children with adenoid hypertrophy and hearing loss. This retrospective study included 63 children, 40 males (63.5%) and 23 females (36.5%), aged 4 to 6 years (mean age of 5.5±0.6 years). A total of 21 children (33.3%) had tympanostomy tube placement in addition to adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy. All children had mild conductive hearing loss. Pure tone average (PTA) was lower after adenoidectomy and adenotonsillectomy ( $p<0.0001$ ). Type B tympanogram was predominant before treatment (62.7%), and type A tympanogram after treatment (81%). Preoperative mean PTA in children with adenoidectomy was 28 dB HL and in children with adenotonsillectomy was 27 dB HL. In both subgroups postoperative mean PTA was 16 dB HL. In children with adenoid hypertrophy and conductive hearing loss, hearing thresholds after adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy are significantly lower than preoperative hearing thresholds.*

**Keywords:** adenoidectomy, adenotonsillectomy, children, hearing loss

### INTRODUCTION

The most common type of hearing impairment in childhood is transient conductive hearing loss due to middle ear effusion (Zahnert, 2011). Otitis media with effusion (OME) is the presence of fluid in the middle ear without signs or symptoms of acute ear infection (Schilder et al., 2016). Adenoid hypertrophy can cause recurrent acute otitis media in addition to OME as a result of Eustachian tube dysfunction and primary infection focus (Durgut & Dikici, 2019). The adenoid is a mass of lymphoid tissue in the postero-superior wall of

the nasopharynx (MacKeith et al., 2022). Chronic OME is OME persisting for 3 months or longer from the date of onset, if known or from the date of diagnosis if onset is unknown (Rosenfeld et al., 2016). There are a number of potential theories for the etiopathogenesis of OME including Eustachian tube dysfunction, subclinical bacterial infection and middle ear effusion as a sequelae of acute otitis media (Atkinson et al., 2015). Up to 80% of children have been affected by OME by the age of 4 years, but prevalence declines beyond 6 years of age (Williamson, 2011). Congenital, permanent, bilateral hearing loss

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is much rare, with a prevalence of 1.2 per 1000 children (Zahnert, 2011). There is a bimodal peak of incidence at two and five years of age, with 50% of episodes of OME resolving spontaneously within three months (Robb & Williamson, 2016). Children with chronic OME may develop structural changes of the tympanic membrane, hearing loss, and speech and language delay. Untreated persistent middle ear effusion would place the child at high risk for hearing loss from suboptimal conduction of sound through the middle ear, which could interfere with subsequent speech and language progress (Rosenfeld et al., 2022). The hypothesis that OME disrupts a child's language processing is based on the premise that children who have had history of OME may have difficulty with the rapid rate of language processing. During language processing, an individual analyzes an acoustic waveform for known phonemes; searches in long-term memory for words corresponding to the identified phoneme sequences; analyzes sequences of words for grammatical structures; and identifies the representation of the form. Frequent and persistent mild to moderate hearing loss that interferes with or prevents completion of these processing operations in a timely fashion could possibly cause a loss of language information. Delays in such aspects of language development as speech perception, grammatical comprehension, and word learning could result (Roberts et al., 2004). Sensory, physical, cognitive, or behavioral factors that place children who have otitis media with effusion at increased risk for developmental difficulties are the following: permanent hearing loss independent of OME; suspected or confirmed speech and language delay or disorder; Autism spectrum disorder and other pervasive developmental disorders; syndromes (eg, Down) or craniofacial disorders that include cognitive, speech, or language delays; blindness or uncorrectable visual impairment, cleft palate, with or without associated syndrome; and developmental delay (Rosenfeld et al., 2016). Some authors' findings suggest that ~25% of bilateral childhood hearing loss is postnatal (Weichbold et al., 2006). Such continuous hearing screening is important because even a perfect newborn hearing screening program will never identify late-onset permanent hearing loss or identify fluctuating hearing loss as a result of otitis media (Johnson et al., 2005). Any parental concern about hearing loss requires an objective hearing screening. Hearing impairment is often identified when parents express concern regarding their child's behavior, performance at school,

or language development (Williamson, 2011). The benchmark for hearing loss due to bilateral OME is hearing in the better ear of 25-30 dB HL or worse, averaged at 0.5, 1, 2 and 4 kHz. Tympanometry will typically demonstrate reduced middle ear compliance, with Jerger type B (flat) or C (negative pressure) traces (Robb & Williamson, 2016). A systematic review of hearing loss in children with diagnosed OME showed mostly bilateral mild to moderate hearing loss (average 18-35 dB HL) in the most important frequencies for speech perception. The air conduction configuration is roughly flat with a slight elevation at 2000 Hz and a slope at 8000 Hz (Cai & McPherson, 2017). Acoustic immittance measures, including tympanometry and acoustic reflex thresholds can provide important information about specific aspects of auditory system functioning (Johnson, 2002). Objective middle-ear assessment can best be performed by tympanometry (Harlor et al., 2009). Tympanogram is an objective measure of how easily the tympanic membrane vibrates and at what pressure it does so most easily. If the middle ear is filled with fluid (eg, OME), vibration is impaired and the tracing will be flat; if the middle ear is filled with air but at a higher or lower pressure than the surrounding atmosphere, the peak on the graph will be shifted in position based on the pressure, to the left if negative, and to the right if positive (Rosenfeld et al., 2022). Surgical management of children with OME includes tympanostomy tube insertion or adenoidectomy, alone or with myringotomy and tube insertion. Adenoidectomy is surgical removal of the adenoid and it is performed under general anaesthesia (Capaccio et al., 2016). Tympanostomy tube insertion is surgical placement of a tube through a myringotomy incision for purposes of temporary middle ear ventilation. Tympanostomy tubes generally last several months to several years, depending on tube design and placement location in the tympanic membrane. Synonyms include ventilation tubes, pressure equalization tubes, and grommets (Rosenfeld et al., 2022). The aim of the study was to compare pure tone thresholds and tympanometric findings in preschool children with adenoid hypertrophy and hearing loss before and after adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy.

## METHODS

This retrospective study included a sample of 63 children, 40 males (63.5%) and 23 females (36.5%), aged 4 to 6 years (mean age of  $5.5 \pm 0.6$  years), examined at the Department of

Otorhinolaryngology, Division of audiology, City General Hospital “8<sup>th</sup> September”, Skopje, during the period from January 2018 to December 2022. Inclusion criteria were: audiological assessment before and after adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy in preschool children with adenoid hypertrophy cooperative for pure tone audiometry, preoperative unilateral or bilateral hearing loss, and at least one month postoperative follow-up. Both, children with and without tympanostomy tubes placement were included. Children with preoperative normal hearing were excluded. Findings from ENT examination, pure tone audiometry and tympanometry were analyzed. Pure tone audiometry was performed with MADSEN Astera<sup>2</sup> audiometer (GN Otometrics, Denmark) and Sennheiser HDA 300 circum-aural headphones (Sennheiser electronic, Germany) in sound proof booth. Hearing threshold

was obtained at frequencies from 125 to 8000 Hz using the modified Hughson-Westlake technique. Normal hearing was defined as thresholds  $\leq 20$  dB hearing level (HL) at audiometric frequencies from 250 to 8000 Hz. Tympanometry with 226 Hz probe tone was performed with Amplaid A756 tympanometer (Amplifon, Italy). For statistical data analysis we used Paired t test and Chi-square test with level of significance  $p < 0.05$ . The Protocol number of Ethical approval is 628-2/2023.

## RESULTS

Our study included 63 preschool children (a total of 126 ears were analyzed). Baseline demographic and clinical characteristics of children are displayed in Table 1. A total of 20 children (31.7%) had adenoidectomy and 43 children (68.3%) had adenotonsillectomy.

Table 1. Baseline demographic and clinical characteristics of the patients (n=63)

Characteristics	No (%)
Age (Years)	4-6 (mean 5.5 $\pm$ 0.6)
Gender	40 (63.5)
Male	23 (36.5)
Female	
Preoperative diagnosis	
Adenoid hypertrophy	20 (31.7)
Adenoid and tonsil hypertrophy	43 (68.3)
Side of hearing loss	
Unilateral right	15 (23.8)
Unilateral left	6 (9.5)
Bilateral	42 (66.7)
Degree of hearing loss (126 ears)	
Normal hearing (0-20 dB HL)	21 (16.7)
Mild hearing loss (21-40 dB HL)	105 (83.3)
Type of hearing loss (105 ears)	
Conductive	105 (100)

In addition to the adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy, there was ventilation tubes placement in some children. Number of children with

different surgical intervention and tympanostomy tubes placement is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of children with different surgical intervention and tympanostomy tubes placement

Surgical intervention	With ventilation tubes	Without ventilation tubes	Total
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)
Adenoidectomy	7 (11.1)	13 (20.6)	20 (31.7)
Adenotonsillectomy	14 (22.2)	29 (46)	43 (68.3)
Total	21 (33.3)	42 (66.7)	63 (100)

Postoperative outcomes in cases of preoperative hearing loss in terms of the surgery were analyzed (Table 3). A statistical analysis with Chi-square test shows that there is no statistically significant

difference between the postoperative outcomes in cases of preoperative hearing loss in terms of the surgical intervention ( $\chi^2 = 0.146$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.702$ ).

Table 3. Postoperative outcomes in cases of preoperative hearing loss in terms of the surgery

Surgical intervention	Normal hearing	Hearing loss	Total	p
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	
Adenoidectomy	31 (29.5)	3 (2.9)	34 (32.4)	0.702
Adenotonsillectomy	63 (60)	8 (7.6)	71 (67.6)	
Total	94 (89.5)	11 (10.5)	105 (100)	

Figure 1 shows tonal audiogram and tympanogram in child with adenoid hypertrophy and otitis media with effusion.

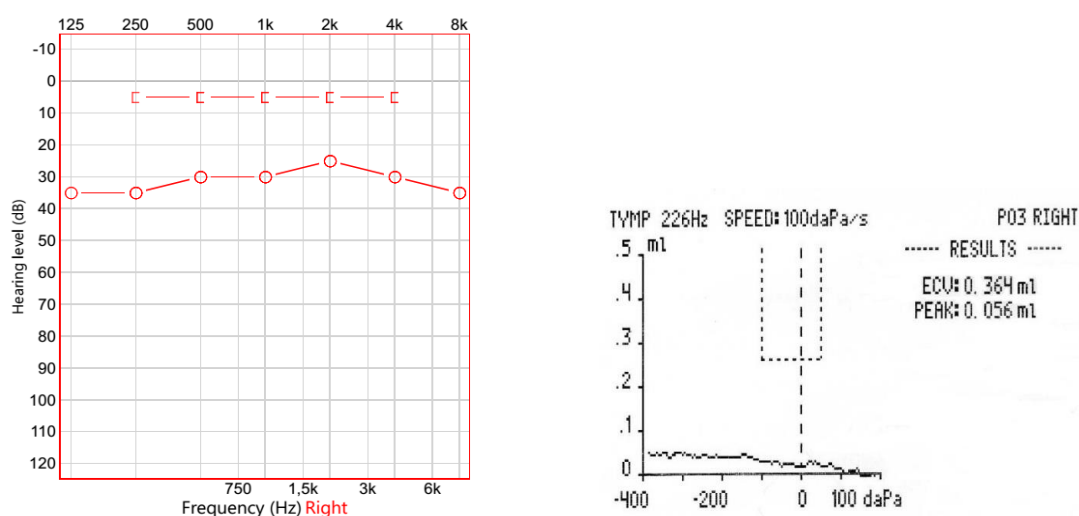


Figure 1. Tonal audiogram and tympanogram in child with adenoid hypertrophy and OME

Distribution of cases of hearing loss and normal hearing before and after surgery is displayed in Table 4. A total of 42 children (66.7%) had bilateral hearing loss and 21 (33.3%) had unilateral hearing loss. The number of hearing impaired ears before the treatment was 105.

Table 4. Distribution of cases of hearing loss and normal hearing before and after surgery

Patient's	Pre-treatment	Post-treatment	Total
hearing	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)
Hearing loss	105 (41.7)	11 (4.4)	116 (46)
Normal hearing	21 (8.3)	115 (45.6)	136 (54)
Total	126 (50)	126 (50)	252 (100)

A total of 6 children (9.5%) in our study had reoperation adenoideotomy. Treatment outcomes from the first surgery were analyzed. We displayed the preoperative and postoperative mean PTA and standard deviation error

bars in cases of hearing loss (Figure 2). Preoperative mean PTA in children with adenoideotomy was 28 dB HL and in children with adenotonsillectomy was 27 dB HL. In both subgroups postoperative mean PTA was 16 dB HL.

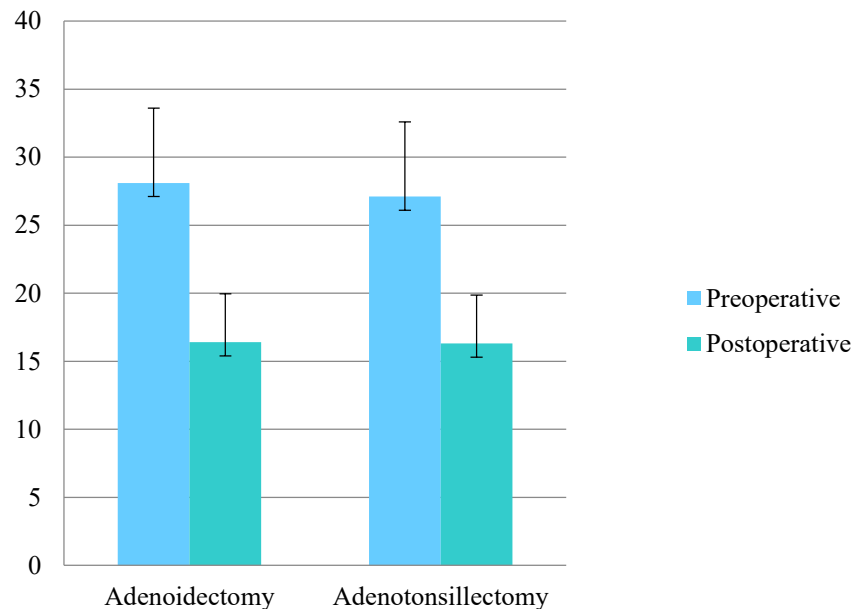


Figure 2. Preoperative and postoperative mean PTA and standard deviation error bars

Pre-treatment and post-treatment pure tone average (PTA) of hearing-impaired ears was compared in children with adenoidectomy and adenotonsillectomy (Table 5). A statistical analysis with Paired t test shows significantly

lower pure tone thresholds after adenoidectomy ( $t = 12.3773$ ,  $df = 33$ , SE of difference = 0.948,  $p < 0.0001$ ) and adenotonsillectomy ( $t = 17.5799$ ,  $df = 70$ , SE of difference = 0.614,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Table 5. Pre-treatment and post-treatment PTA in cases of hearing loss

Surgical intervention	Pre-treatment PTA Median (min-max)	Post-treatment PTA Median (min-max)	t	p
Adenoidectomy	28 (21-40) n = 34	17 (10-30) n = 34	12.3773	< 0.0001
Adenotonsillectomy	27 (21-38) n = 71	16 (10-27) n = 71	17.5799	< 0.0001

Distribution of different types of tympanograms before and after surgery are displayed in Figure 3 and

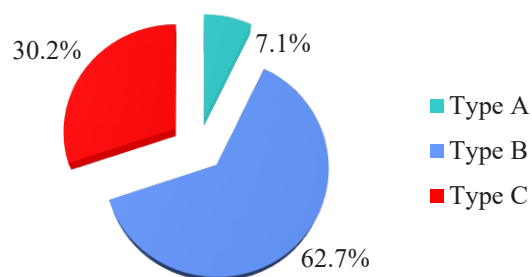


Figure 3. Types of tympanograms before surgery

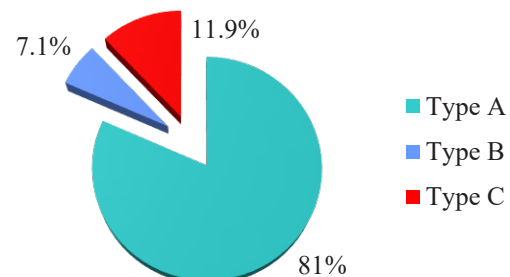


Figure 4. Types of tympanograms after surgery

Figure 4.

Type B tympanogram was predominant before treatment (62.7%), and type A tympanogram after treatment (81%).

## DISCUSSION

We analyzed preoperative and postoperative audiological profile of 63 children with adenoid hypertrophy and hearing loss due to Eustachian tube dysfunction and OME. Based on strong research evidence, the most common cause of conductive hearing loss in children is OME

(Gifford et al., 2009).

All children had mild conductive hearing loss. Pure tone average (PTA) was lower after adenoidectomy and adenotonsillectomy ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Preoperative mean PTA in children with adenoidectomy was 28 dB HL and in children with adenotonsillectomy was 27 dB HL. In both subgroups postoperative mean PTA was 16 dB HL. In our previous study averaged hearing loss associated with OME in children was 26 dB HL (Ristovska et al., 2017). Children with OME may be at risk for poor school performance because of hearing loss, problems with behavior or attention,



and difficulties understanding speech in noisy classroom settings. The impact of OME on hearing ranges from no hearing loss up to moderate hearing loss (0-55 dB HL). The average hearing loss associated with OME in children is 28 dB HL, but about 20% of children with OME have hearing thresholds > 35 dB HL (Rosenfeld et al., 2022). Cai et al. (2018) reported mean PTA (500, 1000, 2000) of 26.8 dB HL in school age children with OME. In terms of the effusion viscosity, Al-Salim et al. (2021) reported mean 4PTA  $35.41 \pm 12.64$  in children with mucoid fluid in the middle ear. James et al. (2018) concluded that adenoidectomy can improve the middle ear function and the hearing profile of child and can be considered as a practical management option in children with chronic adenotonsillar hypertrophy with OME. We did not analyze the PTA in terms of the adenoid tissue size. According to Durgut & Dikici (2019) adenoid tissue size and location have no effect on hearing thresholds and the duration of effusion in OME. Another study confirmed the high correlation between adenoid size and incidence of OME. There was a highly significant relation between grade IV adenoid hypertrophy (adenoid has relation with torus tubarius, vomer, and soft palate) and tympanometry type B and highly significant relation between adenoid hypertrophy grade IV and mucoid type of middle ear effusion. With more increase in the adenoid size, more viscosity of middle ear effusion was detected (Abdel Tawab & Tabook, 2021). In the present study, type B tympanogram was predominant before treatment (62.7%), and type A tympanogram after treatment (81%). In some children the ventilation tubes were still present at control examination. Tympanometry may provide useful information on positive or negative middle ear pressures that pneumatic otoscopy does not. Tympanogram type B with normal ear canal volume is fairly sensitive in diagnosing OME (Anwar et al., 2016). The most common cause of flattened, type B tracing with a low static admittance and normal ear canal volume is decreased mobility of the tympanic membrane secondary to otitis media with effusion (Onusko, 2004). In children with OME treated with adenoidectomy Rajan et al. (2022) reported type B tympanogram in 86% and type C tympanogram in 14% before adenoidectomy. Post-treatment distribution of tympanograms was as follows: type A tympanogram in 27%, type B tympanogram in 57%, and type C tympanogram in 16% of all cases. In children with adenoid hypertrophy, Augustian et al. (2022) found bilateral effusion in 20%, unilateral effusion in

12%, and prevalence of asymptomatic OME 32%. They also found significant association between OME and adenoid size. After adenoidectomy and myringotomy in cases with bilateral OME, in about 93% of children with bilateral type B tympanogram and all children with unilateral type B and bilateral type C, tympanograms returned to normal on three months follow-up. A total of 21 children (33.3%) had tympanostomy tube placement in addition to adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy. Tympanostomy tubes help to ventilate the cavities of the middle ear and balance the pressures on each side of the tympanic membrane. Different types of tympanostomy tubes can be used in treatment of OME. Shepard tubes are primarily used in Europe. Adenoidectomy can be combined with ventilation tubes placement in children over the age of 4 if hypertrophy is detected with nasal endoscopy or under the age of 4 years in the event of nasal obstruction or recurrent rhinopharyngeal infections (Vanneste & Page, 2019). A Meta-Analysis showed that tympanostomy tubes improve hearing at 1 to 3 months compared with watchful waiting, with no evidence of benefit by 12 to 24 months. The benefits of tympanostomy tubes must be weighed against a variety of associated adverse events (Steele et al., 2017). Complications from tympanostomy tube insertion include tympanic membrane perforation, chronic otorrhea, and tympanosclerosis (Minovi & Dazert, 2014). According to the Cochrane review, the effect of ventilation tubes on hearing in children with OME, as measured by standard tests, appears small and diminishes after six to nine months by which time natural resolution also leads to improved hearing in the non-surgically treated children (Browning et al., 2010). Primary adenoidectomy with tympanostomy tube placement may be superior to tympanostomy tube placement only in decreasing the risk of repeated tympanostomy tube placement and the risk of recurrent acute otitis media, OME, or otorrhea (Mikals & Brigger, 2014). A total of 6 children (9.5%) in our study had reoperation adenoidectomy. Schneuer et al. (2022) concluded that one in five children having adenoidectomy under 5 years required reoperation.

## CONCLUSION

Mild conductive hearing loss is the most common degree and type of hearing loss in children with adenoid hypertrophy and hearing loss. Bilateral hearing loss is more common than unilateral hearing loss. In children with

adenoid hypertrophy and conductive hearing loss, hearing thresholds after adenoidectomy or adenotonsillectomy are significantly lower than preoperative hearing thresholds. The most common type of tympanogram before the treatment is Type B tympanogram and type A tympanogram is the most common after treatment.

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## PARATHYROIDECTOMY IN PATIENTS WITH HYPERPARATHYROIDISM

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Aim: The aim of this study was to analyze all the factors (disease symptoms, scintigraphic findings, biochemical parameters) that occur in patients with hyperparathyroidism, and since hyperparathyroidism itself is a common endocrine disorder. Methods: We analyzed 79 patients with primary, secondary, and tertiary hyperparathyroidism, who underwent surgery. We analyzed mean of age, male: female ratio, representation of different forms of hyperparathyroidism. In our study, we examined the indications for examination and surgery, as well as the most common symptoms and comorbidities. For localization PTG, scintigraphy was performed by a nuclear medicine specialist (at the Clinic of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine) preoperatively. Preoperative values of calcium (Ca), phosphorus (P), and parathyroid hormone (PTH) were determined in all patients, and the same values were measured postoperatively. We also analyzed correlation of dialysis length and parathyroid gland hyperplasia in patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism. Results: In our study mean of years was  $51.13 \pm 11.83$  and most of the respondents were female. The most common operation was subtotal parathyroidectomy. The most common indication for examination of parathyroid glands (PTG) was renal failure. The most common comorbidity was arterial hypertension, which was found in 43 (53.2%) subjects, and the rarest gastrointestinal diseases and pancreatitis, in 1 (1.3%) patients. Scintigraphy showed an equal representation of enlarged lower parathyroid glands (both right and left). The mean values determined preoperatively for PTH were 796.24 pg/ml, Ca 2.58 mmol / l and P 1.35 mmol / l. The mean postoperative values for PTH were 222.33 pg/ml, Ca 2.06 mmol/l and P 1.17 mmol/l. We also showed that was a large correlation between dialysis length and hyperplasia. Conclusion: Hyperparathyroidism is a common endocrine disease, carrying potential complications of many organic systems. In most cases, regardless of the form (primary, secondary, or tertiary), it ultimately requires surgical treatment. For this reason, the clinical picture must be well known, the necessary preoperative diagnostic methods (which are complex), all with the aim of better effect of treatment of such patients.*

**Keywords:** hyperparathyroidism; calcium, parathyroid hormone, scintigraphy

### INTRODUCTION

Hyperparathyroidism is a very common endocrine disorder with potential complications on various

systems such as skeletal, renal, neurocognitive, and cardiovascular systems (Duan, Gomez Hernandez, & Mete 2015). Hyperparathyroidism is excessive secretion of PTH and can be primary, secondary, or tertiary (Jawaid & Rajesh, 2020).

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In most cases, about 95% occur sporadically, and about 5% are associated with a hereditary syndromes: multiple endocrine neoplasia syndromes, hyperparathyroidism-jaw tumor syndrome, familial hypocalciuric hypercalcemia, familial hypercalciuric hypercalcemia, neonatal severe hyperparathyroidism, and isolated familial hyperparathyroidism. Primary hyperparathyroidism clinicopathologically includes parathyroid adenoma (80–85%), hyperplasia (10–15%), and carcinoma (<1–5%). Secondary hyperparathyroidism is mainly manifested by diffuse parathyroid hyperplasia (Duan et al., 2015). Tertiary hyperparathyroidism is a consequence of permanent stimulation of the parathyroid glands, which results in the autonomous function of PTH (Jawaid & Rajesh, 2020). Parathyroid disorders are most often present with serum calcium abnormalities. Patients with primary hyperparathyroidism are the most common cause of hypercalcemia outside the hospital, they may be asymptomatic or may have bone disease, nephrolithiasis, or neuromuscular symptoms. Patients with chronic kidney disease may develop secondary hyperparathyroidism with consequent chronic kidney disease - mineral and bone disorder (Michels & Kelly, 2013). According to Târcoveanu (2009), surgical treatment is the only curative treatment for hyperparathyroidism, and drug treatment is only preoperative preparation. Parathyroidectomy is always indicated for all symptomatic patients and should be considered for most asymptomatic patients, as it is more effective and with more benefits than patient follow-up or pharmacological treatment (Wilhelm et al., 2016). Different imaging methods can be used for the preoperative localization of enlarged parathyroid glands, which can more or less successfully determine the position and identify hyperfunctional parathyroid tissue. The most commonly used methods are ultrasound,

scintigraphy, CT, and MRI. Increased values of serum calcium and PTH confirm the diagnosis (Mariani, Vaiano, Nibale, & Rubello, 2003).

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

We conducted a retrospective-prospective study of 79 consecutive patients with primary, secondary, and tertiary hyperparathyroidism, who underwent surgery at our institution (total or subtotal parathyroidectomy) for a period of seven years.

Including criteria: patients with primary, secondary, or tertiary hyperparathyroidism, who underwent total or subtotal parathyroidectomy.

Excluding criteria: malignant diseases of other areas. Scintigraphy was performed by a specialist in nuclear medicine in 42 patients preoperatively. An ultrasound examination of the neck was performed on all patients. Computerized tomography (CT) scan of the neck and thorax was performed in one patient. Preoperative values of calcium (Ca), phosphorus (P), and parathyroid hormone (PTH) were determined in all patients, and the same values were measured postoperatively.

Data were collected by inspecting the protocols, medical documentation, and records of three different Clinics in our center (ENT Clinic, Clinic for Radiology and Nuclear Medicine and Polyclinic for Laboratory Diagnostics) preoperatively and postoperatively.

## RESULTS

The study included 79 patients with hyperparathyroidism who underwent total or partial parathyroidectomy at our institution, in the period from January 2011 to February 2018, aged 20 to 73 years. (mean  $51.13 \pm 11.83$ ). Most of the respondents were female (Figure 1).

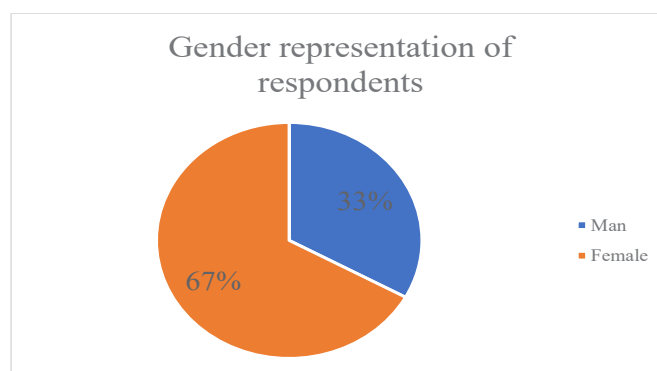


Figure 1. Gender representation of respondents



In the examined group, the most common form of hyperparathyroidism is secondary, which was found in 41 (51.9%) subjects (Figure 2).

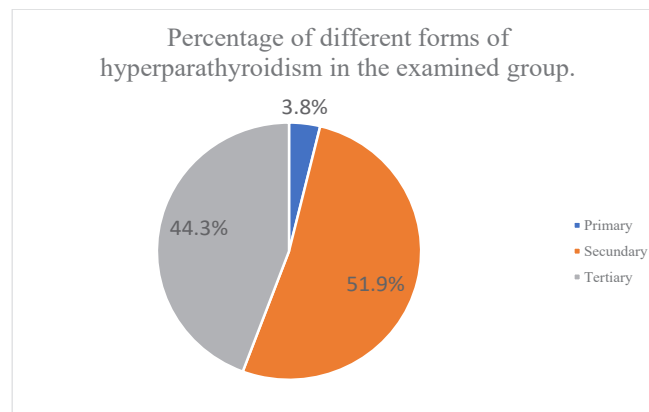


Figure 2. Percentage of different forms of hyperparathyroidism in the examined group.

Primary hyperparathyroidism was found in 35 (44.3%) and tertiary in 3 (3.8%) patients. In the study group, the indications for which patients were referred for parathyroid examination were analyzed. The most common indication for examination of parathyroid glands (PTG) was renal failure, which was found in 38 (48.1%) subjects, and the least common was elevated serum parathyroid hormone (PTH) found in 1 (1.3%) patients (Figure 3).

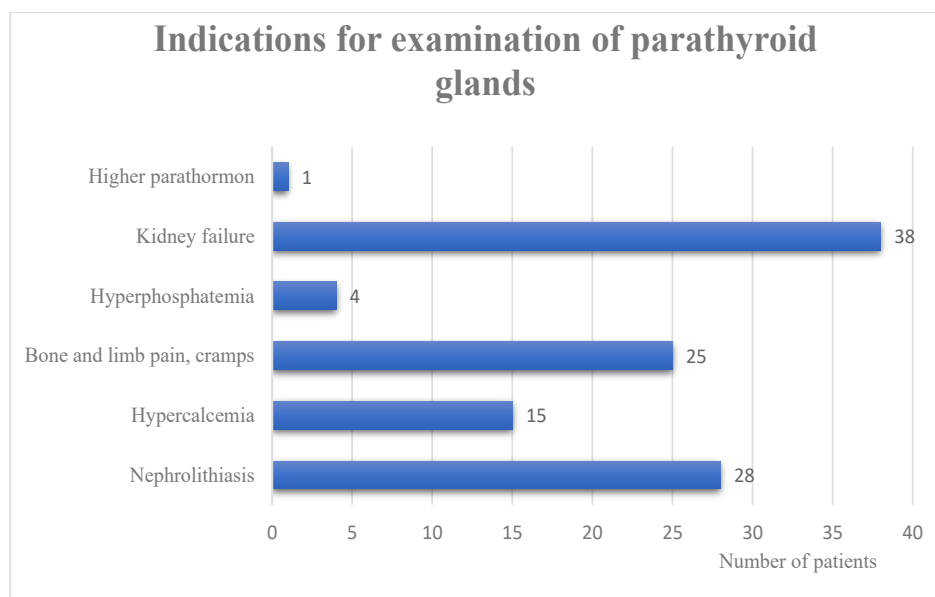


Figure 3. Indications for examination of parathyroid glands

Comorbidity analysis in subjects showed that the most common comorbidity was arterial hypertension, which was found in 43 (53.2%) subjects, and the rarest gastrointestinal diseases and pancreatitis, in 1 (1.3%) patients (Figure 4).

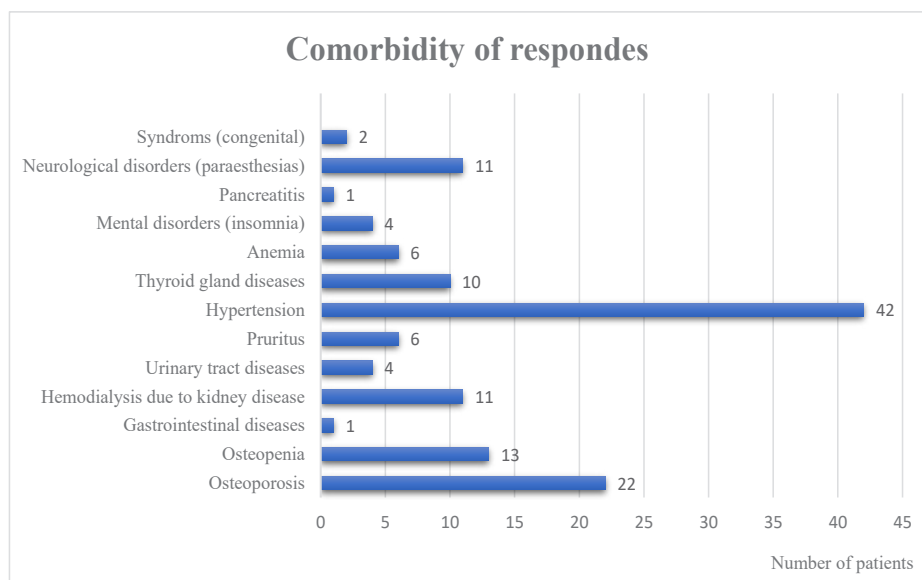


Figure 4. Comorbidity of respondents

Eight total parathyroidectomies (10%), 32 subtotal parathyroidectomies (40.5%), and 38 (48.1%) extirpations (of which 6 with two glands and 2 with two glands and lobectomy of the same side) were performed in 79 respondents of our study,

and one thoracotomy (1.3%). Thoracotomy was performed in a patient with an ectopic parathyroid gland localized in the upper mediastinum. Scintigraphy was performed in 42 patients.

Table 1. Prevalence of localization of enlarged parathyroid glands according to scintigraphy

Localization	Scintigraphy	
	f	%
Right upper	3	5.4
Right lower	20	36.4
Left upper	5	9.1
Left lower	20	36.4
Ectopic localization	4	7.3
Normal results	3	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Scintigraphy revealed 52 enlarged and 3 normal sizes of the parathyroid gland. Scintigraphy showed an equal representation of enlarged lower parathyroid glands (both right and left), 20/55 (36.4%). The calculated sensitivity (sensitivity) of scintigraphy was 49.5% and specificity 93.3%. Table 2 shows the serum values of parathyroid

hormone (PTH), calcium (Ca) and phosphorus (P), determined before and after surgery. The mean values determined preoperatively for PTH were 796.24 pg/ml, Ca 2.58 mmol/l and P 1.35 mmol/l. The mean postoperative values for PTH were 222.33 pg/ml, Ca 2.06 mmol/l and P 1.17 mmol/l.

Table 2. Comparison of preoperative and postoperative serum values of parathyroid hormone, calcium, and phosphorus

Variable	MIN	MAX	SUM	M	SD	VAR	S <sub>k</sub>	K <sub>u</sub>
Parathyroid hormone preoperatively	92.00	4093.00	62902.72	796.24	772.56	596847.36	1.71	3.64
Parathyroid hormone postoperatively	.00	2028.00	14896.10	222.33	349.91	122434.38	3.33	13.16
Calcium preoperatively	1.19	3.66	201.52	2.58	.41	.17	.22	1.97
Calcium postoperatively	.71	2.88	160.84	2.06	.39	.15	-.49	1.37
Phosphorus preoperatively	.48	2.71	105.45	1.35	.53	.29	.41	-.62
Phosphorus postoperatively	.51	2.38	90.03	1.17	.42	.18	.62	-.12

Since the largest number of subjects in this study had secondary hyperparathyroidism, the correlations between dialysis length and hyperplasia were analyzed by calculating the

point of biserial correlation coefficient, which showed that there is a large correlation ( $r_{pb} = .56$ ) of these parameters at the level of statistical significance  $p = .00$ , which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficient of point biserial correlation of dialysis length and parathyroid gland hyperplasia

Hyperplasia		
Length of dialysis	$r_{pb}$	.56
	$p$	.00
	N	79

## DISCUSSION

PHPT is most common after age 50 and has prevailed in women three to four times. In countries where routine screening exists, PHPT is identified earlier and may be asymptomatic (Khan et al., 2017). In a study involving 51 patients with PHPT, the mean age of the patients was  $57.1 \pm 12.1$  years, of which 82.4% were women (Marchini et al., 2018). The study, which was conducted from June to August 2019, included 52 patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism who were on a dialysis program, the mean age was 51 years, male: female ratio 1: 8 (Ahmadi et al., 2016). A study by Khan (2017) supports our results regarding nephrolithiasis and cardiovascular disease. According to Khan, kidney stones are a major complication of PHPT. In Western countries, the prevalence of clinically symptomatic urolithiasis has decreased from approximately 80% of patients in the previous series to 7-20% at present. But, in patients who have been systematically examined, the diagnostic prevalence may be higher (25-55%). In the Li study (2017), 50 patients were examined and all patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism

had renal failure (Li et al., 2017). Severe PHPT characterized by higher serum calcium levels (calcium  $\geq 11.2$  mg/dl) has been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular mortality. PHPT thought to be associated with an increased risk of developing left ventricular hypertrophy, diastolic filling damage, and myocardial calcification. In Latin America, large epidemiological studies reported 44% of patients with kidney stones. Unlike China where the prevalence of asymptomatic PHPT is increasing, the clinical presentation of PHPT in India has not changed over the past 50 years. The main features of the presentation are still the involvement of the skeletal system followed by renal complications, as well as symptoms of hypercalcemia with less than 5% of asymptomatic presentation (Khan et al., 2017). According to Cordellat (2012), primary hyperparathyroidism is associated with hypertension. Given that parathyroid hormone receptors also exist in the vascular system, so the incidence of arterial hypertension and cardiovascular diseases has increased. Nephrolithiasis or nephrocalculosis can be seen in about 20% of patients with primary

hyperparathyroidism. About 5% of nephrolithiasis is secondary to primary. In a study by Pelizz (2001), nephrolithiasis was found in 10 patients, osteoporosis in 4, gastrointestinal problems in 1, and palpable cervical mass in 1 patient. Almost 50% of patients had more than one symptom. Gastrointestinal and neuromuscular symptoms were the most common (Von Breitenbuch et al., 2007). In our group of subjects, gastrointestinal symptoms were present in 1.3% of patients and neuromuscular in 13.9% of patients. A study by Li (2017) of patients who had serum calcium and phosphorus findings available for study 34.00% (17/50) and 76.00% (38/50) showed higher serum calcium and phosphorus levels preoperatively. In a study by Pelizz et al. (2001), all but one patient with parathyroid pathology had hypercalcemia. Von Breitenbuch et al (2007) conducted a retrospective study on 121 patients with primary hyperparathyroidism, where parathyroid hormone was monitored, all patients had elevated levels, more than 65 ng / l. In a study by Târcoveanu et al. (2009), there were 34 subjects, and in 32 patients with primary and 2 patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism performed surgical procedures were: tumor excision (73.53%), subtotal parathyroidectomy (17.6%), total parathyroidectomy (8.82%). Total thyroidectomy (26.5%) and subtotal thyroidectomy (11.8%) were performed in patients with associated thyroid disease. In another study of the 50 patients who underwent surgery, two patients had subtotal parathyroidectomy, and 48 patients had total parathyroidectomy with autotransplantation (Li et al., 2017). Of 109 patients, 80 had total parathyroidectomy with or without autotransplantation, 19 patients subtotal and 10 partial with removal of less than 4 glands (Lee, Kim, & Lee, 2015). Eight total parathyroidectomies (10%), 32 subtotal parathyroidectomies (40.5%), 38 (48.1%) extirpations (of which 6 with two glands and 2 with two glands and lobectomy of the same side) were performed in 79 respondents of our study, and one thoracotomy (1.3%). Lee et al (2015) conducted a study involving 109 patients, where they investigated the sensitivity of three methods USG, MIBI, and CT for preoperative diagnosis. USG had the highest sensitivity (91.5%) and MIBI was the lowest (56.1%) among the 3 modalities. CT sensitivity was 84.8%. The sensitivity in this study was high or higher than in other studies. Lee also researched the results of other studies, the results of which follow, including the study of Perie et al. showed that ultrasound detected 75% of hyperplastic glands, while MIBI identified 66%. A combination of both modalities

identified 88% of the gland. The most pronounced glands on scintigraphy were the upper glands. Vulpio et al. reported that the sensitivity of MIBI and USG was 62% and 55%, and the sensitivity of combined techniques was 73%. A second series of 11 patients reported 91% sensitivity of MIBI in the identification of hyperplastic glands in secondary hyperparathyroidism. Another study showed a low yield of preoperative localization studies in patients with sHPT with MIBI showing only 36.6% and USG showing 35.9% of surgically confirmed enlarged glands. In a prospective study by Mohammadi et al., The sensitivity of USG and MIBI, and the combination of USG and MIBI, was 54%, 25%, and 45%, respectively. A meta-analysis that included 24 studies with 471 patients showed a 58% sensitivity of MIBI in detecting hyperplastic glands in sHPT. According to Ahmadi et al. (2016) in patients with chronic kidney disease, persistent hyperparathyroidism often leads to hyperplasia of the parathyroid glands, especially in patients on dialysis. In these patients, the severity of hyperplasia is positively correlated with the length of dialysis. The study included 52 patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism and all patients were on a hemodialysis program, and partial or total parathyroidectomy was performed. In our study, there were 41 patients with secondary hyperparathyroidism, and the correlation between the length of dialysis and hyperplasia was high, statistically significant. A prospective cohort study by Jäger et al (2017) investigated treatment options for secondary hyperparathyroidism and identified risk factors for nodular hyperplasia of the parathyroid glands. Twenty routinely collected parameters from the history of the disease, ultrasound findings of the parathyroid gland and laboratory results due to their influence on nodular hyperplasia were analyzed. Independent risk factors for nodular hyperplasia of one gland were the duration of dialysis in years, then the volume of the parathyroid gland expressed in mm<sup>3</sup> determined by ultrasound and the serum level of parathyroid hormone in pg/ml. From this, theoretical evaluation of the risk factor interaction showed that the duration of dialysis had the strongest influence on the value of nodular hyperplasia.

## CONCLUSION

Hyperparathyroidism is a common endocrine disorder with potential complications. Most patients sooner or later require surgical treatment: partial or total parathyroidectomy.

The approach to treating these patients requires a multidisciplinary approach, a detailed history (including the presence of clinical manifestations of hyperparathyroidism, duration of dialysis in case of secondary or tertiary hyperparathyroidism), laboratory treatment, radiological methods, all in order to properly set the indication for surgery and successful operative procedure.

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## A CASE STUDY ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH MOVIES TO STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Learning English is a must nowadays, especially for students pursuing higher education and aspiring for a presence on the international stage. There are many methods of teaching English as a foreign language. This case study focuses on the use of audiovisual material in particular movies and photographs as a method to master English language communication skills. In the current world, students must develop appreciable English language comprehension and communication skills to peruse international literature and find ways to express their opinions at the academic level. This study is conducted with the first year bachelor students of three different faculties at the University of Prizren using quantitative and qualitative methods. A carefully designed online questionnaire, as well as interviews, are the main research methods. Findings prove that using videos and photos as teaching materials during English communication classes sparked students' interest to engage in discussion and as the matter of fact they have improved their overall English skills, especially improved their confidence in expressing their ideas in English.*

**Keywords:** movies in TESL, communication skills, university students, student engagement, visual materials

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Using movies and videos in the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) has gained popularity in recent years due to its potential to engage and motivate learners. Alberta (2013) emphasized the potential of films as a medium for learning English, particularly in higher education settings. Rao (2019) points out that this way is more useful in learning a foreign language like English as the learners can get the real experience of listening to the voices of the native speakers of the language. Additionally, movies and videos can provide insight into the culture of English-

speaking countries (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011), which can help students better understand and appreciate the cultural context in which the language is used. Movies offer students a sense of reality by presenting a visual expression that interests them, in addition to providing visual explanations of the context and concepts of the content being taught (Rokni & Atae, 2014). Additionally, the sound and images in movies have the ability to raise consciousness, inspire critical thought, and pique learners' interest in one another's perspectives (Nelson & Guerra, 2009). Additionally, introducing images through movies into the educational process fosters student participation, critical thinking, and

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creativity (Schirta, 2011). With these benefits in mind, including movies into TEFL lessons holds enormous potential for improving student learning and fostering successful language acquisition. However, there are also challenges to using movies and videos in the TEFL classroom. One challenge is the time required to watch a movie or video in its entirety, which may not be practical in a classroom setting (Willis & Willis, 2007). This can be mitigated by selecting shorter movies or videos or using clips from longer ones, but this may also limit the cultural and language learning opportunities provided by the film (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Another challenge is the need for teacher preparation, as the teacher must be familiar with the content of the movie or video and be able to facilitate language practice and comprehension activities (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Additionally, some students may be distracted by the visual content of the movie or video and have difficulty focusing on the language (Willis & Willis, 2007). Finally, there may be logistical challenges associated with obtaining and showing movies and videos in the classroom, such as obtaining the necessary technology and obtaining copyright permission (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Overall the use of movies and videos in the teaching of English as a foreign language can be an effective way to engage and motivate learners and improve their language skills. However, it is important for teachers to carefully consider the class preparations, challenges and limitations of using movies and videos in the classroom.

## METHODOLOGY

Students were taught throughout the semester, which included 15 weeks of lectures using only photographs and videos as the teaching material. The only language of instruction was English. Questionnaires and group interviews were the two main research methods used in this case study. After 15 weeks, the students were handed out a questionnaire and asked to answer questions about their experience with improving their English speaking skills using the audiovisual teaching material. Additionally, a group interview was conducted and the outcomes were compared analytically and merged from both sources.

### Research Design

Qualitative, quantitative, and analytical methods have been used to conduct this research paper. These cross-sectional design enabled complementation

and data assurance. It has been appropriate in the measurement of data and determination of relationship between variables. The number based research is used for measuring attitude, behavior, and performance of numbers. The data received from quantitative methods is converted into graphs and charts that are interpreted easily.

### Population and sample

The questionnaire was eligible for English as a Foreign Language students who have followed English classes during the first semester at the University of Prizren. They were intentionally chosen because they were coming from high school and they were experiencing higher education for the first time. A total of 224 students have responded to the online questionnaire. This research sample is representative of the students' population taking English classes at the Faculty of Philology and Faculty of Education at the University of Prizren. Random sampling has been used to collect data from the targeted sample by emailing questionnaire to the students of respective faculties who were attending English classes during the first semester. This sampling technique represents targeted selection of all eligible students. The same students were interviewed in groups.

### Data collection tools

The link to the questionnaire was sent to students to their official university emails. The questionnaire was designed using survey monkey which is quite user friendly and could generate satisfactory data analysis for the research. To the best of my knowledge this was the first study of this kind conducted on teaching EFL speaking skills in any of the higher education institutions in Kosovo. Questionnaire was user friendly and easy to answer. Students could submit their answers by using any digital device including their smartphone, computer, or tablet. Questionnaires were anonymous and were self-analyzed by the survey application. The feedbacks obtained from the participants of the survey through survey monkey was transformed into graphical data. The frequency represents the count of participant's responses for each question. Percentages are computed for providing meaningful results in graphs and charts that can be interpreted easily. Additionally, a group interview was conducted with the same groups after having fifteen weeks of classes implying audiovisual material in TEFL with a focus on improving communication skills. Interview questionnaire

consisted of sixteen questions and was used as a check and balance instrument for the online questionnaire. The interviews were recorded, content wise analyzed, and later on merged with the results from the online questionnaire.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interview was conducted with university students of the first and the second year of studies. All of them have been learning English at least for eight years. Based on the national curriculum of Kosovo English is set to be an obligatory subject from the first grade of elementary school in 2017, before that it was obligatory from the third grade. Majority of students declared to have Elementary level of English language skills or 30.4%, 25% pre-intermediate, 19.6 upper-intermediate and 21.4% advanced. Taking all English language skills in consideration, students unanimously considered that communication skills were the most challenging in language learning. When asked about the reason, most of them think that the lack of communication in English in previous education, using their mother tongue during the English classes instead of English and also large number of students in groups are considered to be the main reason of weak communication skills among students. This is surprising because of the fact that even after such a long period of having English at elementary and secondary education, majority of students have basic level of English. On the other hand, they clearly understand the importance of English communication skills 78.3% see communication skills as the most important for them.

Students clearly enjoyed having classes by using visual materials such as pictures, short videos and movies. 82.1% either agree or strongly agree that this methodology sparked their interest in engaging during the class, 16.1 declared themselves neutral whereas 0% or nobody disagreed. Majority of students believe that having shown photos and videos during English communication classes sparked their interest to engage in discussion. "I get quite clear idea about the information I should communicate when shown photos and videos, and that makes it way easier for me to find a way to express in English" points out one of the students within the group interview. Majority of students also believe that in last fifteen weeks of English communication classes they have improved their overall English skills, especially improving their confidence in expressing their ideas in English. "I can build my opinion by listening to others and

even If I have challenges to express myself, I still want to communicate my idea about certain topics during the class" shares one of the students. Students showed engagement and interest especially when they would recognize a photo or a video material. When shown a photo of The Queen Elizabeth II, majority of students asked for a word to comment. Students feel more confident in expressing their opinions when they are certain about the information they possess such as their personality, well known facts and people. Many students said that at the beginning of the semester when started having classes delivered entirely in English, it was challenging to follow. "It was like experiencing a cultural shock, coming from secondary school where most of English classes were taught in Albanian to having classes entirely delivered in English" stresses one of the students during the interview. As time passed students got familiar with the fact that only English should be used in any case during the class. "After some time I got used to and I believe my listening skills improved by time" concludes another student. A vast majority of students or 73.2% agree or strongly agree that they improved their communication skills by being taught this way during the semester, 23.2% declared neutral whereas nobody declared that he or she did not make any improvement regarding their communication skills in English. Students seem to be quite polarized when asked about the language of instruction during English language classes. Roughly half of the students or 50% of them either agree or strongly agree that during English classes only English should be used as the language of instruction. The other half or 23.2% disagree and 23.2% are neutral regarding this question. When asked if Albanian should be used as a language of instruction, majority only 19.6% disagree or strongly disagree, the vast majority either is neutral or agrees and strongly agrees. This is concerning and is related to the previous habits of having English classes in primary and secondary education. Students expressed reserves when asked about their opinion on quality of English classes in previous education, in primary and secondary. "There was lack of communication in English, we would usually learn about grammar categories, translate texts, dictation exercises and very few times we had chance to communicate in English" remembers one of the students. Majority of students believe that learning English is of very high importance. They associate learning English with their future career, internationalization, and travelling. During the interview, students recall English

classes in previous education, primary school and secondary school as a typical class. "It would be our English teacher who would be explaining things for the most of the time, usually grammar rules, tenses. I remember very little when somebody from us would be asked to say anything in English" one of the students describes a typical English during his secondary education. Students pointed out that passing the exam was important for them. So, most of them believed that studying English grammar, exercising and preparing for the examination was crucial. Time by time they would read dialogues in English, very rarely would be asked or talked to in English. Students who were able to communicate in English, above Pre-intermediate level students, are those who would learn English in another way or had additional English classes. These were students who liked English and had self-initiative to improve their English competence. Most of them followed additional classes in private Language Schools. This study's findings align with research on the importance of communication skills in second language acquisition (SLA). According to Willis and Willis (2007), communication skills are a key factor in successful SLA, as they allow learners to "participate in social interactions and to negotiate meaning with others" (p. 84). However, the finding that a significant minority of students disagreed with the use of only English as the language of instruction in English classes is supported by research on the role of the learner's first language (L1) in SLA. Some studies have found that the use of the L1 in the language classroom can facilitate learning and promote language development (e.g., Genesee, 1989; Krashen, 1982). Overall, these findings highlight the importance of communication skills in SLA and the potential benefits of using visual materials in the language classroom. They also highlight the need for further research to understand the factors that contribute to learners' English proficiency and to identify effective strategies for improving communication skills.

## CONCLUSION

The study suggests that Kosovo university students face challenges in developing their English communication skills, despite having studied the language for a minimum of eight years. The majority of students reported having elementary or lower levels of English proficiency and identified communication skills as their most challenging aspect of learning the language. The students also expressed a strong recognition of

the importance of strong communication skills in English, with 78.3% stating that it was the most important aspect of the language for them. One effective strategy for engaging students and improving their English communication skills appears to be the use of visual materials, such as pictures, short videos, and movies. 82.1% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed that this methodology helped spark their interest in participating in class and boosted their confidence in expressing their ideas in English. This finding is supported by research indicating a positive relationship between the use of visual materials and student engagement and language learning outcomes. However, the findings also revealed some disagreement among the students on the language of instruction for English classes, with 50% supporting the use of only English and 23.2% disagreeing. This is consistent with research on the role of the learner's first language (L1) in second language acquisition (SLA), which has found that the use of the L1 in the language classroom can facilitate learning and promote language development. These findings highlight the importance of communication skills in SLA and the potential benefits of using visual materials in the language classroom. They also underline the need for further research to understand the factors that contribute to learners' English proficiency and to identify effective strategies for improving communication skills.

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## SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS: THE EDUCATOR AND THE CHILD

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Being outdoors allows children to explore, experience natural phenomena, it gives them more space and freedom for development. Educators should arouse children's interest in nature so that children develop feelings and learn from experience. The research aimed at determining the attitudes and reflections of educators employed in preschool institutions in the Republic of Croatia regarding the attitudes and reflections of educators about being outdoors. The research was conducted on a sample of 351 educators. A measuring instrument designed for the needs of this research was used. The results of the research show that 53% of educators agree or completely agree with the statement that they spend their free time in nature. Furthermore, 35.6% spend up to 6 hours a week walking, recreation, cycling and the like. Regarding the statement which limiting factors prevent going outdoors with children, 58.1% of educators completely agree or agree with the statement. We asked the respondents which other limiting factor they see as an obstacle and 36.9% mentioned the weather. Educators are the ones who decide whether children will spend time outdoors. This affects children's different experiences because their time outdoors depends on the beliefs and attitudes of their educators.*

**Keywords:** educator; preschool child, spending time outdoors.

*„ In a society where nature is less and less accessible to children, the role of kindergartens is becoming more and more important. “  
(Valjan Vukic, 2012:128)*

### INTRODUCTION

Outdoor activities are planned in all preschool institutions. Educators try to ensure that the children who attend the nursery spend as much time outdoors as possible. Being outdoors is definitely good for health, movement, and overall psychophysical development of the child. The fast-paced lifestyle and the influence of modern technology have shortened the time spent outdoors by children and adults. Everyone spends the little

free time that remains in a way that suits them, so Valjan Vukic (2013) states that, if we observe free time as a phenomenon of modern society, we see it as a time in which a person indulges in a certain activity of his own choice. Previsic (2000, p. 405) states that free time is “the time of active rest, leisure, positive development, socialization, humanization and creative confirmation of a personality”. Children, as well as adults, today spend far less time outside, in nature, than previous generations. According to the recommendations of competent

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institutions, for the quality of health, an adult should among other things engage in physical activities of moderate intensity for at least two and a half hours a week (Jurakic & Heimer, 2012). Louv (2015, p.7) points out that “contrary to television, nature does not steal time, but increases it.” Furthermore, he states that nature heals a child living in a “torn” family. It is a blank slate on which the child draws and reinterprets the child’s fantasy. Nature requires visualization and the full use of the senses, which is why the child is encouraged to be creative. Being outdoors and interacting with nature encourages attachment to nature and better and longer-term learning, the development of sensitivity to the environment. Preschools are certainly the ones that most plan regular stay and activities in nature (Lujic, 2020). Nedovic and Morrissey (2013) also say that, if we offer children natural materials, children have better quality play that lasts longer and is characterized by more diverse socialization and communication among children, and they show greater focus of attention and maintain concentration in play longer than in more traditional yard spaces. Being outdoors allows children to directly explore the world, experience natural phenomena directly, and have more space and freedom to develop symbolic games. Relationships with peers and adults are different: children enter into conflicts less often, are less frustrated and “cross boundaries” more easily without fear of warnings from adults about noise, disorder, etc. (Maynard & Waters, 2007). Valjan Vukic (2012) points out that children get rid of excess energy in outdoor play (ball games, on slides, climbing frames, swings, etc.); in addition, they examine the limits, possibilities and abilities of their bodies. Studying children’s stay in natural environments in Slovenian kindergartens, Kos (2010) found that out of 78 teachers surveyed, more than 80% of them do not spend more than four hours a week in natural environments with children, and most of that time is spent on walks. When interviewing the children, they asked them if they wanted to spend more time outside: 78% of them answered positively. Lohf, Bestle-Körfer, and Stollenwerk (2014) warn of the big problem of today’s children, who spend more and more time indoors with the television, while also using modern technology. Such a way of spending free time certainly harms all segments of the child’s development and results in developmental disabilities. Kos (2010) states that preschool children want to spend more time outdoors. If they are given the opportunity to play longer in a natural environment,

they will demand an even longer stay outdoors. That is why play and exploration in the nature that surrounds us are very important because they affect children’s development. In addition, the natural environment is very stimulating for the child, who, developing self-confidence, creativity, imagination, gets rid of some fears (Renz-Polster & Hunter, 2017). Educators decide on children’s stay outside, considering the weather conditions, even in the rain. That way, a person who is willing to change his work and likes challenges will decide more simply (Tomljanovic, 2018). In a study conducted in Ohio, Copeland, Kendeigh et al. (2012) concluded that, although educators are aware of the benefits and limitations of being outdoors, in the end, they are the ones who decide whether children will be outdoors, how much, when and how, what materials will be used and on which playgrounds they can play. Furthermore, they concluded that this can affect the different experiences of children because their stay outdoors depends solely on the beliefs and attitudes of their educators. Thus, educators’ attitudes and beliefs about being outdoors directly affect children’s experience in kindergarten and if educators have a negative attitude towards them aforementioned, children’s experience and development will not be effectively realized (Stevanovic, 2003). The role of educators is to arouse interest in the environment in children so that children develop feelings and learn from experience (Petkou, Andrea, & Anthrakopoulou, 2021). What kind of incentives and problem situations will be offered to the children depends on the educators’ motivation and attitude towards being outdoors, thus enabling them to acquire new knowledge and skills. By putting children in challenging outdoor activities where they can explore, be creative and manipulate, we make them creators of their own knowledge (Hlad, 2022).

## METHODOLOGY

### The Aim of the Research

The aim of the research was to determine the attitudes and reflections of educators working in preschool institutions in the Republic of Croatia regarding educators’ attitudes and beliefs about being outdoors.

### The Measuring Instrument

For the purposes of the research, a measuring instrument was designed, which was distributed to Facebook groups of educators in preschool

institutions throughout the Republic of Croatia. Before the actual posting in the Facebook group, the questionnaire had to be reviewed and approved by the administrator. The questionnaire consisted of three independent variables and ten dependent variables based on a Likert-type rating scale and one open-ended question. During the implementation of the research, the code of ethics was fully respected. The research participants were given written instructions on how to fill out the questionnaire, it was pointed out that the survey is anonymous, that participation in the survey is voluntary and that they can at any time refuse to give further answers.

## The Sample

The research was conducted on a sample of 351 educators working in preschool institutions in the Republic of Croatia. 337 (96.0%) female respondents and 14 (4.0%) male respondents participated in the research. The largest number of research participants had less than 6 years of service: 34.4%, followed by those with 6 to 11 years of service, 21.7%, while there were no respondents with more than 30 years of service. The characteristics of the sample with regard to years of work are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample with regard to years of work

years of work	<i>f</i>	%
less than 6 years	121	34.4
from 6 to 11 years	76	21.7
from 11 to 15 years	62	17.7
from 15 to 20 years	47	13.4
from 20 to 25 years	32	9.1
from 25 to 30 years	13	3.7
more than 30 years	0	0.0
Total:	351	100.0

The division of research participants with regard to the age group of the children they work with is the second statement. The largest number of research participants work in mixed age groups, 36.1% of them, followed by those who work in nursery groups,

27.4%, while the least number of respondents work in the group of children with autism, i.e. in the group of children with developmental disabilities – there are .3% of them in each group.

Table 2. Schedule of research participants with regard to the age group of children

age group of children	<i>f</i>	%
nursery group	96	27.4
mixed group	127	36.1
kindergarten	83	23.6
preschool	43	12.3
other combinations		
- a group of children with autism	1	.3
- a group of children with developmental disabilities	1	.3
Total:	351	100.0

In order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the distribution of the responses of the research participants with regard to the independent variables gender and length of service of the respondents, the Kolmogorov-

Smirnov test was applied. Significance values for both mentioned independent variables are  $p = .000 < .05$ , which means that there are statistically significant differences in the normality of the distribution of respondents' answers.

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality of distribution

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilkov		
	coefficient	df	p	coefficient	df	p
sex	.541	351	.000	.193	351	.000
work experience of the respondent	.199	351	.000	.865	351	.000

a. Lilliefors significance correction

## RESEARCH RESULTS

The first few items that we asked the research participants to comment on were related to their attitude towards spending time outdoors, i.e. whether they spend it outdoors or in some other way. A large number of research participants

could not make up their minds about the offered items: indecisiveness ranges from 27.1% for item (3) to 33.9% for item (4). Furthermore, it is noted that more than half of the respondents, 54.3% of them, spend their free time doing household chores, while 53.0% of the research participants spend their free time in nature.

Table 4. I usually spend my free time...

	I don't agree at all	I disagree	I can not decide	I agree	I completely agree	M SD	$\chi^2$ df p
(1)... in sports activities	12.5	26.8	32.2	20.5	8.0	2.85 1.128	69.356 <sup>a</sup> 4 .000
(2)... doing housework	3.1	19.9	33.9	29.6	13.4	3.30 1.034	107.789 <sup>a</sup> 4 .000
(3)... in hanging out with friends	.9	8.0	27.1	36.8	27.4	3.82 .954	157.191 <sup>a</sup> 4 .000
(4)... in creative expression	10.8	31.1	33.9	18.5	5.7	2.77 1.053	106.422 <sup>a</sup> 4 .000
(5)... in nature	2.8	12.5	31.6	34.8	18.2	3.53 1.019	123.886 <sup>a</sup> 4 .000

a. 0 cell (0.0%) has expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 70.2.

All calculated chi-square values are high, with four degrees of freedom and significance  $p = .000 < .05$ . Such high chi-square values

indicate that the response frequencies of the research participants differ statistically significantly. The obtained asymmetry values are:

for item	asymmetry is
(1)	.114
(2)	-.069
(3)	-.423
(4)	.200
(5)	-.326

and for items (1) and (4), whose asymmetry has a positive sign, it means that the majority of the obtained answers are to the left of the arithmetic mean, i.e. among the smaller values; for other items, the asymmetry sign is negative, which means that most of the obtained answers are located to the right of the arithmetic means. The next item on which the research participants expressed their views related to the time that educators spend walking, recreation, cycling, etc. The obtained results are shown in Table 5. It can be noted that most of the respondents,

35.6% of them, spend up to 6 hours a week walking, recreation, riding bicycles, etc. Those who spend time walking, in recreation, cycling, and the like; less than 2 hours is 14.2%, while those who do it for more than 8 hours is 7.1%. The arithmetic mean is 2.67, with a standard deviation of 1.087. The chi-square value is high, equal to 108.587, and indicates that the differences between the answers are statistically significant. Since the asymmetry has a positive sign, it means that most of the answers are to the left of the arithmetic mean, i.e. among smaller values.

Table 5. The time that educators spend weekly on walks, recreation, cycling, and the like

	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	asymmetry	$\chi^2$ <i>df</i> <i>p</i>
Less than 2 hours a week	50	14.2			
Up to 4 hours a week	108	30.8			
Up to 6 hours a week	125	35.6	2.67	.344	108.587 <sup>a</sup>
Up to 8 hours a week	43	12.3	1.087		4
More than 8 hours a week	71	7.1			.000
Total:	351	100.0	—	—	—

a. 0 cell (0.0%) has expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 70.2.

The next two items that were given to the respondents to express their opinion on were: the educator affects the quality and quantity of spending time with children outdoors (in nature), among the children in the group, the educator can recognize those children who stay with their parents outdoors (in nature).

The obtained data are shown in Table 6. It can be seen that the vast majority of research participants have a positive attitude about the set items: — with item (7) 90.9% of respondents agree (20.8%) or completely agree (70.1%), and — with item (8) 93.7% of respondents completely agree (74.9%) or agree (18.8%).



Table 6. Data obtained with items (7) and (8)

	items			
	(7)		(8)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I completely disagree	2	.6	2	.6
I disagree	2	.6	2	.6
Indecisive	28	8.0	18	5.1
I agree	73	20.8	66	18.8
I completely agree	246	70.1	263	74.9
Total:	351	100.0	351	100.0

Descriptive statistics values are:

– for item (7):  $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = .711$ ,  $\chi^2 = 598.245$  ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ), asymmetry -1.916;

– for item (8):  $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = .654$ ,  $\chi^2 = 701.094$  ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000$ ), asymmetry -2.373.

For both items, the chi-square values are very high, which means that the frequencies of the research participants' responses (for both items) are distributed statistically significantly differently. This is also indicated by the

coefficients of asymmetry - both are negative - so most of the answers are distributed to the right of the arithmetic mean, among higher values. We checked whether items (7) and (8) are connected, that is, whether they correlate, by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient  $r$ : its value is  $r = .238$ , which means that, according to Guilford (1956, 145), the correlation is low, connection is small and significant at the .01 significance level.

Table 7. Correlation between particles (7) and (8)

items		items	
		(6)	(7)
(7)	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	
	significance		
	N	351	
(8)	Pearson correlation coefficient	.238**	1
	significance	.000	
	N	351	351

\*\* The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-sided).

In order to determine how often educators stay outdoors with kindergarten children and what limiting factors prevent them from going outside with their children, we asked the participants of the study to express their opinions on the following items: (9) how often educators spend time outdoors with kindergarten children (10) which limiting factors prevent going outdoors with children.

Data related to children's spending time outdoors are shown in Table 8. More than ¼ of respondents (27.1%) state that they stay outdoors with children

every day, 29.9% of them stay outdoors with children several times a week, while 29.6% of respondents do so once a week; 10.8% of them stay at least once a month. The value of the chi-square test is high and amounts to  $\chi^2 = 110.410^a$  ( $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000 < .05$ ), which means that the responses of the research participants are distributed statistically significantly differently. The value of asymmetry (.394) tells us about this, and since asymmetry is positive, it means that most of the answers are distributed to the left of the arithmetic mean ( $M = 2.32$ ), therefore, among smaller values.

Table 8. Data related to the item (9)

I stay outdoors with children ...	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	asymmetry
... every day	95	27.1		
... several times a week	105	29.9	2.32	
... once a week	104	29.6	1.064	.394
... at least once a month	38	10.8		
... other	9	2.6		
Total:	351	100.0		

$\chi^2 = 110.410^a$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .000 < .05$

a. 0 cell (0.0%) has expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 70.2.

The obtained data related to the item (10) and the calculated values of descriptive statistics are presented in Table 9. As the most important factor that prevents going outside with children, the research participants state a large number of children in the group: this is the opinion of 76.9% of respondents who agree with the statement

(18.8%), that is, they completely agree (58.1%); followed by the proximity of the road, with which 23.9% of respondents agree, that is, 14.2% completely agree. The least present factor is the fear of injury - 19.9% of respondents completely disagree with this factor, or 42.0% of them disagree.

Table 9. Limiting factors that prevent from going outside with children

Factors that prevent going to nature with children	I completely disagree	I disagree	I agree	I completely agree
	in percentages			
a large number of children in the group	6.0	17.1	18.8	58.1
fear of children's injuries	21.7	49.0	19.9	9.4
proximity to roads	19.9	42.0	23.9	14.2
attitudes of parents	20.8	38.8	29.3	11.1

Values of descriptive statistics	Limiting factors that prevent from going outside with children			
	a large number of children in the group	fear of children's injuries	proximity to roads	attitudes of parents
arithmetic mean	4.05	2.47	2.71	2.71
standard deviation	1.344	1.284	1.395	1.371
asymmetry	-1,122	,714	,408	,303
Chi-square	355.652 <sup>a</sup>	228.330 <sup>a</sup>	59.997 <sup>b</sup>	58.744 <sup>b</sup>
For all chi-squares, it is: $df = 4$ , $p = .000 < .05$				
a. 0 cell (0.0%) has expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 70.2.				
b. 0 cell (0.0%) has expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 87.8.				

The chi-squares are of high values, which means that the responses of the research participants are distributed statistically significantly differently. One asymmetry value has the negative sign, so most of the answers are distributed to the right of the arithmetic mean, among the larger values; the remaining three asymmetry values have

a positive sign and indicate that the majority of responses are distributed to the left of the arithmetic mean, i.e. among smaller values. Correlation between the mentioned items - the values of two correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 1% significance level, while one coefficient is significant at the .05 level.

Table 10. Correlation between particles: How often educators stay outdoors with kindergarten children and Which limiting factors prevent going outdoors with children

item		how often educators stay outdoors with kindergarten children	a large number of children in the group	fear of children's injuries	proximity to roads	attitudes of parents
(8)	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	.274**	.114*	-.035	.149**
	significance		.000	.033	.514	.005
	N			351		

\*\* The correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

\* The correlation is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed).

According to Guilford (1956, 145), for the coefficients  $r = .114$  and  $r = .149$  the correlation is insignificant, the connection is almost non-existent, and for the coefficient  $r = .274$  the correlation is low, the connection is weak. The next question that we followed up on

the previous statement was open-ended. We asked them to write down what, in addition to the above, are the limiting factors for taking children outside the kindergarten yard. 136 respondents answered that question. We grouped the obtained data and present it in Table 11.

Table 11. Grouped data

Other limiting factors	<i>f</i>	%
Children who do not walk	23	16.9
Weather conditions	50	36.9
One educator (short time together in a shift)	38	27.7
Children with special needs (especially if they do not have an assistant)	10	7.6
A different attitude of a colleague	5	3.6
Approval of the principal/kindergarten policy	5	3.6
Structured schedule	2	1.6
Staying in the forest is reserved mainly for the colder months due to the fear of bugs, insects and reptiles	1	0.7
Fear of off-leash dogs	1	0.7
We are our own limiting factor	1	0.7
Total:	136	100.0

One respondent wrote a very interesting thought/question: *Parents support going to nature and*

*like their children to be outside, but they don't like their children to get dirty, so what now?*

Table 12. Outdoor activities of preschool children

Children's outdoor activities	<i>f</i>	%
free in the game	92	26.2
in organized activities	5	1.4
a combination of free play and organized activities	254	72.4
Total:	351	100.1

Table 12 shows that the activity of preschool children in nature takes place mostly as a combination of free play and organized activities (72.4%), while only 1.4% of respondents stated that children's activity in nature takes place in organized activities.

## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

Scientists define the concept of free time differently. Among other things, the reason is that philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues, etc. deal with the study of free time. When defining free time, it is important to be aware of the importance of creative, active, meaningful and structured spending of free time (Mlinarevic & Gajger, 2010). In our research, 53% of educators agree or completely agree with the statement that they spend their free time in nature. Furthermore, 35.6% spend up to 6 hours a week walking, recreation, cycling, and the like. When we observe the educators and their time outdoors and whether they directly influence the going outside the kindergarten yard, we found that 90.9% of the educators agree or completely agree with the statement that the educator influences the quality and quantity of spending time with children outdoors (in nature). Experts say it's good to get out, regardless of the weather. In relation to the frequency with which educators spend time outdoors with kindergarten children, we found that 27.1% of educators spend time outdoors with their children every day, and 29.9% several times a week. Weather conditions and being outdoors is recommended every day regardless of the weather. Rain has its charms for children. Sometimes adults misjudge that it is better to keep a child indoors because it is cold, windy, and/or raining. If we decide to go out, we should take care of appropriate footwear, clothing and time spent outdoors. Staying outdoors is better to be postponed if the temperature drops below -10 degrees. For staying outdoors, it is necessary to respect the season, weather conditions, length of stay and appropriate clothing and footwear (Pihac, 2011). With the statement which limiting

factors prevent children from going outdoors, 58.1% of educators fully agree or agree with the statement. We asked the respondents which other limiting factor they see as an obstacle and 36.9% mentioned the weather conditions. Petric (2019) believes that success in working with children in an early and preschool education institution largely depends on the educator and his initiative. Jensen (2010) states that in the countries of northern Europe it is customary to put children to nap in the open air. It is part of a long-standing practice at home and in nurseries because they believe that staying in the open air is good. Pihac (2011) points out that children can never have too much play, movement and joy, and that is why it is important to enable them from an early age. Children need to be freed from stress, tension and aggression, and that is why play, i.e. outdoor movement, is desirable because children relax. If the child moves too little, his natural urge to move decreases. Over time, it can leave consequences on the child's motor skills, which can hardly be compensated for later. Based on the teachers' answers, guidelines for further research in the area of the importance of children being outdoors, child development and ways of organizing outdoor activities can be noted. There is a need to expand and deepen the study of educators' attitudes on how to motivate them to take children outside to play, walk and explore the environment every day.

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## BUILDING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING THROUGH STORY READING IN LITERATURE UNDERGRADUATES: AN INTERVENTION OUTCOME

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Psychological Wellbeing in students has recently have lot of attention, especially after the pandemic outburst. Positive psychological intervention was proved as helpful in promoting psychological wellbeing and it is also connected with the story reading intervention; stories which support positive indicators. This study showed the effect of story reading intervention on positive indicators of psychological wellbeing over time for a group of literature undergraduates (n=60). This included 8 stories provided to the intervention group only for comparison with control group. The result showed that story reading led to improvement in students' positive constructs over a period of eight weeks. The obtained results are discussed in the context of their implications for story reading intervention in higher educational institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Psychological Wellbeing, Story Reading Intervention, hedonic happiness (enjoyment, pleasure), Eudaimonic (meaning, fulfillment) happiness, Resilience (coping, emotion regulation), and Academic Satisfaction (Self-efficacy and Achievements)*

### INTRODUCTION

Field of positive psychology focuses on the science of positive Psychological Wellbeing states and has become an important area of research (Shoshani & Slone, 2017). The World Health Organization also states that health is a state of complete mental, social; and physical wellbeing. Absence of disease is not reflect happiness and good Psychological Wellbeing. Thus, designing the intervention to prioritize psychological health can be as important as treating illness (Morrish et al., 2018). Prevention of mental problems can be viewed as a product of promoting Psychological Wellbeing. Research demonstrated that positive Psychological Wellbeing leads to better health as well as better

social and economic outcomes (Kardas et al, 2019). Positive Psychological Wellbeing is associated with better social relationships, coping, income, satisfaction, physical health as well as reduced the risk of suicide and mental illness (Li & Xu, 2019). Finding positive psychology research on different types of interventions are imperative to psychological wellbeing. Story reading can be an effective approach for the promotion of psychological wellbeing in a school setting (Milaré et al., 2021). In the previous researches, storytelling is employed as a systematic technique which was used in higher education also specially with reference to literature students. Storytelling/story-reading/Story acting based interventions have been found

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very effective to promote psychological health in young adults (Schickedanz & McGee, 2010). Its therapeutic approach has also been shown to lead to reduction of depression and anxiety. Evidence from the previous studies support the positive effect of story reading on psychological health, also highlighting that it can be used to build empathy, resilience, happiness, enjoyment, self-efficacy, self-confidence etc (Arslan et al., 2022). After Pandemic not all students are able to form the concept understanding at a level proficiency and for this concept understanding in the form of storytelling intervention strategies are necessary (Arslan et al., 2022). This intervention provides additional strategies and activities to boost the concept understanding skills in the area of comprehension and understanding for struggling students. It acts as a supplement to the mainstream program curriculum (Zuanetti et al., 2021). Positive Psychology literature has emphasized positive psychological interventions and training to promote positive wellbeing (Joshi et al., 2021). A systematic review of appropriate literature conducted to know the depth of the problem. For the same story reading intervention was selected where in all the stories are related to the positive psychology construct which promotes the psychological wellbeing with reference to Hedonic Happiness, Eudaimonic Happiness (Shinde, 2017), Resilience and Academic Satisfaction. Positive Psychology involves promotion of psychological wellbeing. In examining it distinguish by the hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing (Delle Fave et al., 2011). The hedonic approach focuses on happiness and pleasure attainment. It promotes positive emotions rather than negative emotions (Nikolaev, 2018). The eudaimonic approach on the other hand, related to meaning and self-realization (Park & Ahn, 2022). Research has also shown that resilience is a key individual trait of the wellbeing of the person. Resilience refers to the ability of individuals to face and overcome adversity adaptively. It also refers to an array of resources that enable individuals to transform from challenges to opportunities (Ishak, Yusoff, & Madihie, 2020). Researchers show a positive relation between

resilience and hedonic, eudaimonic wellbeing. It also promotes academic satisfaction as research shows a happy individual achieves more rewards in terms of achievement and self-efficacy (Joshi et al., 2021).

## METHOD AND MEASURES

Participants included literature undergraduates attending an Educational Institution of Bhopal city. After announcing the study in two sections, 126 students initially volunteered to participate in intervention. Of these 66 were assigned to the control group, while 60 were in the intervention group that included the story reading. Participants were assigned to groups according to their willingness not by random selection. Both the groups completed pre and post-test before and after the intervention respectively.

### Procedure and Intervention

This study was conducted using an experimental research design, including control and intervention groups (Joshi et al., 2021). An online survey including the study measures and demographic items was conducted. Before administering the survey, participants are provided with the orientation about the study and its objectives. All the participants were informed to give their consent form for the participation in the study. The study was conducted between February 4 to May 2, 2022, during the college time only. The duration of intervention was eight weeks. All the permission was taken by the educational institution (The Bhopal School of Social Sciences) in writing prior to orientation. Pre-test was conducted during the time of orientation of the study. Stories were selected by expert literature professor Dr. Shibani Basu of BSSS college. The stories were chosen based on positive psychology construct and reading ability. Participants were given total 8 different stories character with the theme of Hedonic Happiness, Eudaimonic Happiness, Resilience and Academic Satisfaction.

Table 1. Positive Psychology Based Storytelling Intervention Model

Module	Topic Covered	Time	Story Title
Hedonic Happiness (Hd)	Enjoyment	Week-1	Character- Dr Faustus enjoyment in “The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus”
	Pleasure	Week-2	Dr Faustus enjoys the material pleasures of life for 25 years
Eudaimonic Happiness (EH)	Meaning	Week-3	Marchbanks in Bernard Shaw’s play “Candida”
	Fulfillment	Week-4	As Candida aims in Shaw’s play with the same name
Resilience(R)	Coping	Week-5	Hamlet coping with his anger in Shakespeare’s anger
	Emotion Regulation	Week-6	Tess in Harry’s novel “Tess of D’ubervilles”
Academic Satisfaction (AS)	Self-Efficacy	Week-7	Candida in Shaw’s play
	Achievement	Week-8	Professor in Shaw’s “Pygmalion”

Participants were asked to write down what they had understood from the stories, and then report whether they had experienced such stories in their lives. Afterwards they were asked to practice the learning in their daily lives. This procedure was repeated for each week. At the end of the eighth week the post tests were conducted on both the groups to know the effect of story reading intervention on their psychological wellbeing in terms of Enjoyment, Pleasure, Meaning, Fulfillment, Coping, Emotion Regulation, Self-Efficacy and Achievement. To study the effect of story reading on the psychological wellbeing of literature undergraduates, this study surveyed a sample of undergraduates of higher education institutions regarding their appraisals of story reading. It provides an opportunity to examine individual differences within the individual (Kim et al., 2018). Providing Intervention to promote the psychological health of undergraduates is an essential step to understand their academic positive growth. Therefore, this study can help to fill the gap in the literature by providing a story reading based intervention program to literature undergraduate and empirically evaluating its effect. Because there is lack of research that examined the effects of story reading on literature undergraduates on psychological wellbeing, Hypothesis were generated based on the earlier similar evidence

- Story reading has a positive effect on Hedonic happiness in terms of Enjoyment and Pleasure of literature undergraduates.
- Story reading has a positive effect on Eudaimonic Happiness in terms of Meaning and Fulfillment of literature undergraduates.
- Story reading has a positive effect on Resilience in terms of Coping and emotional regulations of literature undergraduates.
- Story reading has a positive effect on Academic Satisfaction in terms of self-efficacy and achievements of literature undergraduates.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The process of evaluation of results of the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) involves two steps. In step 1, the examination of reflective and formative measurement models is conducted. This is a necessary part of the evaluation because it provides support for the measurement quality. When quality is confirmed, the structural model evaluation is conducted in step 2. While in step 1, the measurement theory is examined, step 2 covers the structural theory that involves testing the proposed hypotheses and that addresses the relationships among the latent variables. Our model contains only reflective measures (Jr, L. M. Matthews, R. L. Matthews, & Sarstedt, 2017). Pandemic effects on learners’ psychology,

sudden change of learning process from face-to-face learning to digital learning have a huge impact on learners' psychology, they are less connected with the teachers as well as peers, a big false of this switching is their thinking is

more narrow or convergent. For the same positive psychology-based Storytelling interventions were provided with their normal classes. Keeping all these parameters, the proposed framework has been conceptualized (Figure 1).

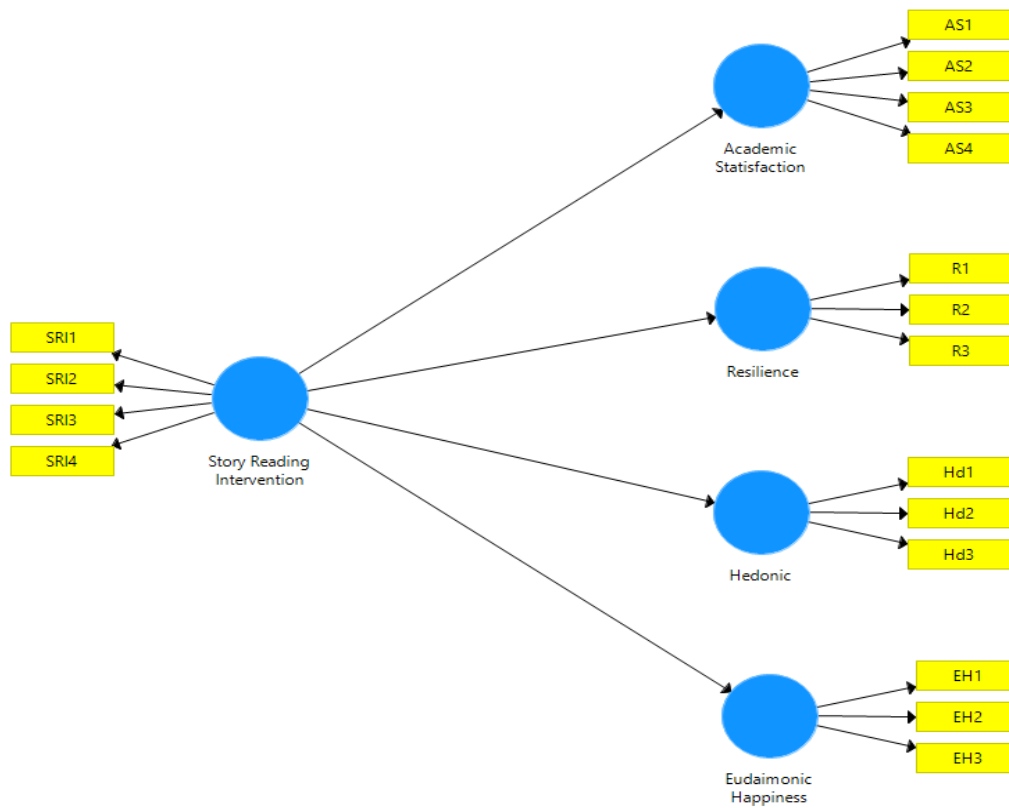


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The research model for this study is depicted in figure 1. Positive Psychology based story reading Intervention is considered as the independent variable. Hedonic, Eudaimonic Happiness, Resilience and Academic Satisfaction were considered as dependent variables (Arslan et al., 2022).

Pilot studies were conducted over the sample of 30 to check the reliability and validity of self-reported questionnaire following are the values {Data analysis was done with the help of SEM Software (Structural equation Model) via online} (Khan T et al., 2021)

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Academic Satisfaction</b>	0.9	0.90	0.93	0.76
<b>Eudaimonic Happiness</b>	0.94	0.94	0.96	0.89
<b>Hedonic</b>	0.81	0.84	0.88	0.72
<b>Resilience</b>	0.86	0.89	0.91	0.79
<b>Story Reading Intervention</b>	0.95	0.95	0.97	0.88

At this stage, we start by examining the indicator loadings. Loadings above 0.70 indicate that the construct explains more than 50% of the indicator's variance, demonstrating that the indicator exhibits a satisfactory degree of reliability. The constructs' internal consistency reliability was assessed. For the composite reliability criterion, higher values indicate higher levels of reliability. Results between 0.70 and 0.95 represent "satisfactory to good" reliability levels. Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistency reliability that assumes the same thresholds. Results between 0.70 and 0.95 represent "satisfactory to good" reliability levels. Convergent validity was calculated, which is the extent to which a construct converges in its

indicators by explaining the items' variance. Convergent validity is assessed by the average variance extracted (AVE) across all items associated with a particular construct and is also referred to as communality. An acceptable threshold for the AVE is 0.50 or higher. This level or higher indicates that, on average, the construct explains (more than) 50% of the variance of its items. The last step in reflective measurement is to assess discriminant validity. This analysis reveals to which extent a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs both in terms of how much it correlates with other constructs and how distinctly the indicators represent only this single construct.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity – Fornell-Larcker Criterion Discriminant validity assessment in PLS-SEM involves analyzing Henseler et al. (2015) heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations.

	Academic Satisfaction	Eudaimonic Happiness	Hedonic	Resilience	Story Reading Intervention
<b>Academic Satisfaction</b>	0.877				
<b>Eudaimonic Happiness</b>	0.712	0.948			
<b>Hedonic</b>	0.704	0.685	0.854		
<b>Resilience</b>	0.514	0.622	0.782	0.889	
<b>Story Reading Intervention</b>	0.768	0.801	0.743	0.617	0.943



Table 4. Outer Loadings

	Academic Satisfaction	Eudaimonic Happiness	Hedonic Resilience	Story Reading Intervention
AS1	0.86			
AS2	0.888			
AS3	0.85			
AS4	0.908			
EH1		0.942		
EH2		0.948		
EH3		0.954		
Hd1			0.486	
Hd2			0.881	
Hd3			0.889	
R1				0.918
R2				0.92
R3				0.824
SRI1				0.941
SRI2				0.954
SRI3				0.928
SRI4				0.948

Table 5. Model\_Fit – Fit Summary

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.064	0.099
d_ULS	0.627	1.492
d_G	0.693	0.876
Chi-Square	345.02	403.54
NFI	0.806	0.773

### Structural Equation Measurement

The data for research were collected through a survey in Google Forms. As the nature of the study was experimental, the data was collected before and after the intervention of ten weeks. Next the data were screened, there were no missing frequency since it was guaranteed by the structure of the survey. The sample size of 60 is sufficient for the experimental study and also for the PLS path Model estimation

(Bretones, Jain, Leka, & García-López, 2020). After the pilot test of structure, researcher found that all the items constructed were appropriate and have above value than the threshold values and were showed strong connection with the latent construct, so all the items were taken for final data collection and analysis. The numbers on the path relationships represent the standardized regression coefficients, while the numbers displayed in the circles of the constructs represent the R<sup>2</sup> values.

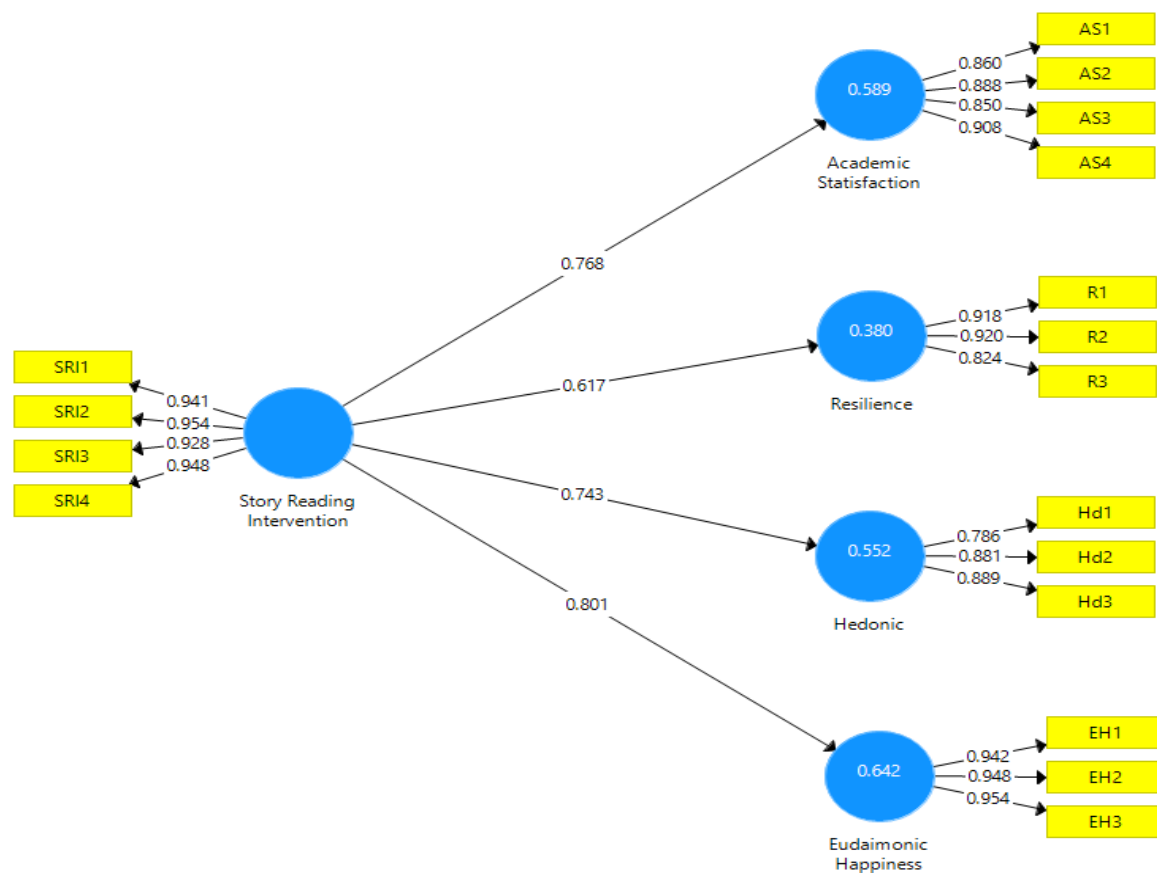


Figure 2. Regression Values

Table 6. Path coefficient of the structural model and significance testing results of Control Group (Pre-Test Scores) – Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Story Reading Intervention -> Academic Satisfaction	-0.19	-0.15	0.17	1.12	<b>0.26</b>
Story Reading Intervention -> Eudaimonic Happiness	-0.12	-0.11	0.16	0.76	<b>0.45</b>
Story Reading Intervention -> Hedonic	0.57	0.60	0.21	2.78	0.01
Story Reading Intervention -> Resilience	0.03	0.10	0.41	0.08	<b>0.60</b>

Table 7. Path coefficient of the structural model and significance testing results of Intervention Group (Pre-Test Scores) – Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Story Reading Intervention -> Academic Satisfaction	0.00	0.01	0.16	0.00	<b>1.00</b>
Story Reading Intervention -> Eudaimonic Happiness	0.07	0.16	0.23	0.3.	<b>0.76</b>
Story Reading Intervention -> Hedonic	0.68	0.70	0.09	7.42	0.00
Story Reading Intervention -> Resilience	0.19	0.31	0.35	0.49	<b>0.60</b>

Table 8. Path coefficient of the structural model and significance testing results of Control Group (Post-Test Scores) – Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Story Reading Intervention -> Academic Satisfaction	0.53	0.45	0.41	1.31	<b>0.19</b>
Story Reading Intervention -> Eudaimonic Happiness	0.48	0.48	0.30	1.62	<b>0.11</b>
Story Reading Intervention -> Hedonic	0.37	0.36	0.15	2.44	0.01
Story Reading Intervention -> Resilience	0.19	0.31	0.36	0.52	<b>0.60</b>

Table 9. Path coefficient of the structural model and significance testing results of Intervention Group (Post-Test Scores) – Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Story Reading Intervention -> Academic Satisfaction	0.76	0.77	0.06	12.66	0.00
Story Reading Intervention -> Eudaimonic Happiness	0.80	0.80	0.05	15.09	0.00
Story Reading Intervention -> Hedonic	0.74	0.74	0.05	12.62	0.00
Story Reading Intervention -> Resilience	0.61	0.62	0.09	6.19	0.00

Results reveals that Story Reading Intervention was affected on undergraduates' psychological health. Hypothesis "Story reading has a positive effect on Academic Satisfaction in terms of self-efficacy and achievements of literature undergraduates" is true. On comparison of Pre-test score (t-value 0.00 with P-Value 1.00) and Post-test scores (t-value 12.66

with P-Value 0.000) showed that intervention affected students' psychological health. With the Story Reading Interventions students were able to developed Academic Satisfaction in terms of self-efficacy and achievements. Hypothesis "Story reading has a positive effect on Hedonic Happiness in terms of Enjoyment

and Pleasure of literature undergraduates” is false. On comparison of Pre-test score (t-value 7.428 with P-Value 0.00) and Post-test scores (t-value 12.62 with P-Value 0.000) showed that intervention does not have major affected students’ psychological health. Hypothesis “Story reading has a positive effect on Eudaimonic Happiness in terms of Meaning and Fulfillment of literature undergraduates” is true. On comparison of Pre-test score (t-value 0.3 with P-Value 0.76) and Post-test scores (t-value 15.09 with P-Value 0.000) showed that intervention affected students’ psychological health. With the Story Reading Interventions students were able to developed Eudaimonic Happiness in terms of Meaning and Fulfillment. Hypothesis “Story reading has a positive effect on Resilience in terms of Coping and emotional regulations of literature undergraduates.” is true. On comparison of Pre-test score (t-value 0.49 with P-Value 0.60) and Post-test scores (t-value 6.199 with P-Value 0.000) showed that intervention affected students’ psychological health. With the Story Reading Interventions students were able to developed Resilience in terms of Coping and emotional regulations.

## DISCUSSION

Prevalence of psychological wellbeing issue among young people is extremely high worldwide. Maximum number of young students experience anxiety and depression in their academic time. However the studies show that the benefit of story reading is helping in promoting psychological wellbeing (Jiang, 2020). Although there are studies emphasizing the importance of positive psychology constructs for the wellbeing among school students very have focused on undergraduate’s level. This study may present one of the first attempts to promote psychological wellbeing of literature undergraduates with the help of story reading intervention. It benefits for cultivating positive indicators of psychological wellbeing and decrease negative indicators (Chodkiewicz & Boyle, 2017). Results of the study indicated a significant effect of the story reading intervention for psychological wellbeing in terms of Enjoyment, Pleasures, Meaning, Fulfillment, Coping, Emotional Regulation, self-efficacy and achievements (Costa et al., 2019). We therefore conclude that the story reading intervention can be an important resource to promote psychological wellbeing. It was also concluded that everyone who is reading stories will not become more positive, but we can conclude that those who participated in story

reading will become more better psychologically (Cruz de Quirós et al., 2012). There story reading intervention may lead psychological wellbeing. The findings are consistent with previous studies showing the positive effects of story reading intervention on psychological wellbeing. Researches evident that by utilizing therapeutic reading, participants displayed more positive behavior. Research finding revealed a significant effect of the intervention for depression and anxiety and negative emotions (Khan & Thomas, 2022). This study shows that story reading intervention showed moderate to large beneficial changes in psychological wellbeing in terms of enjoyment, pleasure, meaning, fulfillment, coping, emotional regulation, self-efficacy and achievements (D’Errico et al., 2018). Result shows that story reading intervention has negative impact on negative emotions. Researches evidence proved that the therapeutic approaches have various benefits to participants from reducing loneliness, isolation and depressive symptoms. This suggests that story reading is promoting and useful therapeutic approach to solve psychological wellbeing.

## FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

On the bases of previous researches our findings offer empirical supports for the benefits of story reading for promoting psychological wellbeing. Results are also important for the practice psychological wellbeing for undergraduates. In higher educational institutions, we recommend that teachers acknowledge their students for their strengths through story reading. Parents and Peers should also encourage for the same, which may ultimately allow them to build new skills for coping from psychological wellbeing problems. This study focused on several strong points: It was an experimental study having control and intervention group, allowing isolation of the difference in dependent variables (i.e. psychological wellbeing) attributable to the story reading intervention (Seligman et al., 2009). Without the control group, it could be difficult to examine the effect of story reading intervention on psychological wellbeing in terms of hedonic happiness (enjoyment, pleasure), eudaimonic (meaning, fulfilment) happiness, resilience (coping, emotion regulation) and academic satisfaction (Self-efficacy and Achievements) It is a longitudinal impact story reading on psychological wellbeing included multiple positive indicators like in terms of hedonic happiness (enjoyment, pleasure), eudaimonic (meaning, fulfillment) happiness, resilience

(coping, emotion regulation) and academic satisfaction (Self-efficacy and Achievements) Examined the impact of story reading on those psychological wellbeing indicators simultaneously, which has rarely been done in the academic literature (Beri & Dorji, 2021).

## LIMITATIONS

Sample was relatively small and included only literature undergraduates of BSSS, as this sample barely representative of all undergraduates. We did not take all the positive and negative constructs like optimism, hope, stress, fear etc into the study. In conclusion the results of this study suggest that story reading is an effective approach for improving positive emotions among undergraduates. The findings also point to need to study the experience of undergraduates in different states of psychological wellbeing by using story reading intervention. These finding can be useful to develop and support the psychological wellbeing and preventing from negative emotions in the long term.

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## MOTIVATION OF EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CASE STUDY: VALA MOBILE COMPANY, KOSOVO

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study is to reveal the role of internal organizational communication in motivating employees in public service organizations. Data were collected from 249 surveyed employees, in the mobile telecommunications sector in Kosovo, specifically in the Vala mobile company. The collected data was analyzed by using the SPSS system. The study found that information sharing had the greatest effect on employee motivation, followed by employee involvement in decision-making. This paper can be useful for managers and heads to create an organizational culture that promotes both motivation and performance. This paper is unique as it examines the links between organizational communication, motivation, and performance.*

**Keywords:** Communication, organization, organizational communication, organizational culture, motivation, performance

### INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of organizational communication is the key factor for the success of the organization, and attention should be paid to: how the communication process develops; what methods are used in order to have effective communication between the members of the organization. The motivating factors that lead to knowledge sharing behavior can be divided into internal and external factors (Kim, 2018). How these motivational factors were received from the employees regarding the way of communication and what effect they had, what the ways of their implementation were, always with the aim of achieving and finding adequate experiences to transmit and understand the given information, which is of strategic importance to the organization. In the public sector organizations, the positive sense of belonging to a group and its impact on

other affective reactions of employees should not be underestimated (Leijerholt, Biedenbach, & Hultén, 2022). A number of studies have shown that organizational identification can indeed act as a mediator in public sector settings (Karolidis & Vouzas, 2019). Some researchers argue that public service motivation remains stable over time, while others assert that it is open to management interventions, such as leadership (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022). However, most empirical evidence has tended to focus on three relationships: 1) the effect of leadership on public service motivation, 2) the effect of public service motivation on leadership, and 3) public service motivation as a mediator or moderator between leadership and attitudes or other work behaviors (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022).

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The way in which the functioning of internal communication is organized in an organization has to do with the structure, size and activity that the organization carries out. Depending on the size of the organization and its structures, departments, and work units are formed, where communication channels must be created for each member of the organization, which perform the function of receiving and providing information. The organization of internal communication plays a quite large role in the mobility of information, or as they are also known as organizational structures, their coordination and planning have a primary function in the distribution of information to its members.

The ways of applying internal communication have a very big role in motivating employees. Organizational communication is the connection that is in the organization and comes from the authorities, among other things, it contributes to the organization of individuals through the influence on their motivation and the social cohesion of the organization (Ali, 2020). In this way, a common language is created in organizational communication, a language that can be described as the open language of the world of human meanings, evaluated by the organization's action at all levels (Frunză & Grad, 2020). The formation of reliable relationships between colleagues largely depends on our communication method and approach with internal audiences, in our case with colleagues. Organizational communication refers to staff and samples, decision-making structures, structural properties and formalization of work processes, while compliance, formal reporting methods and degrees of cooperation within business are also factors to be considered (Naji et al., 2022). The formation of working teams or as they are known "teamwork", which have excellent communication and relationships among each other, increases the likelihood of exceeding strict official communication, therefore, the way of carrying out communication becomes more sensitive, closer, which affects employee satisfaction in the workplace and collegiality. Interorganizational partnerships are cooperative relationships that address complex social issues collectively (Wang & Shing, 2023). Given the basis of this context, public sector organizations can be attributed to public organizations, public goods, public services, public policies and other public entities that have a public domain, relation with the public sphere (Dahle & Wæraas, 2020). The communication system should include all its members, which would help in coordinating

and delegating tasks and responsibilities for the function that the employee performs in the organization. Technological development has made many organizations have their own networks and communication channels, making the circulation of information quite easy and fast, however, with this, the risks in the process of understanding and receiving information have also increased. Such an organizational approach places communication at the center of the institution's process, since such communication practices are expected to create and support the organization (Wang & Cooper, 2022). Cases of ambiguity among employees have increased, where now we have a rather interesting situation, long ago we had lack of information and communication channels that did not meet the requirements of the members of the organization to be informed about the events within the organization, and now thanks to technology we have an overload of information, with which the dimensions of development and transmission of it to the employees, can create confusion and uncertainty among the employees. This is precisely what the paper aims to investigate, the ambiguity that overloads in the organization's internal communication cause. Communication is recognized as the key factor for the success of any organization, within any type of organizational structure, individuals must work closely in cooperation, must hold meetings, discuss various issues with each other various related to their functions and activities; on the other hand, if they develop strained relationships and difficult conditions among one another, then they will not be able to work effectively and cause profitability, productivity and good will within the organization (Kapur, 2018). The lack or interruption of communication increases the possibilities for organizations to face crises, which are related to or belong to the field of communication, both internal and external. A crisis is a circumstance in which the organization cannot function normally, which prevents the achievement of its objectives and threatens its very survival. When a crisis occurs, there is uncertainty, stress, panic, and confusion from management, employees, and the public outside. All this makes it difficult to make the right decisions while the organization is involved in a crisis. With the qualitative method, we estimated the level of motivation of employees from the methods of communication, we surveyed 10% of the employees in the mobile company Vala, in Kosovo, which we took as a case study, where the elements we analyzed are the organizational culture and the internal process of communication, both among colleagues and between employees

and supervisors. This paper finds that sharing and exchange of information with all the employees of the organization affects their sensitivity to the organization, to be motivated and feel themselves as an integral part of the organization, and has an impact on higher performance and work success.

### **Literature review – Organizational communication**

Communication is an important element of workplace interaction and can decisively determine the success of an organization (Casoria, Riedl, & Werner, 2020). A closer look at communication allows us to identify different communication behavior that can be systematically analyzed using methods from the field of communication analysis to identify their dynamics and effect on the success or failure of organizational interactions (Müller-Frommeyer & Kauffeld, 2021). An effective communication process within an organization has a positive effect on the intensity of social change (Ivashova et al., 2021). The effective functioning of internal communication would help the organization to create a positive and sustainable image for both internal and external audience. Also, in business organizations, communication conveys a special relevance in the way of implementation, and that communication also works at three levels: organization, leaders and colleagues (Curado et al., 2022). Unfortunately, organizations do not comprehend that harnessing the creative potential of employees requires a sufficient amount of information on the one hand and sufficient confidence in their abilities on the other (Stacho et al., 2019). The mechanism by which strategic internal communication works to facilitate employees' coping with unplanned change events warrants attention from public relations scholars and practitioners who are tasked with maintaining positive employee morale and organization-employee relations during periods of turbulent (Li, Sun, Tao, & Lee, 2021). Responsible transparency indicates that organizations should provide comprehensive and complete information, including positive and negative news (eg, threats and opportunities) to their employees (Li et al., 2021). In many organizations, there are struggles and tensions between an administrative elite with managers and specialists on the one hand and colleagues belonging to powerful professions on the other, in other words, professionals are in a situation of strong power in relation to the administrative elite and with members of semi-professions such as economists, communications officers and

human resource strategists (Falkheimer et al., 2022). Therefore, the traditional focus of internal crisis communication on providing guidance through effective channels must be expanded to build employee trust and loyalty, especially during a prolonged crisis (Falkheimer et al., 2022). Effective and efficient communication is of great importance to the success of organizations. Effective verbal, non-verbal and electronic communication is the exchange of meaning as intended and allows the exchange of information to create a connected world (Robles, 2019). People have different communication styles. Large and diverse workplaces, with generational differences and ever-changing technology, can create barriers to effective communication (Robles, 2019). Indicators of effective communication include: Comprehension, which is the ability to correctly understand messages as transmitted by the communicator. In this case, the communicator is said to be effective if he can understand correctly. Meanwhile, communicators are said to be effective if they manage to deliver the message carefully (Mahdani et al., 2022). Activities in current work environments suggest that the survival of organizations is largely based on effective communication. Communication is the wheel for the survival of the organization as the workers in the organization must master the communication amongst each-other and with the external public of the organization. The flow of communication helps to create, reshape and create facilities for the overall well-being in organizations (Amadu & Anyarayer, 2022). A cordial organization of internal communication in an organization contributes significantly to the elimination of apathy in the performance of individual roles. Again, cordial communication between management and employees will lead to employee job satisfaction (Amadu & Anyarayer, 2022). In these theories, leadership is the process by which a person engages with others and is able to "make a connection," resulting in increased motivation and morale in both followers and leaders (Vinh, Hien, & Do, 2022). However, until recently, no comprehensive framework has described the spectrum of communication roles that employees can be expected to fulfill in the workplace in a more comprehensive way. This is unfortunate because the lack of a well-defined framework for active communication roles hinders our understanding of the communication challenges faced by employees in post-bureaucratic organizations and the strategic importance of employees as communicators (Verhoeven & Madsen, 2022). The downward flow of information is reserved for communication

from management to subordinates, while the upward flow is information from subordinates to management; this can happen through different types of reactions (Reynolds, 2022). One of the challenges for senior managers is that there has been a need to convey a large amount of information to employees and to manage multiple mediums used by many senior managers (Sanders et al., 2020). Moreover, the process of good communication can give something positive to increase the commitment of employees to organizations (Widyanti, Basuki, & Susiladewi, 2020).

### Organizational culture

Organizational culture affects the flow of information within organizational actors, the existence of a common organizational culture motivates employees and provides the ability to create and exchange information, improving and developing their skills and experiences and allowing these ideas to be combined (Xanthopoulou et al., 2022). However, there are actually many definitions regarding organizational culture, we have focused on one of them, which we can say is more meaningful, where according to Schein (2004), organizational culture is defined as a set of shared basic assumptions for an organization about what is valued, how people should behave, and beliefs about what is “normal” within the organization. There are many different factors that affect the functioning of the organization, but, “organizational culture, instead of factors such as structure, policy or politics, is seen as essential for organizational performance (Bamidele, 2022). When we talk about such factors, obviously the organizational subculture of its departments also plays a crucial role, “in large organizations, subcultures tend to evolve to represent common challenges or experiences faced by members in the same department or location (Bamidele, 2022). A subculture that includes the core values of the dominant culture, plus additional values specific to representatives of that department, may be present in each of the different departments (Bamidele, 2022). Organizational or corporate culture is the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that may not be articulated but that shape the ways in which people in organizations behave and things are conducted. Values are open to discussion and people can agree to disagree about them. Basic assumptions are so taken for granted that anyone who does not hold them is seen as “foreign” or “crazy” and automatically dismissed (Schein, 2004).

There are many factors that contribute to an organization’s culture, but there are only three basic components; the behavior of workers in the workplace, the attitudes, temperaments and cohesiveness of the staff, as well as the vision and values of the staff and leadership (Galli, 2022). The focus on organizational culture over the decade has increasingly become a key component of day-to-day organizational functioning because performance has been perceived to depend on organizational culture. The challenge of performance management has equally attracted the attention of management researchers (Akpa, Asikhia, & Nneji, 2021). Business managers empower their employees to participate in the critical decision-making process within a healthy organizational culture (Pathiranage, Jayatilake, & Abeysekera, 2020). Creating a strong organizational culture requires a process due to the changes that occur in the organization in relation to the change of people who are in the organization including differences in perception, desire, attitude and behavior (Kurniady et al., 2020). Compatibility between organizational characteristics and employee desires must be achieved, which leads to a high level of union. In preparation for changes, employees are expected to feel confident and happy in doing their work (Kurniady et al., 2020). From the point of view of an individual, regardless of the relevant experience for a certain job, in a situation where the employer changes, it takes time for an individual to “adapt” to the organizational culture (Omazic, Mihanovic, & Sopta, 2020). And to be actively involved in organizational life.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The public sector organization of mobile telephony Vala in Kosovo, in this study, operates in the telecommunications sector by providing mobile and internet services. In addition to these aforementioned services, being the largest company in the country, it also consists of the largest number of employees. For data collection, we conducted a survey with 249 employees of the mobile company Vala, to obtain data on employee motivation, their job satisfaction, their communication with superiors, their communication with colleagues, their satisfaction with employee training, and individual outcomes related to competency outcomes. The survey included a clarification for potential respondents that the target audience was the employees within the operational departments of the mobile company Vala.



Data was collected by distributing the survey to department heads who forwarded it to staff within their units. The collected data were processed using the SPSS system.

Table 1.

Question	Results			
	Correct	Satisfactory	Frivolous	Not good
How do you rate your communication with your supervisor?	34.4	40.6	15.4	9.6
How do you rate the communication skills of your colleagues?	43.6	38.3	9.5	8.6
How do you evaluate the selection procedure of new staff?	50.4	38.4	4.5	6.7
	Yes	No	Depending on the time	I don't know
Do you communicate with your colleagues about situations not related to work?	46.8	31.7	11.7	9.8
Various disputes are resolved by communication or should the commission intervene?	49.0	40.7	4.5	5.8
Have you had training on how to communication and motivation?	49.6	38.9	7.4	4.1
Are you motivated to come to work willingly?	45.4	41.7	5.0	7.9

## FINDINGS

Based on the results of the employee survey, we can estimate that we have a way of communication which has cynical elements affecting the motivation and performance of employees at work. The rest has assessed it as correct and they have superior-subordinate collegiality and all communication takes place on work issues. In the workplace, it is not enough just to provide information/message, the other party must also have communication and information analysis skills in order to achieve a higher performance and that affects the motivation and satisfaction of employees. Respecting and implementing the rules for the selection of new staff helps in the selection of candidates who are more profiled for the required position and more prepared, where the employees of these organizations have evaluated this process as correct and within the normal parameters. A very important element in the workplace and not only, and for the complete understanding of human and colleague relations, is communication, even on issues that are not directly related to the

work they carry out. Sharing personal or even family information with work colleagues affects the creation of closeness between colleagues and is of course an indicator of correct relationships in the workplace, this is best supported by the results of the research where 45.7% of employees stated that they communicate even outside the workplace. It is unimaginable that there would not be misunderstandings or even different worldviews between employees in the workplace, also in terms of carrying and transmitting information. Based on the research in these organizations, we witness that communication is still a tool for overcoming these situations. Based on the profile of the work of these organizations, we are dealing with organizations that have organized training for their employees on how to communicate and motivate at work. Almost half of the respondents stated that they attended such trainings. This is confirmed by the last question which is presented in this form, whether you are motivated to come to work, nearly half of the annexed employees have expressed their attitude as to how motivated they are.

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings reported in this study provide evidence of the important role of values in internal communication, positive organizational practices, and organizational culture. Undoubtedly, each organization has its own characteristics that distinguish it from other organizations, not only from its field of action but there are also many elements that are characteristic of organizations. However, there are some elements that, regardless of the organization's scope and purpose, are characteristic of most organizations and they are: the activity, the organizational structure that is related to the way communication works, and the organizational culture, and that affect the feeling and satisfaction of employees for being part of the organization. Since the sense of pride and satisfaction with the workplace and among employees can be related to their profession, and then can be transferred to a sense of pride in the organization (Trybou et al., 2014). The most frequent opportunities for misunderstandings in the communication process within the organization are when changes occur in the organization, which affect the interests of employees. There will be no room for misunderstanding when no new decisions are made, when there are no changes and this is a state of organization. Misunderstandings and conflicting situations exist in the minds of people who are participants in them. People emotionally enter into conflict, and this conflict stems from their role in the company's operating process. What this means is that the fear of changes, eventual loss of the position and benefits that you use can lead to a conflict situation with the manager or the owner of the organization, and is an indicator that the organization has failed to have a transparent communication process in order to raise awareness among its employees. The main obstacles in carrying out communication can be divided into two large groups: the group of technological obstacles and the group of human obstacles. Communication barriers are all that prevent the order from being accepted. A technological problem does not usually stop communication, although it may block it temporarily. Barriers are usually human in origin, not technological in origin. Human barriers are often difficult to investigate, but they are more important. Human barriers include many factors such as: socio-cultural; psychological and organizational. And they require more time and attention to put in the right direction to avoid these barriers. Regarding organizational barriers, we are mainly dealing with the barrier,

which is either caused by a weak organizational structure or we are dealing with a low level of organization. Where in both elements we are dealing with communication as a process. The research findings in these business organizations have provided us with interesting data regarding the role of organizational communication within an organization. Communication networks should include all its members, which helps in coordinating and delegating tasks and responsibilities for the function that the employee performs in the organization. Whereas, the fulfillment of communication functions depends on the use of information and the meanings that this information contains. Of course, the weight of the information and its importance also determines the classification of who should possess that information.

## CONCLUSIONS

The access to the strategic information of the employees should be higher because the employees of the organization should be informed about the path that the organization has and the path that should be followed. The level of employee involvement in discussions about the implementation of the company's goals and objectives, but also their non-fulfillment, should be higher, and possibly exceed 50.0% of the total number of employees. Business organizations must include all employees in their communication network, regardless of what tools or platforms they use, even if only one member of the organization remains without being included in the communication network can be considered a weakness of the organization, and it can bring loss. Organizations must be flexible and react in time in terms of informing their employees, about the change and growth that occurs in the organization, because in the business world information is of great importance for the existence of the business organization itself. The ideas related to the improvement of the work environment, which comes from the line or departmental employees, must be evaluated and handled by the management of the organization for many reasons. One of these reasons would be because the employees are in the line of first contact with both customers and people outside the organization and are more aware of the requests or complaints they may have towards the organization. Superior-employee communication must be at the level of positive evaluation, and we can best know this if surveys are carried out with employees within the organization to evaluate the way superiors communicate, from the management

side, and to look at the relationships and relations between supervisors and employees. It is in the interest of business organizations to monitor the state of their employees' communication skills. They can do this best by engaging them to make this evaluation themselves for their colleagues. Such assessments would help the organization to be informed about the level of communication skills of its employees. The management of organizations should also address the level of the progress of rumors within the organization and not allow information or official positions of the organization's management to be forwarded by certain employees and thus affect the volume of the progress of rumors. It is very important for the business organization that various disputes between colleagues are handled in a proper and fair manner. The management of the organization should cultivate the spirit of communication and conversation to resolve disputes between colleagues and avoid other measures. The process of selecting new members is very important for the creation of working teams and for the relations between colleagues, such transparent and influence-free process would greatly influence the creation of sound and sincere colleague relations. Likewise, it would affect the rise of professionalism in the organization, otherwise we would have relations not at the desired level between colleagues with a tendency to deteriorate.

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## SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*Contemporary states take a variety of measures, ranging from economic, social, cultural, and health to legal ones, to ensure the protection of the individual and the family. Social protection is substantially a form or a field of fulfilment of human needs. Economic assistance, social services and social care are considered social programs which aim to alleviate poverty, eliminate social exclusion, provide social care, enable the reintegration of all individuals, families and groups in need. The Republic of Kosovo, through positive law, has undertaken a series of economic and social measures which ensure the protection of the individual and the family. Social protection in the Republic of Kosovo is not defined by a special law, but it is defined by a package of laws. Thus, currently, in Kosovo there is necessary legal infrastructure for social protection beneficiaries, although not complete in the desired form and quality.*

**Keywords:** social protection, situation of social need, social insurance, democratic transition.

### INTRODUCTION

Social protection as a concept means the right that aims to protect the weak and the right that has the source in the right of survival of each individual. The term “weak” means, inter alia, economically and socially weak persons. According to the authors of social law, social protection is based on the idea of justice and on the principles of equality and freedom. It should be noted that the protection of economically and socially weaker people is in the public interest, and in the name of that interest, the state intervenes in the economy and social life. Thus, if the state assumes the role of caring for the economically weak, then this care, which is the purpose of this function, actually ensures their existence. In essence, this understanding is that the concept of economic freedoms means that the state must protect the individual from social risks and provide every

citizen with minimum living conditions. With the intervention of the state, the legal protection of the weak part in the economic life has been enabled. In terms of Kosovo’s integration policy to the EU and other International Organizations, the orientation and goal of the state is to build a sustainable system of social protection in function of equality and social justice. Indicators of the development of democratic transition in Kosovo show that evident results have been recorded in this process despite the symbolic state budget, low economic development, high unemployment, high poverty and other difficulties. During the work on the study, I have utilized various scientific and professional resources, including university texts, scientific papers and articles, analyses, domestic constitutional and legislative acts and international acts on social law. The study was conducted with various scientific methods which are typical for scientific research in the social sciences and humanities, respectively social law.

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The study was conducted using the empirical method and based specifically on statistical data in order for it to be as objective and substantive as possible. The study contains official data and documents of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, related to social protection, which are presented with figures and tables that reflect the categories of social protection and the direct involvement of the state in providing social protection to beneficiary individuals according to positive law. Also, the process, results, and state capacity on the inclusion of a number of social categories as subjects of social protection are examined and analysed. The official data collected during the study show that in Kosovo, according to the current legislation, not all social categories that should be subject to social protection are included.

## DISCUSSION

### The notion of social protection

Social protection, which is carried out through the action of state bodies, is the protection of persons affected by a social event. From this protection, one must distinguish the protection which is fulfilled individually and privately (Stupar, 1960). Social protection is an appropriate expression for its content which it identifies and which is used as a technical designation. Social protection includes social insurance, respectively social insurance, as well as social protection in the narrow sense (Djordjevic, 1986; Heller, 1981; Jelcic, 1982). The term social protection is defined as a group of activities of state, social and other bodies aimed at fulfilling the conditions for life and progress of those persons who for various reasons are not able to provide themselves with such conditions (Djordjevic, 1986; Heller, 1981; Jelcic, 1982). Social protection is a form of social insurance for employed people and citizens based on certain principles. However, on the other hand, there are authors who emphasize that social protection is aimed at those persons or groups of individuals who are in a situation where the need for protection by society is necessarily required (Tintic, 1977). Social protection is a particularly important social function and is part of social policy based on the principles of solidarity and reciprocity, social humanism, equality and rights and obligations, as well as the principles of self-defence (Milosavljevic, 1982). Social assistance and protection services are a form of assistance provided by the state to individuals and groups in need who cannot meet the basic needs of life due to limited economic, physical, psychological and

social abilities (Çuçi-Peto, 2007). Through social services, the state tries to alleviate the level of poverty and social exclusion for individuals and families and to create opportunities for their integration by providing a system of interventions, services, and care for the improvement of life (Çuçi-Peto, 2007).

### The purpose of social protection

Social services are a form of assistance provided by the state for groups in need who cannot provide for their basic needs due to the loss of economic, physical, psychological and social abilities. Thus, the purpose of organizing and providing economic and social assistance is to provide assistance to all individuals affected by the social event (Law on the Social Assistance Scheme in Kosovo, 2007, 2012, Article 1; Law on Social and Family Services in Kosovo, 2007, Article 1-2; Law on Insurances of Kosovo, 2015, Article 1; Law on Pension Funds of Kosovo, 2012, 2017, Article 2; Law on Vocational Ability, Rehabilitation and Employment of People with Disabilities, 2009, 2016, Article 2). Economic assistance, social services, and social care are considered social programs that aim to alleviate poverty, eliminate social exclusion, provide social care, enable the reintegration of all individuals, families and groups in need (Ibid). Also, through these protection programs, more opportunities are created for the integration and improvement of the lives of individuals with social events. Through social services it is intended to achieve the following main goals: elimination or reduction to a certain extent of undesirable social status; reactivation of the individual in social life; regaining the ability to provide for all their needs, through personal work activity (Ibid). It is not claimed that the individual solves the problems of their life through economic assistance, services, or social care. Social assistance is considered assistance through which the individual faces a difficult moment in life. By difficult moment we understand the impact of the individual by a social event. Through social benefits, individuals in need are given the opportunity to be part of social life. To regain the ability to integrate, the individual must be assisted throughout the period of difficulty in order to meet basic living needs. A very important element in the rehabilitation of the individual is the way social assistance is provided. Referring to various studies in this field, it was concluded that assistance for the benefit of individuals in need should be provided in such a way as to avoid the conservation of the unwanted social situation (Çuçi-Peto, 2007).

Through social assistance, it is intended that the individual have an incentive to get out of the predicament and be active in society, or be active in a personal activity from which they can derive income for living (Todorovic, 1990; Lakicevic, 1978; Herman, 1990; Zelenovic-Lakicevic, 1987; Vrcan, 1984). Employment or engagement in a personal activity is realized through employment programs by the state, but also through projects organized by non-governmental organizations.

### **The function of the state in social protection**

Social protection is in the function of the state which is obliged to take care of the social vulnerability of citizens. It is financed by taxes or other state revenues and not by contributions. Researchers think that it is more justified for social protection to be financed from this income, because in this case the burden is shared by a larger number of taxpayers and those who have more (Sudjum, 1990). The socio-political community (state) decides on the provision of social protection funds (Bakraçi, 2007). The state also oversees the work of social welfare institutions. Realization of rights is performed by administrative bodies or administrative organizations. The state community should oversee and control the work of social protection institutions. From this point of view, the concept of social insurance has been built as a system of different events (social risks) (Robaj, 2018). Social insurance aims to provide citizens with protection against certain risks which would manifest a reduction or loss of professional ability, lower their standard of living, or impose new obligations or burdens (Caen-Lyon, 1955). In the view of Francis Netter, social insurance represents the totality of guarantees (of rights) against a certain number of events which are similar in either reducing or destroying their activity or for the burden of the additional burden. Guarantee is about ensuring material gain for everyone, especially for employees (Netter, 1959; Cronston, 1967; Stojanovic, 1989; Jovanovic, 1924). In addition to the state-building process, the democratic transition in Kosovo includes the construction of a sustainable system of social protection, of international standards for freedoms and human rights. However, Kosovo, although with a weak economy compared to EU countries, with high unemployment, low state budget and other difficulties, has begun the progressive phase of building a social protection system. In terms of Kosovo's integration policy in relation to the EU and other international mechanisms, the orientation of Kosovo institutions is also aimed at

building a sustainable system of social protection, in the function of equality and social justice.

### **Social protection and provision of social insurance**

Human and civil rights and freedoms represent a special segment of the democratic transition. In this sense, the obligation of social protection is to guarantee basic social and material security for vulnerable persons. Social protection grows and arises from the social contradictions of class society, as a primary need of the civil class, in order to maintain class peace and the balance of class relations. Social protection, in essence, is a form or area of satisfying (fulfilling) of human needs. The needs of social insurance are not *sui generis* needs, but part of the general social needs of people, social groups, and social communities (Milosavljevic, 1982). Social protection deals with the satisfaction of human needs, and above all, the fulfilment of primary human biopsychosocial needs (Dejvis & Seklton, 1978; Rot, 1980). The permanent character of social protection derives from the character and content of social needs (Leon, 1963; Rigaux, 2009). On the other hand, Professor Pusic emphasizes that protection, in the broadest sense of the word, is a condition in which some of the certain needs are met. The question is, when is it considered that social protection is fully met? Professor Pusic describes this situation as "a positive state of well-being", which means: developing individual skills; creating and maintaining satisfactory human needs; constructive participation in community life; creative work and recreation; as well as the constant establishment of a dynamic balance between new experiences and security. Social protection is guaranteed through social insurances (Law on Insurances, 2015, Article 1), which are primarily focused on the broad organization of prevention of social insecurity (social risks), provision of assistance, protection of security for those who find themselves in these conditions, who cannot cope with them and overcome them (Tintic, 1977). The quality of what direction the service and the social system will go, will depend on the degree of development of a society (Rivero & Savatier, 1991). Therefore, it must be directed in such a way as to provide citizens with a certain level of wealth, namely physical well-being (Tintic, 1964). The needs of the individual for social protection include the needs of wealth and the needs of existence, as well as the needs of public institutions (Law on the Social

Assistance Scheme in Kosovo, 2012, Article 1; Law on Social and Family Services, 2007, Article 1-2). Erich Fromm states that “human existence requires that we possess, preserve, care for, and use certain things in order to survive” such as belief, food, and clothing to meet needs (Fromm, 1979).

### Social protection and human needs

The term “social protection” is also used to denote the right that aims to protect the weak and the right that has its source in the right of survival of each individual (Tasic, 1934; Dupeyroux, 1978; Labus, 1992). The term “weak” means, *inter alia*, economically and socially weak persons. According to this understanding, the essence of social protection must be “to protect socially and economically the weakest and the right of every individual to survive” (Tasic, 1934). State intervention must ensure the principle of justice, that is, it must be carried out in the spirit of justice and the elimination of social contradictions (Law on Social and family services, 2007, Article 1-2). It should be noted that the protection of economically and socially weaker people is in the public interest, and in the name of that interest, the state intervenes in the economy and social life. In essence, this understanding is that the concept of economic freedoms means that the state must protect the individual from social risks and provide every citizen with minimum conditions to exercise other human rights (Saliu, 2004; Markovic, 1982).

### Social insurance scheme income

Income is the main and most important element of financing and functioning of the social insurance scheme (Robaj, 2018). Social law protects the special category of people who perform certain functions of national interest for society. For example, the protection provided to the women

during the period of maternity, childbirth, and child growth. This protection, in economically developed countries, is provided not only to employed women but also to unemployed women. With these rights, the state shows its interest in increasing births, and in this way influences the increase in births. Moreover, there are states that provide children allowances regardless of the family financial status. Also, the right to an old-age pension is acquired regardless of the wealth and condition of the beneficiary. Through the fair determination of the relation that exists between the income from the contribution percentages and the income that social subjects benefit from the social insurance scheme, we will be able to achieve continuity in payments for illness, maternity, maternity allowance, etc.

### Income to be benefited

The social insurance scheme recognizes and implements several types of income. Income in the form of contribution percentage constitutes the main source for the social insurance scheme because contribution percentages are considered the basic source for the social insurance fund. Whereas, the Social Assistance Scheme differs from that of social insurance despite the fact that both schemes aim at the social protection of certain categories. Both schemes are defined by separate laws where each defines the beneficiary categories. Thus, in order to benefit from social assistance, all family members must meet the conditions for classification in one of two categories: First category: Families in which all members are dependent and none of them is employed; Second category: Families with a member able to work, but who is unemployed, with at least one child under the age of five, or who have in permanent care an orphan under the age of 15 years old (for more see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Social Assistance Scheme in Kosovo  
Source: GAP Institute, 2022

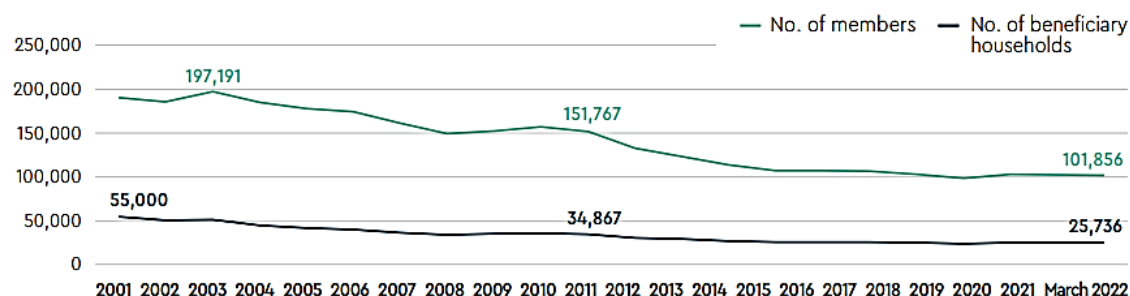
According to these criteria, from 2001 to March 2022, on average, about 34 thousand families received social assistance, as well as on average 140 thousand members of these families. The number of beneficiary families and members has decreased since 2003 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). This decline was also influenced by the amendment of the Law on Social Assistance

Scheme in 2012, especially the selection criteria in Category II, despite the fact that the parameters of poverty and unemployment do not show improvements. The number of social assistance beneficiaries has marked a significant decrease, from 26.302 families (2016) to 25.736 in the first months of 2022 (See Table 1 and Figure 2).

Table 1. Number of families benefiting from social assistance by region 2016-2022.

Region	Years						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Gjakova	2.191	1.998	2.010	2.010	2.005	2.063	2.085
Gjilan	2.741	2.633	2.418	2.418	2.139	2.292	2.195
Mitrovica	5.972	6.156	6.107	6.107	6.099	6.504	6.742
Peja	2.395	2.376	2.276	2.276	2.266	2.309	2.340
Prizren	2.758	2.635	2.537	2.537	2.365	2.476	2.536
Prishtina	7.502	7.631	7.408	7.408	7.018	7.430	7.387
Ferizaj	2.743	2.688	2.589	2.589	2.460	2.605	2.610
<b>Total</b>	<b>26.302</b>	<b>26.117</b>	<b>25.345</b>	<b>25.345</b>	<b>24.352</b>	<b>25.679</b>	<b>25.895</b>

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

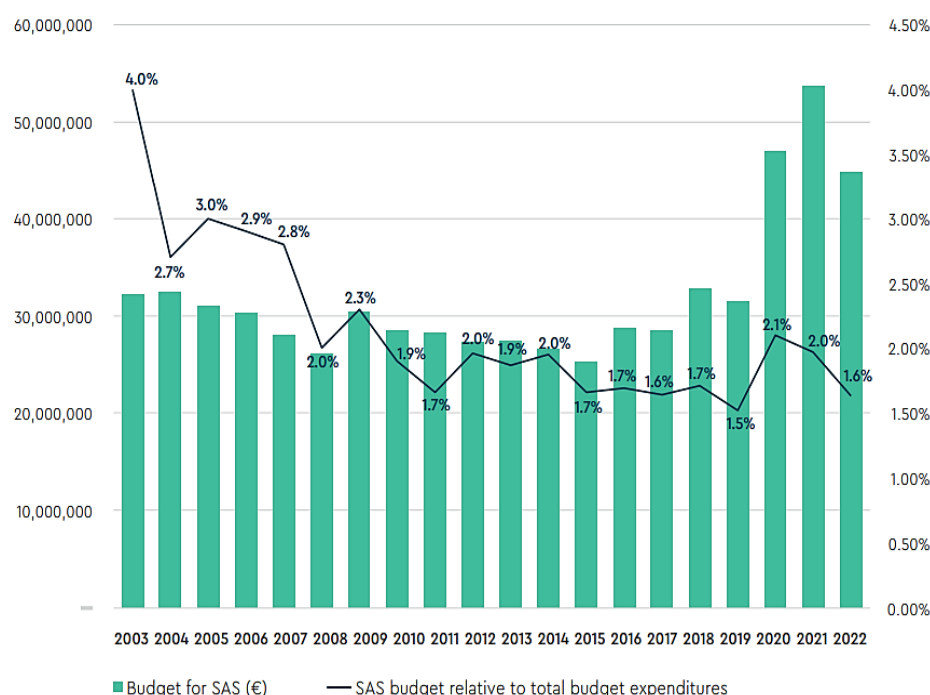


Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

Figure 2. Number of households and members in the Social Assistance Scheme from 2001 until March 2022

From 2003 to 2022, an average of 32 million euros per year were spent on SAS (Social Assistance Scheme, GAP Institute, 2022) from the state budget, or 641 million euros were spent in total for two decades. Despite the fact that the budget

for SAS has remained almost the same (with the exception of the years 2020-2022, where due to the pandemics, transfers for this category increased with various government decisions), the share of SAS in the total state budget has been decreasing.



Source: GAP Institute, 2022

Figure 3. The budget for SAS and its share in total annual expenditures from the state budget, 2003-2022 (GAP Institute, 2022)

Also, the budget for SAS (Social Assistance Scheme) has remained almost unchanged, despite the fact that the budget for social subsidies has increased continuously as a result of the establishment of new social schemes. According to the WB (World Bank), social assistance in Kosovo as a share of social protection spending nearly tripled between 2009 and 2019. Spending on SAS fell by 8.4% in real terms and from 0.69 to 0.45% of GDP. Only about 7% of the total population benefits from SAS, while the official poverty rate is about 20% (World Bank, 2022). Social insurance basically recognizes and applies these types of income:

#### Income for illness

Benefits from area of illnesses fall into the category of short-term benefits due to the fact that the benefits for illnesses cannot last more than 3 months but never 12 months. Subjects covered by insurance from the social insurance scheme receive payments for: a). income for illness; b). income for compensation for illness when changing workplace (Robaj, 2018). Based on the fact that Kosovo still does not have a Law on Health Insurance, this category of compensation does not exist in Kosovo.

#### Maternity income

From the maternity income, the subjects of the social insurance scheme, benefit payment for:

1. maternity income;
2. income for maternity compensation when the workplace is changed;
3. childbirth allowance.

Every woman, who has been employed, enjoys the right to benefit 9 months of income in the name of childbirth. The first 6 months of maternity leave, the payment is made by the employer with compensation of 70% of the basic salary. For the next 3 months, maternity leave is paid by the Government of Kosovo with compensation of 50% of the average salary in Kosovo. An employed woman has the right by law to extend her maternity leave for another 3 months without pay (Law on Labour of Kosovo, 2010, Article 49). Due to the fact that Maternity Leave (Op.cit) still remains a burden to businesses for the first six months and not to the state as it is regulated in the countries of the region, the number of employed women unfortunately remains very low, where specifically from 616,209 working age women only 98,756 are employed (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). According to the same



source, the employment rate among working age women is only 16%. From the latest data of the Statistics Agency, it results that 84% of working age women are unemployed. Unlike Kosovo, which continues to face such problems, in the countries of the region, this issue has already been settled, including in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, etc., where the burden of maternity leave is 100% under the responsibility of the state.

### Pension income

Pension is the amount of income benefited by a subject when becoming incapable of work due to age or an illness. Retirement age is determined

by law (Currently a draft law, Article 77). The retirement age in most countries (states) is 65 years. The right to a pension is a permanent right. This right does not have a statute of limitation. The payment of the pension will start from the day when the person claims it. The right to claim a pension starts no later than 1 year from the day of its recognition. According to the legislation in force, mandatory pensions consist of two forms of Pension: Basic Pensions and Individual Savings Pensions. Employers may also provide Supplementary Employer Pensions to their Employees. Individuals may purchase Supplementary Individual Pensions through Pensions Providers (Law on Pension Funds of Kosovo, 2012, Article 2).

Table 2. Number of beneficiaries of basic old-age pensions in the regions 2015-2021

Region	Years						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gjakova	13.320	12.570	12.500	12.804	13.513	14.224	14.748
Gjilan	19.199	17.100	15.709	16.085	16.833	17.677	18.073
Mitrovica	22.326	18.634	18.907	19.398	20.467	21.991	23.035
Peja	14.645	13.926	14.595	14.885	15.874	16.696	17.146
Prizren	22.201	21.417	21.852	22.732	23.893	25.049	25.994
Prishtina	27.617	24.687	26.608	28.010	29.733	32.216	34.050
Ferizaj	12.692	11.683	12.545	12.974	13.604	14.427	15.116
<b>Total</b>	<b>132.000</b>	<b>120.017</b>	<b>122.716</b>	<b>126.888</b>	<b>133.917</b>	<b>142.280</b>	<b>148.162</b>

Table 3. Number of beneficiaries of contribution old-age pensions by regions 2015-2021

Region	Years						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gjakova	4.712	4.892	4.635	4.896	5.130	5.308	5.473
Gjilan	3.207	3.312	2.936	3.035	3.183	3.305	3.366
Mitrovica	6.509	6.667	6.427	6.692	6.973	7.142	7.143
Peja	4.495	4.659	4.670	4.830	5.016	5.208	5.213
Prizren	6.259	6.437	6.700	7.098	7.420	7.624	7.750
Prishtina	11.869	11.884	14.227	14.951	15.618	16.543	16.591
Ferizaj	3.314	3.464	3.705	3.889	4.146	4.321	4.336
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.365</b>	<b>41.315</b>	<b>43.300</b>	<b>45.391</b>	<b>47.486</b>	<b>49.451</b>	<b>49.872</b>

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

### Disability pension

Disability means an inadequate health condition, persistent for a relatively long time, often for a lifetime, which has consequences for social, professional, and economic life. The term disability in practice has been used with several meanings. In the medical meaning -

it is the phenomenon that shows the connection between the illness and its possibility for treatment. This group includes those individuals who, as a result of an illness, despite the maximum medical efforts for rehabilitation, fail to be treated. In the *economic* meaning – it means the change of status from an employed person to a retired disabled person, which as a result aggravates

the economic situation of the disabled person. He/she cannot provide the same standard of living he could previously provide. In the *social* meaning - disability is related to various social reasons, which are followed by damage to the health of the person. In the *legal* meaning – it has to do with the establishment by the state of the legal conditions determined by law. In order to obtain the status of a disabled person, every person must meet the legal requirements (Çuçi-Peto, 2007).

### Special pensions

Special pensions are provided by law. These pensions are awarded to martyrs, invalids and veterans of the KLA, as well as civilian victims and their families (Law on the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of Kosovo Liberation Army, Civilian Victims of War and their Families, 2011, Article 6). According to the positive law, the state provides special benefits to the above-mentioned categories, which are considered as social rights, respectively these special rights enter the domain of social law.

Table 4. Pension scheme for families of war martyrs and invalids 2015-2021

Region	Years						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gjakova	2.401	2.378	2.330	2.477	1.627	2.507	2.473
Gjilan	270	264	261	400	312	401	392
Mitrovica	2.534	2.454	2.401	2.356	2.100	2.386	2.323
Peja	1.191	1.456	1.423	1.498	1.002	1.569	1.527
Prizren	1.699	1.665	1.648	1.640	1.419	1.700	1.670
Prishtina	3.778	3.686	3.639	3.931	3.280	4.115	4.048
Ferizaj	779	777	770	779	688	792	778
Out of Kosovo	:	:	:	57	65	80	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.652</b>	<b>12.680</b>	<b>12.472</b>	<b>13.138</b>	<b>10.493</b>	<b>13.550</b>	<b>13.293</b>

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

### Family pensions

In circumstances where there is no support from the family or when it is not sufficient to ensure the wellbeing of an individual, the state has the duty to provide social and family services to those people

who would otherwise not be helped in a way that would respect their dignity as human beings and their basic rights based on Kosovo legislation and international conventions on human rights (Law on Social and Family Services, 2007, Article 1-2).

Table 5. Number of families benefiting from social assistance by regions 2016-2021

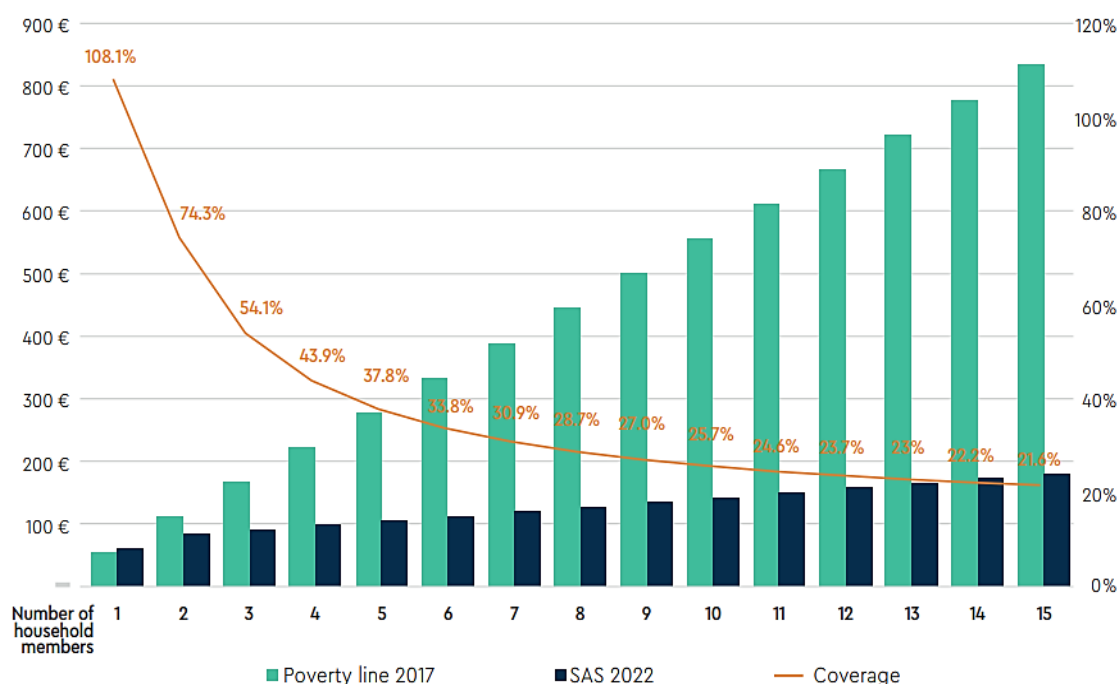
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Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022

## Poverty rate

The poverty rate in Kosovo has been continuously declining since the post-war years. In the first poverty assessment, made in 2000, the WB (World Bank) findings showed that over half of the population (50.3%) lived in poverty, while 11.9% of the population lived in extreme poverty. Seven years later, poverty levels had declined slightly, with 45% of the population living in poverty, while extreme poverty had risen

to 15% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2022). According to WB (World Bank), poverty in Kosovo at the end of 2021 was 20.9%. The increase of consumer prices and the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine are expected to increase poverty in Kosovo even more. If we get based on the monthly compensation based on the size of the family and the 2017 poverty rate of 1.85 euros per day, it turns out that all families with two or more members continue to remain poor even after receiving social assistance.



Source: GAP Institute, 2022

Figure 4. SAS poverty coverage according to household size

## Supplementary pensions

Supplementary pension is the amount of money that benefit the persons who perform constitutional functions. The President of the Republic of Kosovo acquires the rights defined by law after the end of the mandate for which he was elected (Law on the President of the Republic of Kosovo, 2009, Article 18-18). The President of the Republic of Kosovo after the end of his/her term in accordance with the law is entitled to a pension, the amount of which is 70% of the salary which the president receives (Ibid).

After the end of the mandate, deputy is entitled to a supplementary pension, if he/she has exercised the duty of deputy for at least one mandate and has reached the age of 55. The deputy who meets the conditions set by law realizes the supplementary pension in the amount of 50% of the basic salary of the deputy (Law on Rights and Responsibilities of the Deputy, 2010, Article 22). To the family members of the beneficiary of the supplementary pension who has died, the family pension is determined in the amount of 70% of that pension on the day of death. The spouse and

children up to the age of 18, respectively up to the age of 22, are entitled to a family pension if they continue their higher education (Ibid, Article 27). The Law on Benefits to Former High Officials defines the beneficiaries as: the former President of the Assembly, the former Prime Minister, and the former President of the Supreme Court of Kosovo (Law on Benefits to Former High Officials, 2008, Article 2-3).

### Unemployment income

Unemployment is an involuntary event which may come as a result of low economic development or as a result of the irresponsibility of the individual. Either way, unemployment is associated with negative consequences, both in the economic situation and in the social situation of the individuals affected by it. This is due to the fact

that with the termination of the employment relationship, the benefits deriving from it are also terminated. One of the main benefits of employment is the salary. Salary is a very important means of livelihood. Termination of employment brings negative consequences not only for the individual but also for his/her entire family. To avoid the negative consequences of salary termination and unemployment, the state, in addition to other ways used to avoid the negative phenomena brought by this problem, has created a system of protection in case of unemployment (Robaj, 2018). The system of protection against unemployment aims at providing monthly, temporary economic assistance, in order to meet basic living needs. The unemployment protection system operates through assistance which is part of the social insurance system (In Kosovo, under positive law, unemployment benefits are not currently included).

Table 5. Number of families benefiting from social assistance by regions 2016-2021

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	2016	2017	2018	2018	2019	2020	2021
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### Initiative for the Social Assistance Scheme Reform

Issues with the social assistance system were observed long before the pandemics. The Sector Strategy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) 2018-2022, approved in December 2017, had identified issues with the SAS (Social Assistance Scheme). According to the Strategy, the monthly value of social assistance is not adjusted to the prices, as provided by law. The monthly payment amounts are even lower than the poverty line. The social protection system is characterized by inconsistencies and inequalities between schemes in terms of adequacy of material benefits. The SAS monthly amount per person is lower compared to all other schemes (Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, Sectorial Strategy

2018-2022). The one child under the 5 criteria for the same category of beneficiaries in particular poses a problem in covering poor households from the scheme, given that the financial situation of households worsens when children attend education. According to a UNICEF study, the highest risk of child poverty is for children where the main household income comes from social assistance (94.8%), which accounts for 16.5% of poor children and 8.5% of all children in Kosovo (UNICEF-Kosovo Programme, Children Poverty, 2022). Households from minority communities, particularly those from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are most at risk of poverty. The Sector Strategy also envisaged amendments to the SAS (Social Assistance Scheme) legal framework and drafting the analysis to review the social assistance scheme.

## CONCLUSIONS

It should be noted that the protection of economically and socially weaker people is in the public interest and in the name of that interest the state intervenes in the economy and social life. However, the quality of society will depend on the degree of development in which direction the service and the social system will go. Kosovo, although with a weak economy compared to EU countries, with high unemployment, small state budget, and other difficulties, has nevertheless begun the progressive phase of building a social protection system. Currently, in Kosovo, there is the necessary legal infrastructure for social protection beneficiaries, although not complete in the desired form and quality. In terms of Kosovo's integration policy in relation to the EU, and other international mechanisms, the orientation of Kosovo Institutions is also aimed at building a sustainable system of social protection, in the function of equality and social justice. Indicators of the development of democratic transition in Kosovo show that evident results have been recorded in this process, however, Kosovo still has a lot of work to do in achieving the standard of EU countries, related to social protection, namely equality and social justice. The economic situation in which Kosovo is today, the slow economic growth, the high rate of unemployment at over 45%, and the high rate of extreme poverty are factors that directly affect the difficult life of certain categories of Kosovo society. Kosovo has drafted social policies for the protection of social categories in need, however, these policies do not properly address the elementary needs of some of the social categories. The sectoral strategic documents of the Government of Kosovo identify the current problems, while the legislation in force needs intervention and possible clarifications. By reducing the number of beneficiaries of social schemes, it would be possible to increase support for those who need it. As a conclusion, it should be noted that the state of Kosovo, since it is in the period of democratic transition, and it faces many challenges, the biggest challenge for it is precisely the dignified provision of social protection to legal categories, as well as the expansion of subjects-categories of social protection, in order to include all economically and socially weak persons.

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## A STUDY ON IMPROVING THE ANXIETY, STRESS AND DEPRESSION LEVEL AMONG PSYCHOSOMATIC PATIENTS THROUGH COGNITIVE LANGUAGE THERAPY

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*The psychosomatic condition affects the hippocampus, temporal role, and parietal lobes of the brain. People with Psychosomatic condition displays poor language skills, higher level of cognitive dysfunction, Memory disorders, Anxiety level, Depression, and stress level. Cognitive language therapy aids learners towards the improvement of anxiety, depression, and stress levels. The sampling method employed in the study is the purposive sampling method. DASS 21 was used to analyze the stress, anxiety, and depression levels before and after the intervention. Cognitive language therapy activities like chunking, embroidery, and identifying errors were given to the learners to reduce the impact of stress, anxiety, and depression among individuals with the psychosomatic condition. The paired t-test in SPSS was performed and from the study findings, it is concluded that the participants displayed a low to medium range of depression after the intervention of cognitive language therapy. Through paired samples test, the significance value for all three pairs (Depression, anxiety, and stress) is 0.000, which is lesser than 0.05. Hence, there is a considerable improvement in depression, anxiety, and stress levels among the participants with the psychosomatic condition as a result of cognitive language therapy intervention.*

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Stress, Depression, cognitive therapy, Psychosomatic condition

### INTRODUCTION

A psychosomatic illness is a psychological disorder that frequently has physical symptoms and leads to high patient anxiety and stress levels. The human body and its parts are vulnerable to Psychosomatic illness, as it affects the cardiac system, digestive system, Immune system, respiratory system and Physical symptoms. People with psychosomatic illness always feel anxious and stressed and prefer to be in medical attention. However, appropriate medical treatment and activities will aid in the betterment of anxiety and stress levels. According to Kurlansik and Maffei (2016), Psychosomatic illness is a prevalent disorder that affects people

of all ages., children, adolescents, and adults. Its prevalence is believed to be between 5% and 7% of the general population, where females tend to affect more than men in the ratio of 10:1. Creed and Barsky (2004) identify that psychosomatic illness was more prevalent among primary care patients with diabetes, asthma, acute injuries, ulcers, and cancer diagnosis. The frequency of psychosomatic conditions was high among patients with “fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, and chronic fatigue syndrome” (Hauser, Bialas, Welsch, & Wolfe, 2015). Psychosomatic patients often get anxious and stressed about the medical symptoms and pain of the illness. People who experienced psycho-emotional distress,

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psychological disorders, erratic way of life, a problem in understanding and expressing emotions, loneliness or neglect during childhood, sexual abuse, drug addiction, and personality disorders were vulnerable to psychosomatic illness. The most common symptoms of Psychosomatic illness are sleeplessness, dizziness, severe aches, shortness of breath, skin allergies, headaches and indigestion issues (D'Souza & Hooten, 2022). Lacourt, Houtveen, and van Doornen (2013) identified the symptoms of psychosomatic patients into seven major categories (gastrointestinal symptoms, cognitive symptoms, respiratory symptoms, cardiac symptoms, musculoskeletal symptoms, physical fatigue symptoms, and physical symptoms) comprising 47 items. Psychosomatic patients usually have two to three bodily symptoms. Due to the symptoms and pain the individuals undergo, they are depressed and anxious. Appropriate medical treatment, medication, and antidepressants will help in managing the condition. Anxiety and depression were common among patients with psychosomatic conditions and physical ailments. Many researchers have confirmed the notion through periodical research. Hashiro and Okumura (1997) affirm that atopic dermatitis patients displayed a higher level of anxiety symptoms, depression symptoms and psychosomatic symptoms and were in three varying degrees (Mild symptoms, moderate symptoms and severe symptoms). They suggest that the patients must be treated with medical advice, medications, psychological therapies and psychological counseling. Wielgus et al. (2020) confirm the highly significant correlation between the anxiety level and psychosomatic symptoms during covid pandemic. A higher level of anxiety and psychosomatic condition is often associated with higher psychopathological symptoms. The research concludes that psychological balance, laxness and mindfulness will reduce the impact of psychosomatic symptoms and anxiety levels. McKenna (1972) also reported that psychosomatic symptoms and anxiety levels were more prevalent among obese participants. The research concludes that obesity level has increased the anxiety level and elevated psychosomatic symptoms where obese people have taken a higher amount of food due to anxiety when compared to normal individuals. McKenna concluded that Physical condition significantly impacts anxiety and psychosomatic condition. Abramson and Wunderlich (1972) reconfirm the above notion and conclude that obese individuals displayed a high level of anxiety and fear and showed disturbed eating

practices. Satsangi and Brugnoli (2018) also assert that psychosomatic symptoms and anxiety levels are relatively high among patients in palliative care, clinical hypnosis treatment and meditative training. According to Hindustan times (2022), anxiety level affects the heart and frontal lobe of the brain which eventually affects the central nervous system. Wientjes & Grossman (1994) also affirm that psychosomatic illness leads to anxiety, disturbed heart rate, and an over-reactive mind. Greene and Walker (1997) assert that psychosomatic symptoms, stress, and depression level were more prominent among adolescents. Wong and Fong (2015) confirm that a high level of anxiety proportionately increases the stress level among psychosomatic patients. They confirm that psychosomatic symptoms and anxiety were the mediating factors. Cognitive language therapy is defined as the psychological language-based treatment used to reduce the impact of psychological disorders, anxiety, depression, and stress disorders. Matsuoka et al. (2017) assert that "Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been applied for various problems, including psychiatric diseases such as depression and anxiety, and physical symptoms such as pain". Waring (1980) also concludes that cognitive therapy has improved chronic psychosomatic conditions among the individuals. Cognitive language therapy was used as psychiatric therapy to improve adolescent school students' speech and anxiety levels (Nnamani et al., 2019). The psychosomatic condition affects the hippocampus, temporal role and parietal lobes of the brain. Hence, people with Psychosomatic condition displays poor language skills, higher level of cognitive dysfunction, Memory disorders, Anxiety level, Depression and stress level. Cognitive language therapy aids learners towards the improvement of anxiety, depression and stress levels (Waring, 1980). The current study intends to analyze and improve the anxiety, depression and stress levels of the individuals who have psychosomatic condition through cognitive language therapy. The study employs the "Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale DASS-21", which was devised by P. F. Lovibond and S. H. Lovibond (1995). "The depression, anxiety and stress scale" have 21 items ("7 items for depression, seven items for anxiety and seven items for stress"). Cognitive language therapy activities like chunking, embroidery, and identifying the errors were given to the individuals to decrease the level of anxiety, stress and depression among individuals with the psychosomatic condition.

## METHOD

### Samples and Sampling Method

The samples of the study were undergraduate late adolescent engineering students from the Vellore district. The criteria for selecting the samples were undergraduate students from urban engineering colleges, late adolescent learners, ESL learners with psychosomatic condition, and with smart phone accessibility. According to Kallakuri et al. (2018), mental and physical problems are three times more prevalent in metropolitan regions of India than in rural ones. Vellore has been categorized as one of the cities under Tamil Nadu. The Vellore district is regarded as having a weak educational system, according to a study from the Union Government published in 2021. In the state of Tamil Nadu, Vellore is ranked sixth in terms of educational backwardness. The sampling method employed in the study is purposive sampling method. Learners with the psychosomatic condition were selected as the samples from the population through Psychosomatic Symptom Questionnaire (PSQ) inventory by Tamara Lacourt et al. (2013), which has 47 items. Transitioning from childhood to adolescence is challenging for psychological development and memory enhancement (Khatoon & Roy, 2017). The World Health Organization claims that (WHO, 2021), one in seven late adolescent people has psychosomatic illnesses. Hence late adolescents were selected as the age group for the present study.

### Objectives

The study aims to identify and improve the anxiety level, depression, and stress levels of participants who has psychosomatic condition through cognitive language therapy. The null hypothesis was formulated for the study based on the objectives and variables. H01: There is no significant change in the anxiety, stress, and depression levels among the participants with the psychosomatic condition as a result of cognitive language therapy intervention.

### Method and Design of the Study

The method employed in the study is experimental. The duration of the intervention was eight weeks. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The psychosomatic Symptom Questionnaire was circulated to 320 late adolescent students from an urban engineering college in the Vellore district. One hundred sixty samples

were selected as the study participants through Psychosomatic Symptom Questionnaire, as the samples displayed two to three psychosomatic symptoms. Consent was obtained from the samples before beginning the intervention. Prior permission has been obtained from P. F. Lovibond and S. H. Lovibond (1995) for using the 'Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)' inventory with 21 items to identify the depression, anxiety, and stress levels among the participants with the psychosomatic condition. DASS inventory was circulated to 160 participants as pre-study and post-study questionnaires to analyze the anxiety, stress, and depression levels of the participants before to and following the intervention. Pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire scores were calculated through DASS rating scale (0,1,2,3). The scale scores must be multiplied by two, and the overall sum must be calculated. Based on the scores, depression, stress, and anxiety level will be dissented into five sets "normal, mild, moderate, severe, and extremely severe". If the DASS value of depression is above twenty-eight, it means highly severe, whereas if the DASS value of anxiety is above twenty, the individual has extremely severe anxiety. However, the stress condition is highly severe if the scores exceed thirty-four. Following interventions were applied to the selected participants. Cognitive language therapy was applied as an intervention for the selected participants for eight weeks. Cognitive language therapy like chunking, embroidery, the story is full of blanks, and identifying the error was given to the learners during the intervention. The researcher has created the android application and the Cognitive activities, pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, and materials were embedded in the application. The application was circulated to the selected participants. Cognitive language therapy has evaluative and analytical reading tasks and activities. A progressive test for thirty marks was conducted to analyze the scores of the samples. Four progressive tests were conducted.

### Data collection and tool

The data was collected through the Psychosomatic Symptom Questionnaire (PSQ) and DASS-21. Prior permission has been obtained from both Tamara Lacourt (2013) and P. F. Lovibond and S. H. Lovibond (1995). The collected data was analysed using IBM SPSS software. The questionnaire's validity was tested using the Cronbach alpha method and Bivariate analysis. Pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire data were analyzed using the tests like frequency



tests and descriptive statistics. A paired t-test was also carried out to find how the values varies in both pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire.

### Data Collection and Ethical consideration

Samples were selected for the study based on the GARP guidelines of the Indian University Grants Commission. The consent was obtained through Google Forms, which was sent to participants. Primary demographic data like name, email id, age, and institution name were obtained from the participants. The study was explained in detail to the participants on the beginning page of the Google form. The study participants have the freedom and right to withdraw from the research study. Data obtained from the participants were interpreted and analyzed anonymously and confidentially.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

PSQ was used to identify the individuals with the psychosomatic condition. The symptoms of patients with psychosomatic illnesses were divided into seven primary groups by Lacourt et al. (2013), a total of 47 items in each: gastrointestinal symptoms, cognitive symptoms, respiratory symptoms, cardiac symptoms, musculoskeletal symptoms, physical tiredness symptoms, and physical symptoms. The gastrointestinal symptoms are “upset stomach, abdominal pain or stomach pain, bowel cramps, and bloated stomach”. The cognitive symptoms include, “difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, having trouble paying attention, unclear or foggy thoughts, distracting thoughts, confusion or feelings of unreality”. The respiratory symptoms

are “feelings of dyspnea, shortness of breath, inability to take a deep breath, sudden fast or deep breathing, and breathlessness”. Cardiac symptoms include “chest pain, rapid heartbeat, pounding heart, tightness around the chest, irregular heartbeat, and painful stings in the heart area”. Musculoskeletal symptoms are “muscle pain, pain in bones, pain in joints, back pain, pain in the neck, and stiffness of fingers, arms, or legs”. Physical symptoms include “feeling low on energy, feeling tired, feeling exhausted, feeling physically weak, not feeling fit, and feelings of muscle weakness, excessive sweating, hot or cold flashes, dry mouth, headache, trembling of hands, arms, or legs, tingling feeling in fingers, arms, or legs, numb feeling somewhere in the body, nausea, fainting, having trouble swallowing, sore throat, rustling sound in ears, lump in the throat, dizziness” (Laucourt, 2013). The reliability test was analyzed using the Cronbach alpha test. The test data were tabulated in Table 1. The Cronbach alpha coefficient value of psychosomatic symptom questionnaire is 0.876. The value is above 0.07; hence the data is reliable. Whereas the Cronbach alpha coefficient of the “Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)” Questionnaire is 0.925, which means the data is highly reliable. The questionnaire results show that over 32% of participants had two to three gastrointestinal symptoms. Over 24% of the participants displayed cardiac symptoms, and over 54% displayed breathing symptoms. Almost 42% of the participants displayed cognitive symptoms, 38% of the participants had musculoskeletal symptoms, 56% of the participants possessed cognitive symptoms, and 64% of the participants had physical symptoms.

Table 1. Reliability of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient
Psychosomatic Symptom Questionnaire (PSQ)	47 Items	0.876
Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)	21 Items	0.925

The samples were selected based on the number of psychosomatic symptoms. One hundred sixty samples were selected for the study. Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) questionnaire was circulated to participants as a pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire. Pre-questionnaire data has been tabulated in Table 2. In the DASS questionnaire, “item 1, item 6, item 8, item 11, item 12, item 14, and item 18 were categorised as stress categories. However, items like items

2, item 4, item 7, item 9, item 15, item 19, and item 20 were categorised as anxiety. Item 3, item 5, items 10, item 13, item 16, item 17, and item 21 were categorised as depression” (P. F. Lovibond & S. H. Lovibond, 1995). Table 2 presents the data of the pre-questionnaire data of the participants. N represents the total number of participants. From the table, it is very apparent that individuals with psychosomatic conditions had significant levels of anxiety,



depression, and stress. Over 107 participants affirmed that they find it challenging to stress down after a difficult situation, whereas over 90 participants affirmed that they tend to overreact to everyday situations. Almost 119 participants put forth that they often become nervous about the situation. However, over 96 participants confirmed that they often feel agitated about the situations happening in life and often find the situation very difficult to relax. Almost 120 participants affirmed that they feel intolerant towards the issues and situations. Over 84 participants accepted that they have unexplained fear. In the depression scale, as the responses mean value ranges from 1.73 to 2.04, it is concluded that the participants displayed a high range of depression. Over 90 participants affirmed

that they experience dry mouth, rapid breathing, trembling hands and difficulty breathing. Almost 103 participants confirmed that they often get panic feelings, and over 80 participants affirmed that they feel scared without any reason. The mean value of the anxiety scale ranges from 1.71 to 2.05. Hence it is evident that the participants displayed a considerable amount of anxiety level. Almost 100 participants affirmed that they hardly had a positive feeling and felt challenged to initiate doing daily activities. Over 106 participants concluded that they felt down-hearted, non-enthusiastic, worthless, and afraid about the situations in life. The mean value of the stress scale ranges from 1.75 to 2.22, which is indicated that the participants displayed high-stress levels.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Pre-questionnaire (DASS 21, N=160)

Items	Mean	Std.Dev	St. Error mean	Frequency			
<b>Depression Scale</b>				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Item 1	1.83	1.09	.08682	21	24	51	56
Item 6	1.78	1.10	.08750	24	46	30	60
Item 8	2.01	0.86	.06752	8	33	68	51
Item 11	1.76	1.06	.08422	26	35	49	50
Item 12	1.84	1.07	.08530	20	47	31	62
Item 14	2.07	0.87	.06956	8	32	60	60
Item 18	1.73	1.15	.09107	37	21	49	53
<b>Anxiety Scale</b>							
Item 2	1.77	1.07	.08516	24	46	37	53
Item 4	1.90	0.87	.06936	8	46	60	46
Item 7	1.83	0.09	.08682	29	24	51	56
Item 9	1.78	0.10	.08750	24	46	30	60
Item 15	2.05	0.86	.06752	8	33	68	51
Item 19	1.71	0.12	.08918	34	28	47	51
Item 20	1.67	0.11	.08935	30	46	30	54
<b>Stress Scale</b>							
Item 3	2.01	0.89	.07093	11	30	65	54
Item 5	1.75	1.060	.08400	26	36	49	49
Item 10	1.88	1.063	.08452	20	48	33	59
Item 13	2.01	0.94	.06752	8	33	68	51
Item 16	2.00	1.11	.08844	29	12	48	71
Item 17	2.22	1.09	.08693	24	12	30	94
Item 20	2.21	0.94	.07439	16	9	60	75

Cognitive language therapy was engaged as a psychiatric therapy to reduce the level of stress, anxiety, and depression level of the participants. Activities like chunking, embroidery, the story is full of blanks, and identifying the error activities were given to the selected participants. The activities were given two times for eight weeks. The pre-progressive test was also conducted to give appropriate practice to the learners. The progressive test was conducted for 30 marks, and the mean value of the scores was displayed in the figure below. The first activity was chunking, where students were given forty

minutes to complete the activity. The successive activities were embroidery, the story is full of blanks, identify the error, and the second set of chunking, embroidery, the story is full of blanks and identify the error comprising eight activities. The mean value of the first progressive test was 21.7, whereas the mean value of the successive progressive test was 23, 25, 25, 26.3, 27, 27.2, and 27.56. The mean difference between the first and last progressive tests was approximately 6. Hence, from the findings of the data, it is established that there is a significant improvement in the values of cognitive language therapy.

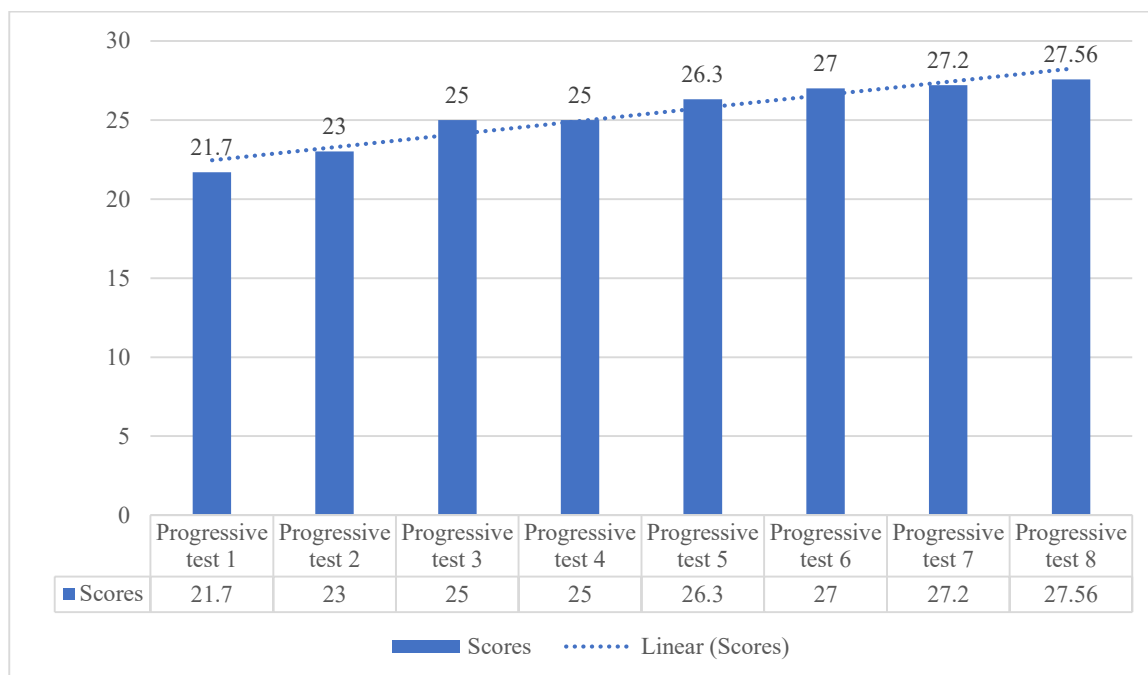


Figure 1. Cognitive Language Therapy Scores

After the eight-week intervention of the cognitive therapy, DASS 21 questionnaire was circulated as the post-questionnaire to analyze the impact of cognitive language therapy in improving depression, anxiety, and stress levels. From the table, it is very apparent that participants who have psychosomatic conditions had improved their anxiety, depression, and stress levels considerably after the intervention of cognitive therapy. Post-questionnaire data confirms that over 104 participants affirmed that they do not find it challenging to stress down after a difficult situation. In contrast, over 110 participants affirmed that they do not overreact to everyday situations but rather feel typical for daily situations. Almost 89 participants said they do not feel nervous about today's situation. However, over 99 participants confirmed that they do not feel restless about the situations happening in life and often find the situation very normal and tend to relax. Almost 93 participants affirmed that they tolerate the issues and situations. Over 103 participants denied the unexplained fear. In the depression scale, the

responses mean value ranges from 0.6 to 1.1; hence it is concluded that the participants displayed a low to medium range of depression after the intervention of cognitive language therapy.

Over 50 participants affirmed that they still experience dry mouth, rapid breathing, trembling hands and difficulty breathing. Almost 126 participants confirmed that they do not often get panic feelings, and over 104 participants affirmed that they no more feel scared without any reason. The mean value of the anxiety scale ranges from 0.71 to 1.20; hence, the participants showed considerable improvement in their anxiety level. Almost 98 participants affirmed that they had developed positive feelings over nine weeks and felt motivated to initiate doing daily activities. Over 106 participants concluded that they felt enthusiastic and normal about life situations. The mean value of the stress scale ranges from 0.63 to 1.16, which is indicated that the participants displayed low to average stress levels. The participants' stress level has been reduced from high to moderate stress level due to the cognitive language therapy

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of Post-questionnaire (DASS-21, N=160)

Items	Mean	Std. Dev	St. Error mean	Frequency			
Depression Scale				1	2	3	4
Item 1	0.9	.97903	.07740	79	25	51	6
Item 6	0.825	.95529	.07552	77	46	25	12
Item 8	1.15	.96609	.07638	56	32	64	8
Item 11	0.9687	1.03049	.08147	76	24	49	11
Item 12	0.6812	.78003	.06167	82	47	31	0
Item 14	1.1688	.97272	.07690	55	32	64	9
Item 18	0.8688	.96558	.07634	82	21	53	4
Anxiety Scale							
Item 2	0.8375	.93760	.07412	75	46	29	10
Item 4	1.2	1.00189	.07921	54	33	60	13
Item 7	0.9062	1.00187	.07920	80	23	49	8
Item 9	0.7375	.85036	.06723	80	46	30	4
Item 15	1.1625	.97702	.07724	56	31	64	9
Item 19	0.825	.96185	.07604	85	23	47	5
Item 20	0.8062	.92142	.07284	77	46	28	9
Stress Scale							
Item 3	1.0938	.92347	.07301	59	29	70	2
Item 5	0.9	.94636	.07482	75	31	49	5
Item 10	0.7437	.83362	.06590	78	48	31	3
Item 13	1.162	.97702	.07724	56	31	64	9
Item 16	0.775	1.00908	.07977	96	11	46	7
Item 17	0.6038	.96140	.07624	109	12	31	8
Item 20	0.9062	1.02667	.08117	86	59	6	9

DASS 21 scores were calculated for the three pre- and post-questionnaire categories by multiplying the responses by two. The scores were categorised into pre-depression, pre-anxiety and pre-stress scores for pre-questionnaire. The post-questionnaire scores were categorised into post-depression, post-anxiety, and post-stress scores. Paired t-test was performed for the categorised scores. The paired samples statistics data were tabulated in Table 4. The mean scores of the pre-depression scale are 25.36. Whereas the mean value of the post-depression scale is 17.53. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the depression scale. The mean value has considerably reduced in the post-depression scale, indicating that cognitive therapy significantly reduces depression levels. The mean value of the

pre-anxiety scale is 18.38. Whereas, the mean value of the post-anxiety scale is 11.18. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant reduction in the mean scores on the anxiety scale. The mean value in the post-anxiety scale has considerably reduced, indicating that cognitive therapy significantly reduces anxiety levels. The post-stress scale mean value is 20.20, comparatively less than the pre-stress questionnaire mean value of 30.60. the mean difference between the pre-stress scale value and the post-stress scale value is 10.40, indicating a significant reduction in the stress level due to cognitive language therapy. The learners have also affirmed that cognitive language therapy has significantly reduced stress, anxiety, and depression levels. Table 5 provides the statistical information of the paired sample test.

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Depression	25.3625	160	4.61810	.36509
	Post-Depression	17.5375	160	4.16920	.32960
Pair 2	Pre-Anxiety	18.3875	160	4.73710	.37450
	Post-Anxiety	11.1875	160	2.46277	.19470
Pair 3	Pre-Stress	30.6062	160	3.70636	.29301
	Post-Stress	20.2000	160	3.58333	.28329

Paired sample t-test was performed to analyze the differences in the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire data. The mean difference between the pre-depression and post-depression scale is 7.82500, and the t-value is 14.349. The significance value(p) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, hence it is concluded that there is a significant difference in the p-value. The mean difference between the pre-anxiety and post-anxiety scale is 7.20000, and the t-value is 17.235. The p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The mean values significantly differ from pre-anxiety and post-anxiety values. In pair 3, the mean difference between the pre-stress and post-stress scale was 1.0406, and the t-value was 25.945. There is a significant difference in

the mean value of the participants' stress levels, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Through paired samples test, the significance value for all three pairs (Depression, anxiety, and stress) is 0.000, which is lesser than 0.05. Hence the formulated null hypothesis, there is no significant change in the depression, anxiety, and stress levels among the participants with the psychosomatic condition as a result of the cognitive language therapy intervention is rejected. The alternate hypothesis is accepted. The alternate hypothesis is a significant change in the depression, anxiety, and stress levels among the participants with the psychosomatic condition as a result of cognitive language therapy intervention.

Table 5. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-Depression - Post-Depression	7.82500	6.89777	.54532	6.74800	8.90200	14.349	159	.000
Pair 2	Pre-Anxiety - Post-Anxiety	7.20000	5.28413	.41775	6.37495	8.02505	17.235	159	.000
Pair 3	Pre-Stress - Post- Stress	1.04062E1	5.07342	.40109	9.61410	11.19840	25.945	159	.000

## DISCUSSION

The study's findings concluded that cognitive language therapy was found to be an effective method in improving anxiety, stress, and depression levels. Various studies (Marchand, 2012; Novaco, 1977; Li et al., 2020) has also confirmed that cognitive therapy has been found effective in reducing depression, stress, and anxiety level. In the present study, DASS 21 questionnaire mean value (both pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire data) significantly varies in the three categories (stress, anxiety, and Depression) after

the intervention of cognitive language therapy. Cognitive language therapy has reduced stress, anxiety, and depression among learners with psychosomatic condition. The paired difference test has also confirmed that cognitive language therapy was an effective treatment for the psychological disorder of participants with the psychosomatic condition. The results of the present study were also confirmed by many researchers (Matsuoka et al., 2017; Mazaheri et al., 2014; Ghazavi et al., 2016), who have employed cognitive therapy as a psychotherapeutic treatment for improving the psychosomatic condition of the participants.

Naqvi put forth that females had higher levels of depression when compared to males. The present study does not identify any gender difference in the level of anxiety, stress, and depression as stated by Naqvi, T. Z., Naqvi, S. S., and Merz (2005). Both genders displayed similarly varying levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. Seydel et al. (2013) identified that the psychosomatic condition and its related depression and stress varied based on age. In the present study, late adolescent learners displayed higher levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. The World health organization report also confirms that one in seven late adolescents have a psychosomatic illness. The pre-questionnaire findings suggested the learners with psychosomatic conditions displayed a high level of anxiety, depression, and stress. The calculation of the level was based on DASS 21 scale. Cognitive therapy based activities were given to the learners to engage themselves in doing the activity. After the eight-week intervention, DASS 21 is circulated. The findings of the post-questionnaire data have confirmed that the learners' depression, anxiety, and stress level has reduced from high to moderate and low. Learners have affirmed that cognitive language therapy has helped them engage, learn and analyze the text given. They have also affirmed that it has significantly improved their perception of memory and attention capabilities.

### Limitations and Recommendation

The study is limited to the Vellore district and late adolescent learners. Research could also be carried out across districts, states, and countries to identify the anxiety and depression levels of individuals with the psychosomatic condition. Various psychotherapies like behavioural therapy and memory therapy could also be implemented to reduce the stress, anxiety, and depression level of the participants. The psychosomatic condition affects the psyche through depression, stress, anxiety, and mental disorders. Detailed research could be done on other disorders and mental illnesses.

### CONCLUSION

Participants with psychosomatic conditions displayed higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. However, psychosomatic patients develop mental illness from multiple physical symptoms. Appropriate medications could help them to resolve the physical symptoms. The study concludes that cognitive language therapy could be employed to reduce the mental illness

of individuals with psychosomatic condition. Anxiety, depression, and stress were identified as the factors affecting individuals with the psychosomatic condition. Cognitive language therapy, like chunking and embroidery, was found to be effective activities in improving anxiety, depression, and stress levels of individuals.

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### Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest.

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## THE IMPACT OF ANXIOUS AND NON-ANXIOUS PARENTS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive and persistent anxiety or fear and are associated with a range of behavioral disturbances. Most parents experience anxiety from time to time, parenting anxiety can affect the quality of their life or their child's life. The regulation of emotions and behavior is crucial to the healthy early development of children, where they interact with the environment to adjust emotions, cope with frustrations and stress. Parents who are depressed and out of tune with their child's needs and emotions leave the child unsupported, left to manage their own anger, sadness, and fear, and are left to their own immature repertoire of behaviors. To make a comparative analysis of the impact of anxiety on the mental health of children of anxious and non-anxious parents. A cross-sectional transfer analytic study was conducted. 300 students were analyzed, in the territory of Gostivar, as well as their parents. "Psychometric properties of the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders" (SCARED) - child version was used to examine anxiety in children, and it measures it in 4 domains (panic, separation anxiety, generalized anxiety and school phobia). A statistically significant difference was confirmed in the distribution of students without anxiety, with possible anxiety disorder, and with anxiety disorder, between parents with and without anxiety ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Anxious parents more often than parents who did not manifest anxiety have children with a possible anxiety disorder and with a convincing result for anxiety disorder consequently. Anxious parents significantly more often than parents without anxiety had children with panic disorder. Regardless of children's specific symptoms, anxiety can have a negative effect on their thoughts, emotions, and physical health. Anxiety runs in families, with recent analysis showing that children of anxious parents are twice as likely to have anxiety problems than children of non-anxious parents. The results of the research showed a significant impact of parents' anxiety on children's health.

**Keywords:** anxiety, parents, children, puberty, influence

### INTRODUCTION

Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive and persistent anxiety or fear and are associated

with a range of behavioral disturbances. Typically appearing in childhood, they are the most common psychiatric condition in pre-adolescence, and if left untreated, a long-term, chronic course

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can follow (Chapman et al., 2022). Anxiety symptoms vary widely and often go undiagnosed in children and adolescents. Anxiety disorders in children are characterized by irritability, nervousness, excessive worry, shyness, sleep problems, and/or physical symptoms, such as headaches or digestive problems (Schluger, 2023). Children are very much affected by what is happening in the world around them. They may feel drained and isolated from others, as well as fear or have feelings of shame. Children with anxiety may also have difficulty making friends or participating in other social activities (Schluger, 2023). Family is the first social environment in which the child begins his social life. Parents have the role of educators, motivate the child, and help him build the value system. They are the important people in life because parents can show different degrees of acceptance and non-acceptance (Kenny, 1994). Open communication between children and parents in the family and democratic behavior encourages self-confidence and offers rich material for research and realization of one's own ideas (Todorovic, 2005). The family is a system that is constantly changing and developing and goes through different stages of development that require the ability to adopt new tasks and ways of adaptation. Everyone reacts differently. Some parents may immediately create a new home routine, some may struggle balancing work and home responsibilities. Some children may feel deep sadness or anger, others may withdraw or act as if nothing is happening (Brown, 2004). Caring for a child is a big responsibility. Most parents experience anxiety occasionally, but for some people, parenting anxiety can affect their quality of life or their child's life (Rowden, 2022). The relationship between parental anxiety and anxiogenic parenting behaviors such as overprotection and fear/avoidance modeling is complex and strongly moderated by parents' ability to regulate their emotions. That is, a highly anxious parent who has strong emotion regulation skills may engage in low anxiety parenting, while a parent with more moderate levels of anxiety but poor emotion regulation may engage in significant anxiety parenting (Chapman et al., 2022). The regulation of emotions and behavior is crucial to the healthy early development of children, where they interact with the environment to adjust emotions, cope with frustrations and stress. Parents who are depressed and out of tune with their child's needs and emotions leave the child unsupported, left to manage their own

anger, sadness, and fear, and are left to their own immature repertoire of behaviors. A sick mother cannot adequately respond to the child's needs and does not fulfill her expectations, just as if she is not present. Such neglect leads to the inability of children to recognize and manage their emotions and behavior (Macuka, 2010). Another problem is parents who do not show enough concern for their child who shows problems in his development. First of all, we mean the problem of communication with your child, some disorders of a different nature, or simply the lack of time that the parent devotes to his child. Namely, all research shows that the relationship between parents and children is important for successful socialization of children. Regulation of emotions and behavior is important for healthy development in the early period of children, who interact with the environment to form emotions and cope with frustrations and stress. Parents in a state of stress are not attuned to the child's needs and their emotions leave them without support. A sick mother cannot adequately respond to the child's needs. The child is not able to "recognize" his own emotions (Klain et al., 1999). Research results confirm that parental concern can be useful in detecting disorders in children. Most of the research confirms a significant connection between the type of concern and the later diagnosis, that is, the type of concern indicates the type of problem the child has. Parents are useful members of the healthcare team, because they have good insight into the child's previous experience, his capacity to overcome discomfort as well as fears that may arise during unpleasant procedures (Multicultural Mental Health Australia, 2007). Children's development involves a whole range of emotions from pleasant to unpleasant emotions. In other words, everyday parenting experiences can be a source of satisfaction and joy, and they can provide a sense of competence and self-confidence when challenges are met successfully (Carter, 2001). However, the experience can be frustrating, confusing, and therefore stressful for parents. When there is a discrepancy between the requirements and the fulfillment of obligations, stress appears.

## PURPOSE OF THE WORK

To make a comparative analysis of the impact of anxiety on the mental health of children of anxious and non-anxious parents.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this cross-sectional study, 150 students from secondary schools in the territory of the municipality of Gostivar, as well as their parents, were analyzed. Two standardized questionnaires were used as research instruments. "Psychometric properties of the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders" (SCARED) - child version was used to examine anxiety in children, and it measures anxiety in children in 4 domains (panic, separation anxiety, generalized anxiety and school phobia). The questionnaire is composed of 41 questions, which should be answered with one of the alternatives: Not true, somewhat true, or very true. The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS), consisting of 42 questions including three self-rating scales designed to measure negative emotional symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress, was used to determine anxiety in parents. The anxiety scale contains 14 questions, divided into subscales of 2-5 questions each with similar content, and it assesses autonomic alertness, skeletal muscle effects, situational anxiety, and subjective experience of the impact of anxiety.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data obtained from the trial were analyzed with the statistical program SPSS for Windows 23.0. All the data of interest for the preparation of the paper are shown tabularly and graphically. The description of the data is made with relative and absolute numbers. Chi-square test was used to compare the responses of children from anxious

and non-anxious parents. All those results where the  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  are considered significant.

## RESULTS

This part of the research shows the results obtained by processing and analyzing the answers from the completed questionnaires of 600 respondents, of which 300 students (140 male and 160 female) and their parents (198 male and 102 female) in the territory of the municipality of Gostivar. A statistically significant difference was confirmed in the distribution of students without anxiety, with possible anxiety disorder, and with anxiety disorder, between parents with and without anxiety ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Anxious parents more often than parents who did not manifest anxiety have children with a possible anxiety disorder and with a convincing result for anxiety disorder - 22.1% (19) vs 18.7% (40), and 50% (43) vs 24.8% (53), consequently. Parental anxiety was significantly associated with child panic disorder ( $p < 0.0001$ ), generalized anxiety disorder ( $p < 0.001$ ), separation anxiety ( $p < 0.001$ ), and social anxiety disorder ( $p < 0.0001$ ). , and was not significantly related to school avoidance ( $p = 0.25$ ). Anxious parents significantly more often than parents without anxiety had children with panic disorder - 61.6% (53) vs 36% (77), with generalized anxiety disorder - 51.2% (44) vs 35.05% (75), with separation anxiety - 63.95% (55) vs 43.9% (94), and with social anxiety disorder - 41.9% (36) vs 16.35% (35) (Table 1).

Table 1. Anxiety disorder, panic disorder, generalized, separation, social and school anxiety in children (SCARED – children's version) depending on the frequency of anxiety in parents

SCARED – children's version	ANXIETY (parents)			p-value
	points	there are n (%)	none n (%)	
Anxiety disorder				
	0 – 25	24 (27.91)	121 (56.54)	$X^2=22.97$
<b>children</b>	26 – 30	19 (22.09)	40 (18.69)	$p=0.00001$ sig
	>30	43 (50)	53 (24.77)	
Panic disorder or significant somatic symptoms				
	0 – 6	33 (38.37)	137 (64.02)	$X^2=16.43$
<b>children</b>	$\geq 7$	53 (61.63)	77 (35.98)	$p=0.00005$ sig
Generalized anxiety disorder				
	0 – 8	42 (48.84)	139 (64.95)	$X^2=6.66$
<b>children</b>	$\geq 9$	44 (51.16)	75 (35.05)	$p=0.0098$ sig
Separation anxiety disorder				
	0 – 4	31 (36.05)	120 (56.07)	$X^2=9.84$
<b>children</b>	$\geq 5$	55 (63.95)	94 (43.93)	$p=0.0017$ sig
Social anxiety disorder				
	0 – 7	50 (58.14)	179 (83.64)	$X^2=22.09$
<b>children</b>	$\geq 8$	36 (41.86)	35 (16.35)	$p=0.000003$ sig
Significant avoidance of schools				
	0 – 2	57 (66.28)	156 (72.9)	$X^2=1.31$
<b>children</b>	$\geq 3$	29 (33.72)	58 (27.1)	$p=0.25$ ns

### $X^2$ (Pearson Chi-square)

A statistically significant difference was confirmed between anxious and non-anxious parents, regarding the total average score for anxiety disorder ( $p=0.000001$ ), and the subscales for panic disorder ( $p<0.0001$ ), generalized anxiety disorder ( $p=0.0002$ ), separation anxiety ( $p=0.031$ ) and social anxiety ( $p=0.00008$ ), while the difference regarding the mean score for the school anxiety subscale was not statistically significant ( $p=0.07$ ). The mean total score for anxiety disorder, and the mean score for the subscales of panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety and social anxiety were significantly higher

in the group of parents with anxiety:  $31.74 \pm 12.9$  vs  $23.89 \pm 11.7$ ;  $9.27 \pm 5.5$  vs  $5.99 \pm 4.7$ ;  $8.56 \pm 3.9$  vs  $6.73 \pm 3.7$ ;  $5.24 \pm 2.7$  vs  $4.45 \pm 2.9$ , and  $6.48 \pm 3.3$  vs  $4.96 \pm 2.9$ , respectively. Table 2 shows the questions from the Child Anxiety Disorders Questionnaire – Children's Version, for which a statistically significant difference was obtained when comparing the responses of children of anxious and non-anxious parents. Significance in all questions was obtained as a result of their being rated as "very true" significantly more often by students whose parents were anxious, compared to surveyed children whose parents were not anxious.



Table 2. Distribution of responses from the anxiety disorders questionnaire – version for children, depending on the frequency of anxiety in parents

Variable children	Anxiety (parents)			p-value
	points	there are n (%)	none n (%)	
<b>When I'm scared, I breathe hard.</b>	Not true	24 (27.91)	90 (42.06)	$X^2=8.88$ $p=0.012$ sig
	Somewhat true	34 (39.53)	85 (39.72)	
	Very true	28 (32.56)	39 (18.22)	
<b>People tell me I look nervous.</b>	Not true	32 (37.21)	126 (58.88)	$X^2=11.91$ $p=0.0026$ sig
	Somewhat true	35 (40.70)	61 (28.50)	
	Very true	19 (22.09)	27 (12.62)	
<b>I'm nervous around people I don't know.</b>	Not true	40 (46.51)	142 (66.36)	$X^2=11.05$ $p=0.0039$ sig
	Somewhat true	36 (41.86)	61 (28.50)	
	Very true	10 (11.63)	11 (5.14)	
<b>When I'm scared, I go crazy.</b>	Not true	57 (66.28)	176 (82.24)	$X^2=9.11$ $p=0.01$ sig
	Somewhat true	23 (26.74)	29 (13.55)	
	Very true	6 (6.98)	9 (4.21)	
<b>When I'm scared, I think things aren't real.</b>	Not true	42 (48.84)	134 (62.62)	$X^2=7.08$ $p=0.029$ sig
	Somewhat true	35 (40.70)	54 (25.23)	
	Very true	9 (10.47)	26 (12.15)	
<b>I notice I'm trembling.</b>	Not true	19 (22.09)	108 (50.47)	$X^2=21.12$ $p=0.00003$ sig
	Somewhat true	34 (39.53)	61 (28.50)	
	Very true	33 (38.37)	45 (21.03)	
<b>I dream something bad is happening to me.</b>	Not true	27 (31.40)	103 (48.13)	$X^2=15.96$ $p=0.0003$ sig
	Somewhat true	34 (39.53)	87 (40.65)	
	Very true	25 (29.07)	24 (11.21)	
<b>When I'm scared, I sweat a lot.</b>	Not true	45 (52.33)	150 (70.09)	$X^2=13.36$ $p=0.0013$ sig
	Somewhat true	26 (30.23)	52 (24.30)	
	Very true	15 (17.44)	12 (5.61)	
<b>I get upset easily.</b>	Not true	25 (29.07)	90 (42.06)	$X^2=9.93$ $p=0.0069$ sig
	Somewhat true	33 (38.37)	88 (41.12)	
	Very true	28 (32.56)	36 (16.82)	
<b>I'm afraid for no reason.</b>	Not true	60 (69.77)	176 (82.24)	$X^2=12.39$ $p=0.002$ sig
	Somewhat true	14 (16.28)	31 (14.49)	
	Very true	12 (13.95)	7 (3.27)	
<b>I find it hard to talk to people I don't know well.</b>	Not true	23 (26.74)	89 (41.59)	$X^2=8.61$ $p=0.013$ sig
	Somewhat true	42 (48.84)	97 (45.33)	
	Very true	21 (24.42)	28 (13.08)	
<b>When I'm scared I feel like I'm suffocating.</b>	Not true	51 (59.30)	156 (72.90)	$X^2=6.16$ $p=0.046$ sig
	Somewhat true	25 (29.07)	46 (21.50)	
	Very true	10 (11.63)	12 (5.61)	
<b>People tell me I worry too much.</b>	Not true	43 (50.0)	137 (64.02)	$X^2=11.32$ $p=0.0035$ sig
	Somewhat true	24 (27.91)	59 (27.57)	
	Very true	19 (22.09)	18 (8.41)	

Table 2 (continuation). Distribution of responses from the anxiety disorders questionnaire – version for children, depending on the frequency of anxiety in parents

<b>I'm worried about having a panic attack.</b>	Not true	39 (45.35)	137 (64.02)	$X^2=10.48$ $p=0.0053$ sig
	Somewhat true	30 (34.88)	57 (26.64)	
	Very true	17 (19.77)	20 (9.35)	
<b>I worry about what will happen in the future.</b>	Not true	19 (22.09)	70 (32.71)	$X^2=6.39$ $p=0.041$ sig
	Somewhat true	36 (41.86)	95 (44.39)	
	Very true	31 (36.05)	49 (22.90)	
<b>I'm afraid to go to school.</b>	Not true	70 (81.40)	195 (91.55)	$X^2=6.35$ $p=0.042$ sig
	Somewhat true	10 (11.63)	12 (5.63)	
	Very true	6 (6.98)	6 (2.82)	
<b>I worry about things that actually happened to me.</b>	Not true	30 (34.88)	99 (46.26)	$X^2=12.69$ $p=0.0018$ sig
	Somewhat true	36 (41.86)	97 (45.33)	
	Very true	20 (23.26)	18 (8.41)	
<b>When I'm scared I feel dizzy.</b>	Not true	49 (56.98)	166 (77.57)	$X^2=15.73$ $p=0.00038$ sig
	Somewhat true	21 (24.42)	35 (16.36)	
	Very true	16 (18.60)	11 (6.07)	
<b>I get upset when I am with children or other adults who watch me do something.</b>	Not true	36 (41.86)	129 (60.28)	$X^2=9.73$ $p=0.008$ sig
	Somewhat true	34 (39.53)	65 (30.37)	
	Very true	16 (18.60)	17 (9.35)	
<b>I am shy.</b>	Not true	26 (30.23)	72 (33.64)	$X^2=6.97$ $p=0.031$ sig
	Somewhat true	31 (36.05)	100 (46.73)	
	Very true	29 (33.72)	42 (19.63)	

X<sup>2</sup> (Chi-square test)

In the group of children of anxious parents, a significantly higher average score was registered than in the group of children of non-anxious parents for the following questions from the Anxiety Disorders Questionnaire – version for children:

When I'm scared, I breathe hard ( $1.05 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.76 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.003$ );

I don't like being with people I don't know well ( $1.28 \pm 0.7$  vs  $1.08 \pm 0.8$ ,  $p=0.047$ );

I am a nervous type ( $0.99 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.78 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.03$ );

People tell me I look nervous ( $0.85 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.54 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.0008$ );

I feel nervous with people I don't know well ( $0.65 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.39 \pm 0.6$ ,  $p=0.0009$ );

When I'm scared, I feel like I'm going crazy ( $0.41 \pm 0.6$  vs  $0.22 \pm 0.5$ ,  $p=0.007$ );

When I'm scared, my heart beats faster ( $1.50 \pm 0.7$  vs  $1.16 \pm 0.8$ ,  $p=0.004$ ); I notice that I tremble ( $1.16 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.71 \pm 0.8$ ,  $p=0.000008$ );

I dream that something bad is happening to me ( $0.98 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.63 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.0002$ );

When I'm afraid, I sweat a lot ( $0.65 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.35 \pm 0.6$ ,  $p=0.0003$ );

I get upset easily ( $1.03 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.75 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.0027$ );

I am afraid for no reason ( $0.44 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.21 \pm 0.5$ ,  $p=0.0014$ );

It's hard for me to talk to people I don't know well ( $0.98 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.71 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.003$ );

When I'm scared, I feel like I'm suffocating ( $0.52 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.33 \pm 0.6$ ,  $p=0.013$ );

People tell me that I care a lot ( $0.72 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.44 \pm 0.6$ ,  $p=0.002$ );

I worry about having a panic attack ( $0.74 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.45 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.001$ );

I am ashamed when I am with people I do not know well ( $0.98 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.79 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.043$ );

I worry about what will happen in the future ( $1.14 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.90 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.013$ );

I worry about the way I do things ( $0.94 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.75 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.013$ );

I am afraid to go to school ( $0.26 \pm 0.6$  vs  $0.11 \pm 0.4$ ,  $p=0.014$ );

I worry about things that actually happened to me ( $0.88 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.62 \pm 0.6$ ,  $p=0.0025$ );

When I'm scared, I feel dizzy ( $0.62 \pm 0.8$  vs  $0.28 \pm 0.6$ ,  $p=0.00006$ ); who see me doing something ( $0.77 \pm 0.7$  vs  $0.49 \pm 0.7$ ,  $p=0.002$ ).  
 I get upset when I am with children or other adults

Table 3. Average score of responses from the anxiety disorder questionnaire – version for children, depending on frequency of anxiety in parents

	Anxiety (parents)		p-value	
	there is mean $\pm$ SD	None mean $\pm$ SD		
1. When I'm scared, I breathe hard.	$1.05 \pm 0.8$	$0.76 \pm 0.7$	$t=2.9$	$p=0.003$ sig
2. My head hurts when I'm at school.	$0.98 \pm 0.8$	$0.79 \pm 0.7$	$t=1.9$	$p=0.06$ ns
3. I don't like being with people I don't know well.	$1.28 \pm 0.7$	$1.08 \pm 0.8$	$t=1.9$	$p=0.047$ sig
4. I am afraid when I sleep away from home.	$0.45 \pm 0.7$	$0.33 \pm 0.6$	$t=1.5$	$p=0.14$ ns
5. I take care of the people I love.	$1.14 \pm 0.8$	$1.02 \pm 0.9$	$t=1.1$	$p=0.29$ ns
6. When I'm scared, I feel like I'm crazy.	$0.38 \pm 0.6$	$0.26 \pm 0.5$	$t=1.6$	$p=0.099$ ns
7. I'm a nervous guy.	$0.99 \pm 0.8$	$0.78 \pm 0.7$	$t=2.1$	$p=0.03$ sig
8. I follow my mother or father wherever they go.	$0.35 \pm 0.6$	$0.35 \pm 0.6$	$t=0.04$	$p=0.97$ ns
9. People tell me I look nervous.	$0.85 \pm 0.8$	$0.54 \pm 0.7$	$t=3.4$	$p=0.0008$ sig
10. I feel nervous around people I don't know well.	$0.65 \pm 0.7$	$0.39 \pm 0.6$	$t=3.4$	$p=0.0009$ sig
11. My stomach hurts when I go to school.	$0.44 \pm 0.6$	$0.36 \pm 0.6$	$t=1.05$	$p=0.3$ ns
12. When I'm scared, I feel like I'm going crazy.	$0.41 \pm 0.6$	$0.22 \pm 0.5$	$t=2.7$	$p=0.007$ sig
13. I get upset if I have to sleep alone.	$0.28 \pm 0.5$	$0.30 \pm 0.6$	$t=0.3$	$p=0.74$ ns
14. I try to be as good as the long children.	$0.64 \pm 0.7$	$0.61 \pm 0.7$	$t=0.3$	$p=0.72$ ns
15. When I'm scared, I feel like things aren't real.	$0.62 \pm 0.7$	$0.49 \pm 0.7$	$t=1.4$	$p=0.17$ ns
16. I dream about something bad happening to my parents.	$0.44 \pm 0.6$	$0.29 \pm 0.6$	$t=1.94$	$p=0.053$ ns
17. I worry when I have to go to school.	$0.52 \pm 0.7$	$0.48 \pm 0.7$	$t=0.4$	$p=0.7$ ns
18. When I'm scared, my heart beats fast.	$1.50 \pm 0.7$	$1.16 \pm 0.8$	$t=3.5$	$p=0.0004$ sig
19. I notice that I am trembling.	$1.16 \pm 0.8$	$0.71 \pm 0.8$	$t=4.5$	$p=0.000008$ sig
20. I dream that something bad is happening to me.	$0.98 \pm 0.8$	$0.63 \pm 0.7$	$t=3.8$	$p=0.0002$ sig
21. I worry about things going well for me.	$1.07 \pm 0.8$	$0.86 \pm 0.8$	$t=1.9$	$p=0.053$ ns
22. When I'm afraid, I sweat a lot.	$0.65 \pm 0.8$	$0.35 \pm 0.6$	$t=3.6$	$p=0.0003$ sig
23. I get upset easily.	$1.03 \pm 0.8$	$0.75 \pm 0.7$	$t=3.02$	$p=0.0027$ sig
24. I am afraid for no reason.	$0.44 \pm 0.7$	$0.21 \pm 0.5$	$t=3.2$	$p=0.0014$ sig
25. I am afraid of being alone at home.	$0.28 \pm 0.5$	$0.31 \pm 0.6$	$t=0.4$	$p=0.65$ ns
26. I find it difficult to talk to people I don't know well.	$0.98 \pm 0.7$	$0.71 \pm 0.7$	$t=2.9$	$p=0.003$ sig
27. When I'm scared I feel like I'm suffocating.	$0.52 \pm 0.7$	$0.33 \pm 0.6$	$t=2.49$	$p=0.013$ sig
28. People tell me that I worry too much.	$0.72 \pm 0.8$	$0.44 \pm 0.6$	$t=3.12$	$p=0.002$ sig
29. I don't want to be away from my family.	$1.21 \pm 0.7$	$1.08 \pm 0.8$	$t=1.27$	$p=0.21$ ns
30. I worry about having a panic attack.	$0.74 \pm 0.8$	$0.45 \pm 0.7$	$t=3.3$	$p=0.001$ sig

Table 3(continuation). Average score of responses from the anxiety disorder questionnaire – version for children, depending on frequency of anxiety in parents

31. I worry that nothing bad happens to my parents.	1.26 ± 0.8	1.15 ± 0.8	t=0.9 p=0.32 ns
32. I'm embarrassed when I'm with people I don't know well.	0.98 ± 0.7	0.79 ± 0.7	t=2.03 p=0.043 sig
33. I worry about what will happen in the future.	1.14 ± 0.7	0.90 ± 0.7	t=2.5 p=0.013 sig
34. When I'm scared, I vomit.	0.33 ± 0.7	0.22 ± 0.6	t=1.41 p=0.16 ns
35. I care about the way I do things.	0.94 ± 0.7	0.75 ± 0.7	t=2.19 p=0.029 sig
36. I am afraid to go to school.	0.26 ± 0.6	0.11 ± 0.4	t=2.46 p=0.014 sig
37. I worry about things that actually happened to me.	0.88 ± 0.8	0.62 ± 0.6	t=3.05 p=0.0025 sig
38. When I'm scared, I feel dizzy.	0.62 ± 0.8	0.28 ± 0.6	t=4.1 p=0.00006 sig
39. I get upset when I am with children or other adults who watch me do something.	0.77 ± 0.7	0.49 ± 0.7	t=3.15 p=0.002 sig
40. I get nervous when I have to go to a birthday party or a dance or places where I don't know others.	0.79 ± 0.7	0.63 ± 0.7	t=1.81 p=0.07 ns
41. I am shy.	1.03 ± 0.8	0.86 ± 0.7	t=1.84 p=0.07 ns

t (Student t-test for independent samples)

The results of the research showed a significant impact of parents' anxiety on children's health.

## DISCUSSION

All parents want the best for their children. They want them to be healthy, happy and resilient when faced with life's challenges. This is often easier said than done with the daily demands and responsibilities of parenting. Anxiety is a common issue among children, adolescents and teenagers, often experienced at different stages of development. Parents play the role of educators, motivate the child and help him build a value system. Open communication between children and parents in the family and democratic behavior encourages self-confidence and offers rich material for research and realization of own ideas. Anxiety disorders can first be diagnosed in children between the ages of four and eight, while a recent survey found that about 32% of adolescents in the United States have an anxiety disorder, a number that has increased significantly over the years. The study also found that one in four to five adolescents had a severe disability related to their anxiety disorder (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). According to the current knowledge from the available literature in the field of relations between the risky behavior of young people, there are strong links about the influence of parents' anxiety on children during their puberty. There are several

factors that contribute to the development of anxiety. Regardless of children's specific symptoms, anxiety can have a negative effect on their thoughts, emotions, and physical health. This, in turn, can affect their ability to function both academically and socially. Helping them deal with the problem starts with recognizing the causes of their anxiety symptoms. Anxiety runs in families, with recent analysis showing that children of anxious parents are twice as likely to have anxiety problems than children of non-anxious parents. Several papers show that parental anxiety disorders increase the risk of similar anxiety problems in children. Overprotection is a risk of anxiety disorders. In a Washington, D.C. study of anxiety treatment, the study teaches parents to reduce overprotection and respond to a child's anxiety symptoms in a supportive way that conveys acceptance of the child's real problem along with confidence in the child's ability to cope anxiety (Elsevier, 2020). The influence of parents' attitudes on children, positive and negative, certainly leaves a mark on the further effective and social life of the child, adolescent and young person, forming the contours of the future mature person. Psychological, biological and social dysfunction is the greatest burden for a person. The foundation for good mental health is mainly formed in the first years of life, and improving the mental health of children and young people is an investment in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Anxious parents more often than parents who do not manifest anxiety have children with a possible anxiety disorder and with a convincing result for an anxiety disorder (22.1%). When comparing the responses of children from anxious parents and parents without anxiety, a statistically significant difference was obtained ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Significance in all questions was obtained as a result of their significantly more frequent assessment as "very true" by students whose parents were anxious compared to the surveyed children whose parents were not anxious.

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## ADDICTION AND RECOVERY: DIGITAL GAMES AS DEVICES FOR COGNITIVE REPAIRMENT

*Original scientific paper*

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, digital games have evolved into a worldwide form of entertainment that captivates individuals of all ages. This game addiction has made people less active and less social, which could be harmful to both their mental and physical health. Paradoxically, the very innovation that involves addiction has also emerged as a powerful tool for cognitive repair and recovery. In this research, qualitative methods were used. The qualitative study results came from a wide range of secondary sources, such as medical research articles, academic psychology journal articles, medical blogs, and previous theses. This study looks into the reasons for game addiction as well as the role of digital games in cognitive repair and addiction recovery. The study's findings indicate that gaming addiction has a damaging effect on people's mental and physical health. Integrating digital games as a supporting tool for cognitive repair during addiction recovery will be a promising approach to produce effective results.*

**Keywords:** addiction; recovery; mental health; digital games; cognitive repair

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital games have gained popularity as a tool for addiction recovery. As a means of assisting patients in overcoming their addictive behaviours, many addiction treatment centres have incorporated gaming into their medication therapy. Some people engage in problematic gaming behaviours that can lead to addiction and other psychological problems, despite the fact that many people enjoy playing without the impact of negative side effects. According to studies (Cevasco, Kennedy, & Generally, 2005; Russoniello, O'Brien, & Parks, 2009), gaming can effectively reduce tension and anxiety, enhance mood, and expand social connections, all of which are crucial elements of addiction recovery. People of all ages enjoy playing digital games,

including children and adults. The advancements in technology have made these games more immersive and engaging than ever before. In addition to providing entertainment, they enhance cognitive abilities such as problem-solving and decision-making. According to researchers such as (Malone & Lepper, 2021) playing games is an effective method of education because people invest a great deal of time, effort, and energy in them. Research indicates that digital games can improve hand-eye coordination and mental focus (Rosenberg, Landsittel, & Averch, 2005). It is important to note that excessive gaming can result in negative consequences such as addiction and social isolation. Despite this, playing games is a fun way to learn and socialise and a respectable method of skill development. It is essential to maintain a healthy balance between gaming and

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other activities in order to avoid negative outcomes. In recent years, digital games have become increasingly popular as an entertainment platform, addiction recovery and cognitive repair tool.

## GAME ADDICTION

Game addiction is the excessive or obsessive use of digital games that interrupts daily life. Users may engage in compulsive gaming, isolating themselves from social interaction and concentrating almost exclusively on in-game accomplishments instead of real-life events. Studies (Pinna et al., 2015; Sachdeva & Verma, 2015) show that this type of gaming can negatively impact mental health, physical health, and social functioning, even though it is not officially recognised as an illness in any diagnostic system. Experts consider game addiction a form of behavioural addiction that is similar to being addicted to gambling or the internet (Yau & Potenza, 2015). Several specialists believe dopamine, which is connected to pleasure and reward, may cause addiction. Game addiction influences three types of problems: physical, mental, and social. Negative consequences for mental health bring on issues like sadness, stress, and chronic anxiety. Poor sleep patterns, being overweight, and carpal tunnel syndrome are some of the physical health issues connected to game addiction. Isolation from relatives and closest friends, poor academic or professional performance, and trouble establishing or sustaining connections are all examples of social issues. Even though digital gaming addiction is more common in adults, it can also affect children and teenagers. Additionally, statistics (Su et al., 2020) show that boys are more prone to developing gaming addiction than girls. To overcome gaming addiction, a combination of therapies, medications, and lifestyle changes may be necessary. Therapies such as talk therapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy can be effective, as well as medications like antidepressants or sleep pills. Making lifestyle modifications such as increasing physical activity or seeking social support can also be beneficial.

## Symptoms of Digital game addiction

Addiction makes it difficult for those who suffer from it to control their impulses because it is a chronic disease. These are the primary symptoms of all addictions, whether it's games, drugs, alcohol, or gambling.

1. Low performance in work, education, or household chores because of excessive gaming

2. Withdrawal effects when playing is prohibited or taken away, such as unhappiness, worry, or irritation.
3. Spending more time playing digital games to feel the same level of enjoyment.
4. Giving up social connections because of gaming
5. Deceiving family members or well-wishers about the amount of time spent on gaming.
6. Escaping unpleasant circumstances at the job or home by playing games
7. Playing digital games to get rid of bad feelings like shame or depression.

## Game addiction Causes

Game addiction can be caused by a variety of factors, such as game developers' addictive plan, challenges and rewards, reality escapism, dopamine secretion, and advanced technologies.

### i) Game developers' plan

When it comes to game designers' addictive plans, they intentionally design games to be addictive in order to increase sales and revenue.

### ii) Challenging and Rewards

Game designers aim to keep players engaged by creating games that are challenging but not so difficult that players give up. As a result, it's common for players to lose frequently. However, game designers strive to make losing less discouraging by providing feedback, opportunities for growth, and rewards for perseverance.

### iii) Reality escapism

The game is made to be an escape from reality and gives the player a chance to temporarily switch off their brains in order to fully immerse themselves in whatever virtual world they are playing in.

### iv) Dopamine secretion

Playing games can become addictive because they trigger the brain to release dopamine, a chemical that can make the brain's receptors less sensitive over time. This means that individuals may need to play for more extended periods to experience the same level of enjoyment they once did.

### v) Advance technologies

The advancement of technology has led to an increase in gaming addiction. With improved hardware and graphics, gamers are more deeply absorbed in the virtual world, making it harder to detach and re-enter reality.

## Diagnosis and therapies

### i) DSM-5

Mental health professionals rely on the DSM-5 from the American Psychiatric Association

to identify mental illnesses (Regier, Kuhl, & Kupfer, 2013). The DSM-5 includes criteria for diagnosing internet gaming disorders, such as losing control over gaming, prioritising gaming over other things, and continuing to game despite negative consequences. This diagnosis is crucial in identifying those who may need help and treatment due to excessive gaming. To receive a diagnosis, a person's gaming habits must severely impact their personal, family, social, educational, or work lives for at least a year. It's important to note that a gaming disorder does not necessarily mean addiction but rather a way to identify and improve bad gaming habits. Seeking help for a gaming disorder can positively impact your overall mental health and well-being.

ii) Psychotherapy- Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT)

Psychotherapy is the most common way to treat video game addiction (Johnson, 2006; Lemos, Abreu, & Sougey, 2014). It helps people understand and change the negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviours associated with their addiction. Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is also a practical approach that can help people develop strategies to cope with their addiction and control their cravings (Somers, 2007; Gaudiano, 2008). Additionally, family therapy could be recommended if family issues are contributing to their addiction. Mental health professionals such as psychiatrists and psychologists can offer support, information, and advice. In some cases, medication may be prescribed to address any underlying mental health issues that may have led to your addiction. Experts say that physical activity and exercise, especially sports and other outdoor activities, can help prevent game addiction. Research has shown that regular exercise can help people with game addiction feel less stressed and happier (Hazar & Hazar, 2018). Participating in team sports or group fitness classes can also give social support and a sense of belonging, which can keep the player from playing video games too much.

#### iii) Pharmacotherapy

Game addiction leads to different disorders, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHA), anxiety disorder, etc. Drugs like bupropion are rectifying these kinds of issues. In a few carefully chosen scientific trials, it has been investigated as a gaming addiction medicine (Han & Renshaw, 2012; Song et al., 2016). The medication revealed variations across the patients and reduced the symptoms of gaming addiction, which persisted for four weeks following therapy. Escitalopram serves as another antidepressant. It

performed less well in symptom reduction than bupropion (Han & Renshaw, 2012; Song et al., 2016).

#### iv) Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

In a recent case study, a 14-year-old struggled with an addiction to computer gaming, which resulted in concerns about violent behaviour and a lack of social interaction. To address these issues, the study utilised psychodynamic psychotherapy for two and a half years, incorporating theories of mentalisation, addiction, and self-esteem. At the beginning of therapy, the patient's emotional state and self-esteem were assessed using three projective tests, including the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Kinetic Family Drawing, and Thematic Apperception Test. Due to his unhealthy mental perceptions, Michael experienced low self-esteem and struggled to connect with his family and peers during therapy. Michael's self-esteem improved as a result of his ability to recognise and fight his destructive thought patterns during treatment. Also, he acquired extraordinary communication abilities that enabled him to forge closer bonds with his family and peers. However, the projective tests and scale administered throughout the therapy sessions revealed that Michael's mental health improved and his sense of self grew stronger (Stavrou, 2018).

#### v) Psychoeducation

In treating game addiction, psychoeducation is crucial. It helps individuals comprehend the psychological and emotional aspects of their behaviour, provides strategies for managing addiction, and reduces the negative feelings of shame and guilt. Moreover, it creates a friendly and accepting atmosphere where people can grow and acquire new skills.

#### vi) Family therapy

Family therapy can help address game addiction issues by improving communication, establishing boundaries, and promoting healthy habits. Family therapy is a safe space where family members can express their concerns and work together to find solutions. It involves involving family members in the treatment process to promote better communication, understanding, and support. Additionally, it can help to identify patterns of behaviour that may be causing conflicts and provide strategies for resolving them. Ultimately, family therapy can strengthen relationships and improve the well-being of everyone involved. By addressing underlying family issues that may be contributing to addiction and promoting healthier relationships, families can develop stronger bonds and a more profound sense of trust, leading to

long-term healing and recovery.

vii) Individual Counselling

Meeting with an addiction therapist or counsellor on a one-on-one basis can be constructive. In these sessions, individuals can openly discuss their struggles with addiction and work on developing effective coping strategies. The therapist can provide personalised support and guidance throughout the recovery process. These sessions create a safe and secure environment where individuals can explore the underlying causes of their addiction, increase their self-awareness, and learn new ways to manage their gaming habits.

viii) Group Therapy

Group therapy brings together individuals who are facing similar challenges to share their stories, provide mutual support, and learn from each other. It is particularly beneficial for those who feel isolated or alone in their struggles. Being part of a group can provide a sense of community and belonging, especially for those who lack a strong support system outside the group. Moreover, group therapy offers a safe space where individuals can openly discuss their experiences and gain insights from others who are facing similar difficulties. This fosters self-awareness and personal growth.

ix) Virtual Reality Therapy

Virtual reality therapy is a valuable treatment for a number of mental health issues, such as PTSD, phobias, and anxiety. It can also be used to address game addiction by exposing patients to gaming-related triggers in a controlled environment. Compared to traditional therapy methods, VR therapy is more immersive and engaging, which makes it a promising tool for treating a wide range of mental health conditions. Additionally, VR therapy can help individuals develop coping mechanisms and desensitise them to gaming stimuli. It provides a safe and controlled space for people to confront and overcome their fears and anxieties related to gaming addiction and can be customised to meet individual needs and preferences.

When using video games to treat video game addiction, it's essential to be careful and include them as part of a comprehensive treatment plan. The games should focus on the root causes of addiction and promote healthy behaviours. It's also crucial to regularly assess the effectiveness of the games and make any necessary changes. Additionally, it's important to get the person's consent and involve them in selecting the games to ensure they stay engaged and motivated throughout their recovery. When considering game-based approaches, individual needs and preferences should be taken into account, and progress should

be monitored to adjust the approach as needed.

### The pros of gaming

According to studies (Desai et al., 2021; Kowal et al., 2021), playing digital games can improve mental health and possibly lessen stress and anxiety. Also, playing digital games can improve cognitive skills, including focus, memory, and decision-making skills. In fact, several mental health doctors recommend playing digital games as a therapy for people suffering from PTSD and depression (Li, Theng, & Foo, 2014). A sense of accomplishment that comes from playing digital games may also increase one's confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, digital games can provide a social outlet for those who struggle to interact with others in person, as players can communicate and make friends with people from around the world through online gaming communities and multiplayer features. Some studies have even suggested that certain digital games may improve fine motor abilities and hand-eye coordination (Latham, Patston, & Tippett, 2013). Many people use gaming as an escape from stress, challenging emotions, and issues in real life. A study (Hussain et al., 2021) found that this kind of escapism can be a helpful coping mechanism since it relieves stress and increases self-confidence. Escapism may be exhibited in both positive and unhealthy gaming behaviours, and it's crucial to remember that. The same study discovered that people can benefit from escapism. There are online gaming groups that help build social connections and friendships among gamers who share similar interests. For those who may feel isolated in their daily lives, these groups provide a sense of belonging and support. Additionally, they promote collaboration and communication skills, as well as cross-cultural exchanges and understanding, as gamers from different parts of the world come together to play and learn from each other's perspectives. Game-based learning is a way to teach where video games are used to teach. It has three main parts: it makes learning more enjoyable, motivates people, and gives people a chance to practise. This approach to learning has gained popularity in recent years because it is considered a more interactive and enjoyable way to learn compared to traditional methods. Game-based learning has also been shown to help people remember and use what they have learned. It transforms learning into a fun game and rewards students for their achievements with badges, bonuses, and extra lives. Moreover, it enhances critical



thinking and problem-solving skills, as players must use strategy to progress through the game (McDonald, 2017; Darvenkumar & Christopher, 2023). Collaboration and teamwork can also be fostered by certain games that require players to work together to achieve a common objective.

### **Cognitive Developments Due to digital games**

Playing digital games can be a helpful way to improve cognitive abilities, such as problem-solving and decision-making skills, and even memory retention. Studies (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011; Blumberg et al., 2019; Karagianni & Drigas, 2022) have shown that certain digital games can be particularly effective in developing these skills.

#### **i) Memory Enhancement**

Memory can be improved by playing memory-focused games, such as puzzles, matching games, and memory card games. Mindfulness practice and adequate sleep can also improve concentration and reduce stress levels. These games require players to recall information, patterns, or sequences, thereby exercising and enhancing memory functions.

#### **ii) Problem-solving and critical thinking**

Playing serious or educational games can enhance students' critical reading and thinking skills. Games that involve strategy, puzzles, and text-based challenges require players to analyse problems, think critically, and devise solutions. These games often present complex scenarios that demand assessment of data, decision-making, and consideration of consequences. As a result, they can boost cognitive abilities such as logic, problem-solving, and decision-making.

#### **iii) Attention focus**

Playing fast-paced or action-oriented digital games can improve the player's attention span and concentration. These games require players to focus on multiple inputs simultaneously, react quickly to changing conditions, and maintain attention for extended periods. Studies (Tenenbaum et al., 1993; Sliwinski, 2011; Glass, Maddox, & Love, 2013) have shown that playing such games can enhance attention focus, cognitive flexibility, and decision-making abilities, which may have real-world benefits in academic and professional contexts.

#### **iv) Spatial awareness visualisation**

Playing digital games that involve spatial reasoning, like building blocks, labyrinth games, or Tetris-like puzzles, can enhance your spatial awareness and visualisation skills. These abilities are essential in fields like engineering, architecture, and mathematics and can also enhance your overall cognitive performance. Developing

spatial thinking ability is crucial for success in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines, making it a crucial talent to master.

#### **v) Language and communication**

Word puzzles, language-based quizzes, Text-based games, and language-learning games may all help players improve their vocabulary, comprehension, and communication abilities. It also offers a pleasant and exciting approach to learning and enhancing language abilities. These digital games are very beneficial for people learning a new language and native speakers wishing to broaden their knowledge and push themselves. Language-learning games are also widely available online or through mobile applications, making them a practical and accessible tool for language learners of all ages. Individuals may improve their language skills in a more dynamic and entertaining way by including these activities in their language learning routines. Individuals may enhance their grammar, syntax, pronunciation, reading comprehension, and vocabulary through enjoyable and engaging language games.

#### **vi) Executive functioning**

Playing resource management games that involve strategic decision-making and planning can enhance executive functioning abilities. These games require players to think critically, prioritise activities, and adapt to changing situations. Regularly playing such games can help individuals improve their ability to focus and prioritise in real-life situations, including attention regulation, working memory, inhibition, and cognitive flexibility.

#### **vii) Multitasking and dual tasking**

Playing games that involve controlling multiple characters or objects with separate controllers can enhance one's multitasking skills. Such games necessitate players to switch attention between various tasks while prioritising their activities efficiently. Additionally, practising mindfulness and meditation simultaneously can improve multitasking abilities by boosting attention and reducing distractions.

## **DISCUSSION**

To prevent addiction to gaming, a comprehensive approach is necessary. This approach should involve various methods and considerations in the design of games. Digital games can include specific features to minimise the risk of addiction. These features may include time management options, which includes tools within the game that



measure and display the time spent playing can help users become more aware of their gaming habits and encourage them to regulate their behaviour and prevent the players from getting too absorbed in the social aspect of online gaming. For example, weekly or monthly usage statistics could be shown, or pop-up notifications could appear after a set amount of time has elapsed. A rewards system may be an effective motivator, but it should only be used in a balanced and thoughtful manner. The frequency and potency of rewards can be decreased by game designers to minimise addictive behaviour. Clear progression and ending points are the features which provide players with clear objectives, benchmarks, and endpoints which increase their sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. When players know exactly what they need to achieve and the goal, they are less likely to engage in excessive play that lasts longer than necessary. Offline modes and diversification could prevent game addiction. If a game offers offline options or alternative activities, players may be advised to take breaks and engage in other forms of entertainment or leisure. These could include educational or creative mini-games, puzzles, or virtual experiences. Parental controls are a feature where parents and guardians can set limits for their children's gaming habits by providing powerful and customisable parental control options. These might include features like time limitations, content filters, and the ability to monitor and manage in-game transactions. To maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle, it's helpful to include regular prompts in the game to take breaks, stretch, exercise, or engage in other real-life activities. Games that incorporate educational elements can enhance learning and personal development. By adding educational information, quizzes, or challenges, players can boost their cognitive abilities and engage in a more comprehensive gaming adventure. The game interface allows players to access resources and assistance. This includes links to educational materials on responsible gaming, information on how to avoid game addiction, and contact details for helplines or support groups for those struggling with gaming addiction. It is important to understand that while certain methods may help reduce game addiction and speed up cognitive repair, no single method will work for everyone. Different people, their own situations, and other things can lead to addictive behaviours. To address game addiction and promote cognitive repair, it is best to adopt a comprehensive approach that involves game design, player education, and a supportive environment.

## CONCLUSION

Game addiction is a widespread problem that affects people all over the world, and the road to recovery can be difficult. Yet, a cutting-edge strategy has arisen that makes use of video games as a tool for cognitive development during the healing process. Digital games have the rare potential to engage and inspire players, giving them a potent instrument to improve their cognitive functioning and help their road to recovery. This method has proven to be very successful in treating patients who have suffered catastrophic brain injuries or cognitive impairments as a result of gaming addiction (Valimaki et al., 2018; Farchakh et al., 2020). These digital games can help people regain and develop particular cognitive abilities that may have been weakened during the addiction cycle. Digital games may also be customised and personalised to each individual's specific needs and preferences in recovery. Digital gaming as a tool for cognitive restoration during addiction treatment is a supplementary strategy that may be used in conjunction with conventional therapy techniques. It helps overall rehabilitation rather than replacing the value of counselling, support groups, or other evidence-based treatments. Further research and thorough assessment are required to develop clear criteria, identify best practices, and evaluate the long-term results of this method. To ensure the appropriate use of digital games and safeguard vulnerable people from possible damage, additional ethical considerations must be made. In conclusion, the integration of digital games as a device for cognitive repair in addiction recovery can be a promising strategy, and it could provide people with valuable skills and support throughout their recovery journey.

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