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Table of contents

Measuring academic engagement among university students in Romania during COVID-19 pandemic

Delia Ștefenel, Iuliana Neagoș 3

The Concept of Necropolitics during the Pandemic of Covid-19 in Brazil

Rodrigo Tonel..... 31

School-family cooperation through different forms of communication in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic

Violeta Buza, Mirlinda Hysa..... 55

The ‘new’ invisible Landscapes of Covid-19

Andrea Oldani 81

Coronavirus-inspired Metaphors in Political Discourse

Silvana Neshkovska, Zorica Trajkova 99

(De)legitimation of power of agency. A multimodal critical analysis of social practices during COVID-19 pandemic in Romania

Camelia Cmeci 133

Nurses Role in the Covid-19 Pandemic, Knowledge and Attitudes of Nursing Staff – Implications for the Future

Fatjona Kamberi, Enkeleda Sinaj 165

Comparative Analysis of Contemplative Pedagogy and its Possible Applications within Current International Education <i>Jennifer Ngan Bacquet</i>	185
Museums of Scarcity and Art Deserts <i>Luis Javier Rodriguez Lopez</i>	205
Integrating culture in ELT using an indigenous folktale, Poireiton Khunthok <i>Rosy Yumnam</i>	227
The Macedonian Language in Regard to Covid-19 <i>Violeta Janusheva</i>	243
Analyzing business environment- Power outages as an obstacle for firms <i>Pranvera Dalloshi, Shkumbin Misini, Arta Hoti</i>	263
Online learning challenges and opportunities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in developing countries <i>William Butler, Arianit Maraj, Jusuf Qarkaxhija</i>	281
The discourse of motherhood and mother-daughter relationships in the novel Sula by Toni Morrison <i>Elena Kitanovska-Ristoska</i>	301
Alternative Opportunities for Conducting Physical, Sports and Recreational Activities in the Conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic <i>Fadil Rexhepi, Fatmir Pireva, Shemsedin Vehapi, Besim Gashi</i>	319
Book Review on Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow: Illustrated 200th Anniversary Edition <i>Naruhiko Mikado</i>	337
Instruction for authors	341

Measuring academic engagement among university students in Romania during COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many aspects of personal and professional development, outlining different unprecedented behavioural changes among diverse age population, worldwide. In the context of the lockdown restrictions, the aim of the present study was to explore the extent to which emergency states and higher institutions closure affected academic engagement among studying youth. In this direction, data were collected from 227 undergraduate students (N=227) enrolled in different fields of study in public universities in Romania. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-9S) (Schaufeli et al., 2006) was used to assess Romanian students' academic involvement in the particular context of remote learning imposed by coronavirus outbreak. An additional open question was introduced in the present study, to analyse personal experiences and activities undertaken by students during the stay-at-home period. The main findings of our research were discussed in relation with students' average degree of academic engagement, the psychometric properties assessment, the resilience stories and its effects on students'

mental health and academic involvement. Emphasis was given to a deeper understanding of students' responsiveness and proactiveness concerning behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement in their remote academic learning and non-academic life.

Keywords: academic engagement, UWES, students, Romania

The year 2020 has witnessed huge concern in researching the impact of Covid-19 on people's daily commitments and behaviours. Such topic has received much attention especially when it comes to rethinking the remote learning environment and the way it affects students' well-being and their resilience building mechanisms (Kanekar, Sharma, 2020; Brammer, 2020). Now more than ever, international organisations, practitioners and researchers (Stathopoulou, Mouriki, Papaliou, 2020; Van de Velde et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020) seem to be more concerned on sustainable recovery within higher education (Arnove, 2020; Hazelkorn, Locke, 2020; Masri, Sabzalieva, 2020), on providing students with strategic tools, appropriate well-being practices aiming to reduce mental distress and enhance the challenging development of youth (Fotuhi, 2020; Nowak et al., 2020).

Following the global trends, Covid-19 pandemic has pushed the academic institutions to close their doors replacing thus the in-person learning and with the distance learning courses. In accordance with the International Association of Universities ([IAU], 2020), and following the COVID-19 Global Impact Survey findings (Marinoni, Land, Jensen, 2020), it is commonly agreed that more than 1.5 billion students across the world were affected by the educational and academic institutions' closures due to pandemic breakdown. UNESCO reported at the beginning of April 2020 that schools and higher education institutions were closed in 185 countries, impacting

89.4% of total enrolled learners, an equivalent of 20% of the global population.

The Romanian context

Looking at the situation of Romania, a post-communist Eastern European country and non-WEIRD one [Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic-WEIRD] (Henrich, Heine, Norenzayan, 2010), as stated by the Group for Strategic Communication, until 15th of October 2020, the number of diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in Romania was 168.490, among whom 125.009 individual were cured, whereas the number of deaths was 5.674 (Ministry of Internal Affairs, [MAI], 2020).

The World Health Organization (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020) published increasing incidence for Romania, with Covid-19 diagnosed cases numbered at 196,004 and the number of deaths at 6,163 from the beginning of the year until the 24th of October 2020. Such alarming statistics corroborated with the latest announcement of school re-closure from the 26th of October 2020, served as an alert driver for academic institutions to act immediately.

Therefore, in such an unprecedented context, students may encompass a fragile target group for being studied from the perspective of adapting to and engaging themselves in the newly established digitalised learning environment, as a response to Covid-19 measures.

Given this contextual overview, in Romania the application of positive psychology engagement research framework, in the framework of Covid-19 outbreak, is still less advanced. Recent Romanian literature has investigated students' online learning related to their adaptation to remote learning. For example, a recent study (Lup, Mitrea, 2020) undertaken on 3603 students registered at the Romanian Universities, reveals that the

remote learning is completely unfavourable due to the lack of interaction to colleagues, due to an increased number of tasks, projects and homework. The limited access to libraries, the deficit in student-professor communication, the lack of concentration, the inappropriate environment or the lack of rest, of wellbeing and calmness were among the prevalent negative individual, and social effects of distance learning in Romanian universities that the study highlighted (Lup, Mitrea, 2020, p.1-4).

Despite the negative impact of Covid-19 at personal and interpersonal level, there are some positive effects, visible in terms of the civic engagement of medical students from “Victor Babeș” University of Medicine and Pharmacy Timișoara, the Faculty of Medicine in Sibiu and University of Târgu-Mureș, in supporting the Covid-19 patients, or of students from “Transilvania” University of Brașov who were started a micro-production line based on 3D printing technology for the creation of the visors used by medical personnel (Rusu, 2020) Therefore, in such uncommon context, this paper aims at presenting how Romanian students’ engagement posits itself in the new established remote learning environment, and what are the emotional, emergency-responses students give when their academic work is called into question.

Conceptualization of work engagement

Our conceptualisation of work engagement among students draws from the widely cited definition given by Schaufeli et al. (2002), where the term denominates “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, Bakker, 2002, p. 74). Vigor is understood in terms of “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work” (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-

Romá, Bakker, 2002, p. 74); dedication covers “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (p. 74), while absorption means “being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (p. 75). There exists a considerable body of literature on this three-fold construct dimension of work engagement measured with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, which, over the years went through different versions (UWES-24, UWES-17, UWES-15, UWES-9, UWES-3), after being tested in diverse occupational environments (Schaufeli, et. al, 2019), and cultures (Schaufeli, Bakker, 2003; Extremera, Sánchez-García, Durán, Rey, 2012; Zecca et al., 2015; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Kantas, Demerouti, 2012; Petrović, Vukelić, Čizmić, 2017; Vazquez et al., 2016).

As it has been previously reported in the literature, work engagement was related, among others, to job satisfaction (Christian, Garza, Slaughter, 2011), to burnout (Schaufeli, Martínez, Marques-Pinto, Salanova, Bakker, 2002), to workaholism (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009), to job resources and demands (Schaufeli, Taris, 2014), to personal motivation (Sonnentag, 2003), to personality traits (Zecca et. al., 2015), or to work-life balance aspects (Montgomery, Peeters, Schaufeli, Den Ouden, 2003).

Cultural and methodological evidence on work engagement

Work engagement has received much attention over the last two decades, being understood as an “antipode” of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter, 2001), seized in a less unwell-being work-related light, but for a more positive occupational health psychology promotion (Salanova, Martínez, Llorens, 2014; Schaufeli, Salanova, 2007). Good psychometric properties of this

UWES-9S scale were shown along different studies run in countries such as Italy (Balducci, Fraccaroli, Schaufeli, 2010; Loscalzo, Giannini, 2019), Spain (Serrano, Andreu, Murgui, Martínez, 2019), Ecuador (Portalanza, Grueso, Duque, 2017), Chile (Carmona-Halty, Schaufeli, Salanova, 2019), Korea (Römer, 2016), China (Meng, Jin, 2017), Japan (Tayama et al, 2018), Russia (Lovakov, Agadullina, Schaufeli, 2017), Serbia (Petrović, Vukelić, Čizmić, 2017), Turkey (Çapri, Gündüz, Akbay, 2017). When reporting the psychometric values of the UWES-9, research outcomes led to either a three-factor structure validation (Carmona-Halty, Schaufeli, Salanova, 2019; Zecca et al. 2015) or to one factor model (Hallberg, Schaufeli 2006; Schaufeli, Bakker 2003; Schaufeli et al., 2006, Kulikowski, 2017). Findings regarding work engagement among pupils and students have led to the development of The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-9S). In Romania, two of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale versions (UWES-17 and UWES-9, Schaufeli, Bakker, 2003) have been translated and administered among Romanian samples, by Vîrgă, Zaborilă, Sulea, Maricuțoiu (2009). Moreover, similar noteworthy empirical studies (Cazan, 2015; Stan, Cazan, 2019; Sulea, van Beek, Sarbescu, Vîrgă, Schaufeli, 2015) measured work engagement among university students. Despite such interest, in Romania, no one to the best of our knowledge raised the question of the testing UWES-9S among university student samples especially during threatening environment, such as Covid-19 lockdown.

The present study

Within the framework of the above-mentioned theoretical and empirical considerations, the purpose of our paper was to contribute to the already existing literature, by expanding it to nowadays pandemic context. The paper is part of a larger project

“Resilience and Well-Being during Covid-19 Pandemic”, initiated by the first author. What does it look like studying in a virtual environment? What can be done to better stimulate students’ involvement during remote learning? Such questions come to any professor mind, interested in assessing and improving students’ academic engagement. From such simple questions we have started to configure the present empirical research, where, besides the assessment of the preliminary analysis of UWES-9S factor structure, we aim to analyse: 1) the degree of academic engagement among university students, along with 2) the narratives of students’ work engagement. Consequently, given the rapid changes imposed by the state of emergency during pandemic, we expected that there is a moderate degree of work engagement among student target sample (hypothesis 1). In line with this statement, we address the following research question: What are the imprints of the online learning on Romanian students’ engagement? (Research question 1).

Methods

Participants

A total of 227 university students were recruited for the present study, with a mean age of 22,6 years old, mainly females (77,9%), enrolled in Bachelor (88.1%), Master (11,3%) study programmes at different higher institutions from central Romania.

	Romanian student sample (n = 227)
Age (in years)	
M (SD)	22,6 (5,3)
Gender (%)	
Male	22.1%
Female	77.9%
Study program	
undergraduate	88,1%
master	11,3%
PhD	0,6%
Working during the state of emergency	
yes	24,4%
no	75,6%

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Instruments and procedure

Socio-demographics: Students were asked to report their university, study programme, year and field of study, age, gender, and if they are working or not during the state of emergency / alert during Covid-19 pandemic.

Work engagement: An adaptation of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-9S) put forward by Schaufeli, Bakker, Salanova (2006) was used to assess work engagement among students in Romania. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-9S) consists of nine items, rated on a 7- point Likert Scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). Sample items: “When I’m doing my work as a student, I feel bursting with energy”, “I am immersed in my studies” and “My studies inspire me.” The internal consistency was high, with Cronbach's $\alpha = .898$. Before the data collection, the self-reported

scale was piloted as to avoid any item fill-in misunderstanding. Due to lockdown constraints, participants were recruited online, using an electronic platform. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, students being not given any extra remuneration for their participation at the study.

Preliminary analysis

The first set of analyses investigated the data suitability (Dzibuban, Shirkeu, 1974) and the theoretical structure of UWES-9S, using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and Varimax rotation with prior Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Kaiser-Meyer-Olking (KMO) eigenvalues and factor loadings. EFA (exploratory factory analysis) and CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) were performed. In our sample, Kaiser-Meyer-Olking (KMO) measure of sample adequacy of .88 was a good one, as suggested by Hair et al. (2006). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, χ^2 (36) = 1099.210, was significant, at p level <0.001, therefore our sample meets the basic requirements for factor analysis (table 2).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			,889
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1099.210	
	df	36	
	Sig.		,000

Table 2. Results of Sampling Adequacy Test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

PCA displays one component model of UWES-9S, with a single component, which is explaining 55,61%, of total variance.

For testing the goodness-of-fit in our case, several indexes were used: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and normed fit index (NFI). For UWES-9S model we tested one factor

model, with CFI value of .863 (acceptable), with NFI value of .844 (good fit) and with TLI of .818 (acceptable), but with the exception of RMSEA value of .141, (poor fit). In accordance with these indexes the minimum was achieved in the case of the one work engagement factor solution, with a chi-square value sensitive to sample size ($\chi^2(27) = 175,039$, $p < .001$). Although our model fit was not ideal, we nevertheless believe that our findings are in line with previous recommendations (Kulikowski, 2017; Willmer, Westerberg, Lindberg, 2019) related to the approvals that every study using UWES-9, either for general or student samples should test its own factor structure and use it accordingly with the sample characteristics. Our results, in terms of one factor solution of UWES-9 share a number of similarities with previous research outcomes (Hallberg, Schaufeli, 2006; Çapri, B., Gündüz, B., Akbay, S. E., 2017; Balducci et. al., 2010; Klassen et al., 2012; Vazques et. al, 2016).

Results

Our first hypothesis stated that there is a moderate degree of work engagement among students during Covid-19 online learning.

In order to test such assumption, the mean score of academic engagement as whole, was assessed. Taken as a whole, the mean score ($M=3,38$, $SD=1,09$) reported in table 3 has further strengthened our conviction that among our sample there is an average academic engagement during online courses.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Engagement	227	,00	6,00	3,3842	1,09093

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of UWES-9S

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. UWES 1	0	6	3,10	1,475
2. UWES 2	0	6	3,30	1,439
3. UWES 3	0	6	3,63	1,403
4. UWES 4	0	6	3,96	1,393
5. UWES 5	0	6	2,11	1,679
6. UWES 6	0	6	2,92	1,549
7. UWES 7	0	6	4,26	1,472
8. UWES 8	0	6	3,10	1,405
9. UWES 9	0	6	4,07	1,401

Table 4. UWES-9S items - means, standard deviations

Further analysis showed that, when judging from the mean scores per each UWES-9S item, it was highlighted that the mean scores ranged from 4,26 to 2,11, with higher scores for items 7 (dedication) and 9 (absorption), and lower ones for item 5 (vigor), and 6 (vigor). Moreover, when we tried to assess the degrees of study involvement, as suggested in the original manual (Schaufeli, Bakker, 2004), we understood that level of students' engagement during online courses was still moderate (58, 6%) (assessed between 2.89 – 4.66) to low (22,47%), (assessed between 1.78 – 2.88). Therefore, the majority of the students we surveyed reported an average degree of involvement during online courses.

	Frequency	Percent (%)
average	133	58,6
low	51	22,5
high	21	9,3
very low	16	7,0
very high	6	2,6
Total	227	100,0
ns		
Total		

Table 5. Level of work engagement among Romanian university students

When testing for gender variances in students' work engagement during distant learning, statistically significant differences were not found in terms of woman/girls being more involved than men/boys ($M = 3,50$, $DS = 1.02$, $t = -.430$, *ns*), as proved in-person learning environment (Lietaert et al., 2015). Significant difference was identified between Bachelor students been less involved ($M = 3,40$, $DS = 1.02$, $t = -2,409$ $p < .05$), than Master students ($M = 3,98$, $DS = .912$), which substantiates previous findings revealed in UWES manual Schaufeli, Bakker, 2004.

Our research question was formulated as to disclose the hidden imprints and internalisation of the remote online learning among students. In order draw a map on the state of mind in terms of work engagements, in the following we are listing the several emotional-related responses depicted from the recorded narratives of surveyed Romanian students. We agree that students are emotionally engaged in their studies as they are mentally and cognitively present in their courses. Studying under Covid-19 pandemic impositions brought out a wide range

of mental symptoms that varies from loneliness, sadness, paramount stress, anxiety and even depression, with strong impact on students' personal, interpersonal and social daily life. In this regard, the narratives below witness the symptomatology spectrum unearth among our interviewees.

"The state of emergency and the need for isolation has brought some major changes not only to my academic life, but also to my personal one, making all the situation more difficult to bear and bringing unexpected repercussions, by breaking up some very important relationships for my psycho-intellectual balance" (Student, feminine, 22 years old).

"The faculty lost all its charm due to online hours. The interaction, the debate, the study and socialization are precious moments in the student's life, but today all our life depends on a screen and an email. Although this technology seems to have made us much stronger, the reality shows us exactly the opposite, that is, we are weak, fragile, and easily dominated psychically and emotionally" (Student, masculine, 21 years old).

"The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic has a strong impact on us. Online courses are quite boring, but not as clear as they were at university. Along the way monotony and boredom appears and things do not seem as interesting as they were taught before us" (Student, feminine, 21 years old).

"Everything is boring and sad. You have no motivation to learn or do other things. You are afraid of that virus, of failing the exams, so here comes anxiety, stress, frustration, anger, disappointment" (Student, feminine, 22 years old).

"In my opinion, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the entire educational system in Romania. I cannot find any positive effects. There are many negative effects, the worst is that we cannot interact at online

classes like we did during the physical ones that is why the student's interest is diminishing considerably" (Student, masculine, 19 years old).

"It's good, but it's boring to stay at home; school is created for two fundamental things: education and socialization, and when socialization is eliminated, it becomes boring" (Student, masculine, 20 years old).

"From my point of view, this period dominated by COVID was a difficult one for all, at first it would not seem so hard but on the way it was dominated of anxiety, depression, you could no longer concentrate on the things you had to do [...] the fact that we had the courses online helped us to keep us busy and at the same time we tried to return to normality. At present, I still feel the effects of the pandemic because the conditions of anxiety, the fear of being alone sometimes prevails, but I am sure everything will return to normal one day, and all these feelings will not influence my life" (Student, feminine, 22 years old).

The online learning environment imposed due to novel Coronavirus disrupts students' attention, concentration and even motivation for their active participation, making them feel overwhelmed by the increased workloads, which all might stands as an explanation of the average level of academic engagement and fatigue during distance learning.

"After eight hours in front of the screen, I can no longer concentrate on. Headaches sometimes occur [...]. Courses and seminars are not as interesting as they were [...] From the point of view it is sometimes much easier to activate our microphone and express our opinion on certain things, compared to the hours in the rooms, where we are in a larger number (I am also used to online conferences)" (Student, masculine, 18 years old).

"I think that sitting so much at some courses for more than 50 minutes would be a problem because there is a terrible backache and sometimes you really need a break. This is a negative effect on me. To stay in front of the laptop is sometimes very tiring and you get the impression that in addition to the back pain you also have the pain of your eyes, your head and your hands and everything [...] I would have liked seeing much more involvement in this period, but unfortunately I see exactly the opposite" (Student, feminine, 22 years old)

"It is a very difficult and stressful period. I find it very difficult to do something for faculty such as homework or to learn, even though I consider myself an ambitious person. But during this period I simply don't have the power to concentrate" (Student, feminine, 21 years old).

"It's very tiring; I feel like my eyes hurt, I have back pains. I feel it's much harder to concentrate when I'm at home. I used to like the academic environment. It is sad that we cannot see each other physically [...] Sometimes I feel I can't organize the day by myself" (Student, feminine 20 years old).

"I left behind the lessons, the tasks for the faculty, making it increasingly difficult to learn now, that I am full of concerns and fears that I will not be able to pass my exams". (Student, feminine, 21 years old).

"My attention and interest for the study have significantly decreased. I do not feel the same pressure that was put on us once by the courses and seminars we are taking part in, I do not feel the pressure that the approaching exam session should generate. I expect weaker results due to a lack of adequate training and the way in which exams will be carried out [...] These online exams do not depend only on my level of training but also on the necessary logistics (I do not have a laptop/computer, just

a phone, I do not have a stable Internet connection), that will put me at a disadvantage"(Student, feminine, 22 years old).

"The interest on courses has considerably decreased. Concentration is no longer the same, the fact that I always stay at home does not help at all. And it is not the only thing that can be said. It's the most difficult period of my life so far, simply because it's not normal to spend eight hours in front of the computer. At the end of the day I am much more tired than after a day of normal classes. Interaction with colleagues is no longer the same". (Student, feminine, 19 years old).

Conclusion

Taken together, all reproduced resilience stories would seem to suggest that, in these threatening epidemic times it is vital to pay more attention to the hidden person sitting for long hours behind the camera, and to listen more carefully to the voice of the person who is behind the muted microphone. Our empirical work has led us to conclude that there is a moderate to low level of work engagement among Romanian students during Covid-19 pandemic, measured with a confirmed one-factor model of UWES-9S. Our quantitative data demonstrate slightly higher levels of absorption (concentration and dependence of the undertaken activity), but less dedication (significance, enthusiasm, motivation) and less vigour (active involvement) along online courses among the investigated Romanian university students. The investigations we have undertaken into this area are still on-going and seem likely to certify our hypothesis concerning the moderate level of involvement into the online learning, which occurred *per se*, but mainly due to decreased lack of motivation, of concentration, or attention, of online fatigue, procrastination, fear, stress, anxiety, decreased interpersonal interaction, which all produce visible rupture at

emotional and affective level, with perceptible traces on students' mental health and well-being. Despite the acknowledged limitations of our study, in terms of online data collection, self-reported data and even sample size, we are confident that our results may improve the knowledge and encourage more practice-oriented approaches about the new reality of the virtual learning in higher education, highlighting the importance of readjusting the appropriate security-enhancing and coping strategies and tools for a more resilient and efficient distance learning mechanisms for what has become the new normality and might be the new future in education.

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The Concept of Necropolitics during the Pandemic of Covid-19 in Brazil

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Abstract

The present article aims to reflect the access to health in Brazil, especially in the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic, establishing theoretical and conceptual paradigms between the fields of biopolitics and necropolitics. In this context, this study analyses the political discourses during the pandemic of Covid-19 in Brazil. The methodology comes from a bibliographic review, based on the hypothetical-deductive method, mostly based on the concept of necropolitics. Finally, it has been observed that even more dangerous than the virus itself is the necropolitical perspective that dictates who lives and who dies – in this case, who breathes and who suffocates – the nation's economy over human lives. It's also been verified that the admission of certain health protocols, under the bioethical perspective, portray the death policy that dictates who lives and who dies in a State completely ineffective in its political, social and even economic dimensions.

Keywords: Bioethics; Biopolitics; Right to Health; Human rights; Necropolitics.

Introduction

The present study deals with the Covid-19 pandemic, the violation of the right to health in Brazil and the proposals given by political leaders with a necropolitical perspective, the criterion that dictates who lives and who dies – in this case, who breathes and who suffocates.

Among the objectives, the present research seeks to analyze the theoretical and conceptual limits between the fields of biopolitics and necropolitics within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil, as well as to identify which profiles of human beings are being protected or covered by the resource allocation protocols throughout the Brazilian states and who are the ones that are threatened and/or excluded from those protocols?

The subject is justified not only by the contemporaneity of the pandemic that has been devastating the whole world, but above all, by the scientific and social contribution in reflecting theoretical aspects and its consequent transmutation in real situations, generating effects in the areas of bioethics and bio-rights, fundamental and social rights as well as human rights.

The methodology comes from the exploratory paradigm based on the hypothetical-deductive method, promoting as theoretical framework the works of Michel Foucault on the issue of biopolitics and the concept of necropolitics elaborated by Achille Mbembe. Additionally, it has been used consulting all sorts of materials and instruments available on the Internet.

It is possible to observe that the current scenario in Brazil through the resource allocation protocols demonstrates a necropolitical approach by a neoliberal rationality, contradicting constitutional principles, bioethical principles and violating human rights, denying the universal and equal access of certain social groups to health services, exposing them to deadly conditions.

The resource allocation proposals and protocols, and the denial of the right to health

The Covid-19 pandemic, proclaimed by the World Health Organization as a global emergency, caused by a new strain of coronavirus, that is, “[...] a respiratory virus which spreads primarily through droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose.” (World Health Organization, 2020, n.p.). A virus that manifests itself and essentially compromises the respiratory system, and in the most severe cases, patients need certain mechanisms in order to keep them up breathing, such as ventilators, for example. In addition, they need to be isolated in ICU rooms.

Meanwhile, given the rapid spread and consequent contamination of populations around the world, health systems are getting overcrowded with patients presenting severe symptoms from the Covid-19, needing urgent treatment and hospitalization in ICU beds, that is, the demands have been surpassing the usual hospitals capacity. Thus, health professionals and political leaders have been adopting resource allocation protocols against the coronavirus, making respirators and ICU beds available to certain individuals at the expense of others, under a utilitarian logic of maximizing resources, disrespecting and violating constitutional and bioethical principles.

However, given the current scenario, as Von Der Weid (2020, our translation) inquires,

[...] what is the profile of the Brazilian who, from one moment to the next, will lose his rights in the moment of greatest need? What ideals of justice come into play in such ethical criteria and what kind of humanity do they serve? How should we view these deaths? Who should answer for the “Sofia choice” that health professionals are being forced to take? (p. 1).

The Covid-19 pandemic has led the health systems throughout the world into a severe shortage of resources ranging from alcohol gel, disinfectants and face masks to the lack of ICU beds and ventilators. Although resource rationing is predictable in times of crisis, the new coronavirus pandemic has brought the health systems to a gigantic scale.

As Truog, Mitchell, Daley (2020, n.p.) explain that,

although shortages of other goods and services may lead to deaths, in most cases it will be the combined effects of a variety of shortages that will result in worse outcomes. Mechanical ventilation is different. When patients' breathing deteriorates to the point that they need a ventilator, there is typically only a limited window during which they can be saved. And when the machine is withdrawn from patients who are fully ventilator-dependent, they will usually die within minutes. Unlike decisions regarding other forms of life-sustaining treatment, the decision about initiating or terminating mechanical ventilation is often truly a life-or-death choice.

By way of illustration, Manir (2020) points out the discussions in some North American states about the possibility of lower scores for the access of ventilators for patients with mental disabilities or dementia, proposals that, notably, were contested in the form of protests by some entities and/or associations (Baker, 2020). However, Prager (2020) teaches that mental disability, dementia or severe physical disability are issues that become relevant insofar as they can impact the patient's ability to survive during an acute hospitalization. If a person's physical disability, for example, would place him in a high-risk survival category, then that would be relevant, therefore, it doesn't matter just whether someone has a physical or mental disability.

According to Kretzer et al. (2020), in face of all the frenzy caused by the new coronavirus pandemic in Brazil, the Brazilian Association of Intensive Care Medicine – AMIB, along with the Brazilian Association of Emergency Medicine – ABRAMED,

Brazilian Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology – SBGG, and the National Academy of Palliative Care – ANCP, launched a protocol for allocating resources under exhaustion during the COVID-19 pandemic, establishing the most relevant bioethical criteria, namely, the severity of the case, the highest degree of survival and the capacity of the patient. Furthermore, the referred document advocates the predominance that “[...] the most solid principle is that of prioritizing patients with better chances of benefit and with higher expectations of survival.” (Kretzer et al., 2020, n.p., our translation).

Some protocols have been adopting the so-called SOFA – Sequential Organ Failure Assessment, that is, a scoring system that is taken into account when calculating a set of indicators despite the patient's vitality – a score ranging from 1 to 4. Thus, for example, the higher the score on the result calculated in that system, the lower a patient's chances of survival (Kretzer et al., 2020).

Another bioethical triage criterion that has been taken into account is the long-term survival, that is, the idea of saving more years of life. Thus, the calculation is made based on the assessment and / or verification of severe comorbidity with an expected survival of less than one year. If this happens, 3 points are added to the calculation (Madeiro, 2020).

Regarding the patient's capacity, the calculation is based on the functional performance scale Ecog – Eastern Cooperative Oncologic Group, that is, an instrument that “[...] seeks to quantify the physical functional capacity and the patient's capacity for independence and self -care.” (Kretzer et al., 2020, n.p., our translation). In this way, the worse the patient's performance status, the lower the functional capacities and, consequently, it is assumed that less results will be obtained during the treatment, and the stratification adopted can vary between 0 to 4 points.

Finally, Von Der Weid (2020) also emphasizes that some Brazilian states – such as the case of the Recommendation nº 05/2020 of the Regional Council of Medicine of the State of Pernambuco (Cremepe, 2020), for example – have already incorporated instruments for the assessment of patient's functionality, such as the Karnofsky Performance Status (KPS), a system that quantifies physical functional capacity and the capacity for independence and self-care. A worrying fact, however, is the adoption of such instruments in order to select who will have hospitalization priority and who will not have it, that is, an indication that constitutes an indirect threat to people with disabilities or the elderly.

Another example is the Resolution No. 12 from May 27, 2020, which approved the regulatory protocol for Covid-19 cases for highly complex intensive care units in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where one of the criteria that might assist in the patient's classification of priority is the age group with less than or equal to 75 years old, with the argument that, given the circumstances of the pandemic, the allocation of resources should be aimed at patients who are more likely to survive. By this reason “[...] all patients series published so far identify the age group as a reliable predictor of higher mortality.” (Cremers, 2020, n.p., our translation).

Therefore, the aforementioned priority criteria for the access of ICU beds and ventilators, end up promoting the selectivity of certain bodies that are considered worthy of living and those that should be excluded, that is, the material extermination of bodies and populations deemed incapable and vulnerable, in addition to the visible denial and violation of the fundamental human right to health.

The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 in its arts. 6 and 196, states that health is a fundamental social right, and the State has the duty to implement it (Brasil, 1988). Likewise, the Law nº.

8.080 from 1990, provides in its art. 2, § 1, the universal and equal access to health actions and services (Brasil, 1990). However, due to the current pandemic scenario, there has been a failure to comply with such precepts, that means the instant replacement of constitutional and infraconstitutional articles by a utilitarian logic.

According to Von Der Weid (2020, p. 4-5, our translation), those

[...] are criteria that have a high chance of inducing a distribution of resources based on the age of the patient and the body conditions of people with disabilities, although not explicitly, since older patients and people with disabilities tend to be more prone to comorbidities and may be assessed as less likely to recover from critical care.

It is well known that elderly and disabled people already need certain care and special attention in their day-to-day lives, however, to calculate a score in detriment of these groups because they are incapable – or reduced functional capacities – thus decreasing their chances of accessing ICU beds or equipment to help the respiratory system, and giving priority to healthy individuals, younger and / or considered “normal”, reveals the influence and the hidden interest of the neoliberal rationality in privileging these last group, precisely because they are able to work and guarantee the full functioning of the economy.

In spite of all these events, the Brazilian Society of Bioethics (2020), through the publication of Recommendation SBB n° 01/2020, postulates that the constitutional principles of human dignity and social solidarity, as well as human rights and bioethical principles should be respected, highlighting the importance and urgency to invest more resources in the public health system, hiring more health professionals and guaranteeing equal access to health services to patients at all levels of care. This recommendation also points out to the

observance of the principle of equity in access to health services within the context of the pandemic, especially for those groups considered to be vulnerable, thus aiming to avoid possible discrimination.

However, Emanuel et al. (2020) recommend that the only priority exception to access to equipment necessary for treatment against Covid-19 are health professionals who work on the front lines and those who are particularly considered indispensable and / or irreplaceable due to the knowledge and training they have, demonstrating that their contribution to cope with the disease and caring for patients is undoubtedly necessary.

Nonetheless, another antagonism that deserves to be taken into account is the fact that 75% of the Brazilian population depends exclusively on the public health system assistance services, which represents only 44% of the ITU beds available in the country, the other 25% of the population can afford the private health system that disposes 55% of beds. Obviously, there is a clear discrepancy when it comes to the access to health care in Brazil, so that, in the current scenario of the pandemic, ITU beds are available to those with better financial conditions.

In a similar sense, campaigns such as *Equal Lives and Beds for All*, unified efforts and actions, culminating in a joint manifesto, defending, among other things, the centralization of ITU beds from both the public and private hospitals in the fight against Covid-19. By this segment, the jurist Pedro Serrano – one of the coordinators of the campaign *Equal Lives* – in a special article about the coronavirus, published by Abrasco – Brazilian Association of Collective Health, points out that “[...] it will end up having the unreal situation of having hospitals with an absolute lack of beds, with poor people dying for it, and hospitals using beds to perform cosmetic plastic surgery.” (Martins; Dias, 2020, n.p. our translation).

Therefore, it is possible to realize surreal situations within a crisis of global dimensions, a moment when political leaders and the population in general, who should exercise empathy and solidarity with each other, controversially end up creating means to exclude vulnerable individuals, based on a necropolitical approach.

Between biopolitics and necropolitics in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil

Foucault (1988, p. 129, our translation), in the last chapter of his work *The History of Sexuality Vol. I*, refers to the following: “[...] the principle: being able to kill in order to live, which supported the tactics of fighting, made principle of strategy between States; but the existence in question is no longer that – legal – of sovereignty, it is another – biological – of a population.”

Thus, techniques of power used between the 17th and 18th centuries were centered, above all, on the individual body, that is, on the disciplinary power used in hospitals, in prisons, in the army, in schools, among others. For Foucault (1979), discipline is, therefore, a technique of exercising power that has existed for a long time, passing through several moments in the history of mankind, however, only assuming more perfected forms from the 17th and 18th centuries, under intensive surveillance.

Notwithstanding, in the second half of the 18th century, a new power technology emerged, not excluding the first, but expanding it. Unlike the first, which is directed at the individual's body, this new technology signals human life in a general sense. In other words, it is addressed to the human species. In the words of Foucault (1999, p. 289, our translation), “[...] after the anatomo-politics of the human body, established in the course of the 18th century, we see, at the end of the same century, something that is no longer an anatomy-politics of the

human body, but which I would call a "biopolitics" of the human species."

It is, moreover, a set of processes related to rates and / or statistical data on birth, longevity, mortality, and fertility of a determined population. The collection and control of such information is exactly the target of this biopolitics. In this context, a new element appears, that is, "[...] a new body: multiple body, a body with countless heads, if not infinite, at least necessarily numerable. It is the notion of "population". (Foucault, 1999, p. 292, our translation). In this biopolitics, mechanisms are implemented to prolong life, stimulate births and reduce morbidity rates, that is, this technology imposes the power to make people live and letting people die within the population, more precisely, this power is called biopower.

In this sense, what would the question of death look like? How is it possible in these dimensions of politics and power, to kill someone, or by the way, to let somebody die? Firstly, it is not a question of killing someone as it used to be the case with sovereign power, but literally letting certain groups die, presenting as a justification, the incorporation of the biological perspective from divisions of the human species into races, hierarchizing and qualifying them, generating the binomial between the inferiority of some races and the superiority of others. Thus, the more an inferior race is allowed to die, the more vitality a superior race will have. In other words, for the upper race to live it is necessary for the lower race to die (Foucault, 1999).

In short, letting die does not necessarily mean killing a group of people directly as in a war, but rather killing indirectly, that is, through the exposure to death, "[...] to multiply for some individuals the risk of death or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, etc." (Foucault, 1999, p. 306, our translation).

In the work *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the College De France*, (1977-1978), Foucault (2008), precisely in the class of January 25, outlines the analysis about the possibility to use epidemics as a form of laboratory in order to test security devices. Specifically, the referred author analyzed in detail the smallpox epidemic, which occurred in the middle of the 18th and 19th centuries, and its facets as technical models used for population control.

In the current Covid-19 pandemic, however, Foucault's notions of biopolitics and biopower appear specifically in the areas of public health and hygiene, managing living conditions and selecting which lives should be maximized and which will be left to die, the latter for not presenting value or any kind of economic potential for the neoliberal system (Seixas, 2020).

Nevertheless, there are situations that go beyond the concepts of biopolitics and biopower, where certain social groups are in such precarious conditions of existence that they resemble the living dead, where the State itself produces deadly conditions through wars, terrorism and sacrifice. It is the concept of necropolitics. As Mbembe adds (2016, p. 146, our translation), "[...] firearms are implanted in the interests of the maximum destruction of people and the creation of "worlds of death", new and unique forms of social existence, in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that give them the status of "living dead". In other words, the term necropolitics refers to, "[...] contemporary forms that subjugate life to the power of death (necropolitics) profoundly reconfigure the relationships between resistance, sacrifice and terror". (Mbembe, 2016, p. 146, our translation).

Discussions regarding the allocation of resources during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil, ranging from the refusal of respiratory mechanisms and the access to ICU beds in detriment to the elderly and people with disabilities, were justified by a

neoliberal rationality associated with the necropolitics, literally sacrificing lives, considering that the functional contribution of these groups, for production and consumption, is no longer of interest to the economic system. Furthermore, biopolitics is transmuted to or complemented in the necropolitics approach determining whose bodies are worth living and whose bodies are excluded.

Mbembe (2016) observes the sovereign right to kill reemerging in societies where the dynamics of the State of Exception or emergency is perpetuated – as Agamben (2004) once proposed – from the fictional construction of one or several groups considered to be enemies. It is possible to observe individuals who are in similar conditions, such as, for example, black people, the poor, people with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous people, among others. In this way, those who must live and those who must die are selected by this model of State.

By the same token, Estévez (2018) highlights that the existence of worlds of death where people are in an undead condition is an indicator of necropolitics. In the Brazilian scenario, the necropolitics has materialized in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, wide open in the statements and actions of political leaders, disregarding deaths caused by the coronavirus, as well as deaths caused by the non-access to health systems and the violation of the right to health.

Thus, the health issue in Brazil operates necropolitically because it produces deadly conditions due to the lack of health equipment, for example, with the scarcity or insufficiency of respirators and ICU beds, functioning as a fundamental management feature of certain populations, overloading the public health service and making it precarious with the goal of exposing vulnerable populations to death or making them live in extreme conditions so that the borders between life and death become very small.

A perspective, likewise, is orchestrated from an immunological logic, for instance, in the same way as it happens in immunology, where an external organism infects and contaminates a healthy body and, as a result, the biological defenses start to react fighting the parasite proceeding its elimination in order to maintain good health. In other words, in the same way as the human body is an organism that is exposed to numerous types of dangers, mainly manifested in the form of diseases, and reacts through its immune system, the State is an organism that also has to deal with its eventual hosts and has an immunity mechanism to secrete or excrete them (Esposito, 2008). Hence necropolitics, which seems to be connected to this logic, producing the death of certain populations or social sectors, understood as threatening organisms to the health of the State.

Byung Chul-Han (2015) emphasizes that some intrinsic elements exposed in the neoliberal pyrotechnic discourse, such as overvaluation of power, performance, efficiency, creativity, positivism etc., make sense only for sectors from society that have a certain profile. Furthermore, it is a discourse that, nowadays, operates in a seductive and manipulative way, depriving itself of the old logic of allo-exploitation and using the method of self-exploitation. In his books *In the swarm: digital prospects*, Byung Chul-Han (2017, p. 13),

it is meaningful to speak of class only when a plurality of classes exists. "Multitude," however, signifies the sole class. All who participate in the capitalist system belong to it. In fact, "empire" does not refer to a ruling class that exploits the "multitude": everyone now thinks him- or herself free, even while working to death. The contemporary achievement subject is perpetrator and victim in one. Negri and Hardt do not recognize this logic of self-exploitation, which is much more efficient than allo-exploitation. No one rules the empire. It is the capitalist system itself, which encompasses everyone. Today, exploitation is possible without any domination at all.

Yet, in the midst of this *multitude* there are remaining groups, particularly individuals whose profiles do not follow the orchestrated rhythms required by the capitalistic system. In this conjuncture, for instance, an increasingly large mass of the population has been produced that will not be absorbed by the labor market because it cannot adapt to the paradigm and the requirements of such a system. Strictly speaking, that's a mass of the population unsuited for work, unproductive, depreciated by the system. In this way, what has been done to those sectors of the population – the unproductive ones – is to manage conditions in which survival will be maintained and, in some cases, death will be produced.

That's a similar background as the ones advocated by the resource allocation protocols during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which the elimination of certain sectors of society – specifically the elderly and people with disabilities – is verified through the violation of their rights and the denial of access to adequate treatment, not only exposing individuals to death, but also generating deadly conditions, giving priority to the *multitude* that represents productivity – or simply meets the demands – of the neoliberal system.

In this context, another aspect that deserves to be highlighted concerns to the scientific denialism, expressively, the disregard or rejection of analyzes and scientifically proven results, in favor of dubious ideas, which has been adopted in the speeches of the current Brazilian president and vice president since their election campaign, vehemently rejecting universities, cutting off resources destined to research such as the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – CAPES, reducing the income for public health policies such as SUS, disregarding the human rights of vulnerable groups, among many other negative attitudes (Caponi, 2020). In the current pandemic, the scientific denialism

gains even more strength in presidential speeches by magnifying certain proposals that range from the adoption of drugs without scientific background such as Hydroxychloroquine and Chloroquine – with side effects that may seriously affect the cardiovascular system, for example (Boulware et al., 2020; Cohen, 2020)), vertical isolation, making only those individuals in the risk group stay at home, such as the elderly, people who have diseases that compromise their immunity levels (Fiocruz, 2020) and, finally, herd immunity which means to expose the majority of the population to the virus, which would promote indirect protection against the disease as the antibodies will be stimulated by the human organism itself, acting as a self-defense mechanism (Randolph; Barreiro, 2020). Therefore, those are strategies that contradict the recommendations of the World Health Organization, researchers, epidemiologists, infectologists, sanitarians, etc., with the sole interest of saving the economy instead of human lives.

As a way of illustration, during a pronouncement, the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro compared the Covid-19 pandemic as a *little flu*, which affects only the elderly, suggesting that the rest of the population should return to their normal lifestyle, especially when it comes to work. In addition, he showed indifference to the Brazilian population when he said: “Will some people die? Sure. I'm sorry. This is life.” (Mota, 2020, online).

Nonetheless, a large part of the Brazilian population applauds and admires the presidential speeches, calling for the return of the military dictatorship and trivializing the deaths caused by Covid-19 through demonstrations that became known as *death marches*. Despite these facts, it is possible to draw an analogy with what Hannah Arendt (2013, position 6742-6747 of 15537, our translation) observed about the sympathizers of totalitarian movements:

[...] an astonishing fact is that he does not hesitate when the monster begins to devour his own children, not even when he himself becomes a victim of oppression, when he is framed and condemned, when he is expelled from the party and sent to a concentration camp or forced labor. On the contrary: to the dismay of the entire civilized world, he will even be willing to collaborate with his own condemnation and plot his own death sentence, as long as his status as a member of the movement remains intact.

For Safatle (2015, n.p., our translation), fascism is within a logic that confuses liberal democracy societies “[...] constituting something like the latency of our democracy. This logic has nothing to do with the requirement of blind conformity to the Law, but with respect for the paradoxical game between transgression and order, between norm and exception.”

These reckless and unreasonable speeches and proposals that cause the supporters of such a logic to live carefree in relation to the virus, not observing the recommendations of public health authorities are astonishing. It is interesting to note that, in case of infection, the one that will have to provide care to those irresponsible members of the society is the collective public health system, aggravating the issues of overcrowding and lack of resources.

Undoubtedly, for Sturza and Tonel (2020), the new coronavirus has caused devastation around the world, leading to an overload on health systems, and producing lots of deaths. However, in the Brazilian scenario, more aggressive and dangerous than the virus itself are the responses orchestrated by political leaders, within a fascist perspective, scientific denialism, the neoliberal rationality that transposes the economy and underestimates human lives, the biopolitical state of racism, necropolitics on the resource allocation protocols, the violation of fundamental social rights and human rights, specifically, the right to health and its universal and equal access in the public

health system, causing conditions to the detriment of certain social sectors.

Still, Tonel (2020) points out that it is important to note that, the claim that health as an integral part of the quality of life is a fundamental element for a dignified life is indisputable. But in order to enjoy a dignified life, it must not be forgotten that, for its realization, the State must provide the means so that the population can, for example, have access to medicines and health services that are capable of promoting decent living conditions for the general population.

Final Considerations

Therefore, it has been observed that the arguments in favor of younger people who do not have any type of disability, start from a utilitarian perspective, whose principle consists in maximizing utility, that is, the attempt to supply respirators for the greatest number of young individuals who not only have a better chance of survival, but also have a prognosis of existence that is evidently longer than the elderly, for example.

In this way, necropolitics does not happen only through the direct intervention that produces death, but it also operates, producing the expansion of deadly conditions, situations that generate and/or favor the death of certain sectors of the population. As pointed out, the individual's independence and work capacity also constitute value determinants supported by the protocols, portraying the hidden economic interest: the dichotomy between saving lives or saving the economy.

The admission of these protocols elucidates the death policy that dictates who lives and who dies, disrupting the social paradigm that has been built, orchestrated by a state that has never been prepared with the minimum apparatus in order to take care of those vulnerable groups and, nowadays, in face of

the side effects of the pandemic, has demonstrated even more negligence, indifference and contempt for certain human lives.

It is undeniable that the country's economy has been negatively affected due to the pandemic outbreak. However, far beyond the visible consequences from the pandemic itself, it has also to pay the price of saving human lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has been teaching Brazil to abandon hate speech, torture and sacrifice, religious fundamentalism, scientific negationism and scientific research, as well as pointing out the need for preparation, investments in public health, science and technology.

It remains imperative, therefore, to maintain a minimum health system that can save people from death, not only at the present moment, as it is very likely that this will not be the last pandemic that humanity will experience, and the prognosis warns of the possibility of new and future pandemics. If this hypothesis becomes a reality in the indeterminate future, some reflective questions must be raised: Will the Brazilian political leaders become inactive once again? Will the Brazilian public health system continue to survive in this rhythm of precariousness in public investments? How long will Brazil continue to neglect its public health system in times of health crises like the one currently occurring? Will necropolitics endure dictating who lives and who dies? How long will the economy be more important than human lives?

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School-family cooperation through different forms of communication in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Creating and developing a partnership between schools and families is a topic of many discussions among the scholars in the field of education, so the partnership with the parents is necessary to raise the quality in education because the family plays an important role in the process of learning and children's development. The partnership seems to be more necessary at the time when distance learning occurred lately which was imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to pay attention to the forms of communication that are applied by school directors and teachers in relation to the parents, as well as to understand the planning and the realization of the partnership for the meetings and the reasons of organizing those discussions between teachers and parents during a school year in both junior and senior high schools. Through the data analysis it has been understood that application of the suitable forms of communication has a positive impact in school-family partnership and school-family partnership is more satisfying in junior high schools than in senior high schools. It is concluded that direct forms of partnership must be planned and applied in both junior and senior high schools considering that they induce

positive results in problem solving and decision making together with the parents. Also, there must be strategies to increase school-family partnership especially in the senior high school education in order to make parents and teachers aware of the importance of the partnership in special situations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: partnership, school, family, forms of communication, COVID-19

Introduction

School as a basic institution for the younger generation's education has the responsibility to develop, educate and raise the values in all spheres of life of the society. Partnership and cooperation between the school and the family is crucial for the progress of the process of teaching and learning as well as children's development. The parents' involvement improves the students' results and increases the parents' contentment. (Epstain, 2008) It must be considered that many scholars indicate that the partnership between school and family induce positive results in students' sustainable learning and school is the place where the students, parents, teachers, directors and community come together, and the place where children get grown, get developed and get prepared for life. Parents trust teachers for their children's academic, emotional and social advancement; they also think that cooperation and partnership have a huge importance and it is unavoidable to achieve positive results in life (Matheis & Mehmeti, 2017)

Regarding the partnership between the school and the family, it is believed that teachers should not only inform the parents about their children's achievements but also keep parents engaged in order to help the school, the teachers and especially the children to overcome possible obstacles. Based on

the recommendations of a study, it is said that the school must invest in the training and professional development of teachers in involving the parents and supporting their initiatives; in contacting parents when children have problems or stumble, and also when they get positive achievements; and also one of the criteria for teachers' performance evaluation must include their work with parents for a more successful partnership between school and family in offering essential information for children's education. (Bezati & Hoxhallari, 2011) School must be open to parents and the community, who may offer their help for the school and induce new experiences in supporting students in their development, "more amicable contacts of the parents with the school staff enable better decisions in favor of the children's future" (Zajazi, 2003, p. 606)

Despite of the importance of a well-organized partnership between the school and family aimed at including parents within the school to improve the quality of learning for students, it is obvious that the inclusion of the parents is lacking. Formulating the research questions well is essential in order to achieve a successful study. (Klotz & Prakash, 2008) Therefore, five questions are planned in this study, RQ1: Does your school have a plan for partnership with parents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic? RQ2: Which forms of communication with parents have more impact in advancing the partnership between the school and the parents before and during the COVID-19 pandemic? RQ3: Which level of education has had more engaged partnership between the school and the parents, junior high school or senior high school before and during the COVID-19 pandemic? RQ4: Does the application of the suitable forms of communication have positive impact in school-family partnership? RQ5: Do students become more cooperative and sociable if there is a partnership between the teachers and the parents? This work aims to understand the functioning of the

partnership between school and family including the recent situation of the COVID-19 pandemic emphasizing the importance of applying dozens of communication and cooperation forms by the school staff and the teachers in relation to the parents. The main focus of this study includes four schools in the municipality of Kaçanik – Kosovo in order to view the planning and realization of the partnership forms between the schools and families. People involved in this research through the questionnaire are 48 teachers, 4 directors who responded through the interview, and 4 heads of parents' councils.

Through data analysis this research aims to present that the application of appropriate forms of communication has a positive impact on school-family partnership, that school-family partnership is at a more satisfactory level in junior high school education compared to senior high school. Based on the results, it is concluded that the school should have a plan for partnership with parents. School must plan and apply direct forms of partnership in junior high schools and senior high schools since they bring positive results in problem solving and decision making together with parents. Also, strategies should be developed to build school-family partnership, especially in senior high school education to understand the importance of parent-teacher cooperation in special cases such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theoretical context

For a school education of children in kindergartens, the parent-teacher partnership must be based on mutual trust, respect and responsibility. "Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities that involve school staff, parents and other family members of students in a school". (Department of Education)

Parents have the right to be part of the school by being part of the class parents' council, as well as the school board, who should participate in the drafting of school rules to promote good behavior and discipline of students, drafting of the school development plan, discussion of important issues related to school functioning and performance, giving ideas for extracurricular activities where all the meetings contribute to an inclusive school which fulfills the needs of all participants in the school. (MASHT, 2016) According to Epstein, the main goal of the partnership is to develop good communication between the school and the family to support students towards achieving positive success in school. (Epstein, 2001) Teachers should support parents with their ideas, proposals, suggestions and help. (Bojaxhi, 2004) Through communication between the teacher and the parent, it is possible to understand the child's progress in learning or behavior during a certain period if there has been any obstacle or positive learning achievements. (Zajazi, 2003)

It is important for the school to prepare students in all fields in order to train them for life and work by motivating students to love the book and always use it as they will learn throughout life. This is achieved through communication between three partners, teacher - parent - student, which is necessary. (Kraja, 2008) According to Zuna, by partnership we understand that cooperation between school and family is important for school because the family manages to get informed about, understand, support and improve the school function. Also, the cooperation is important for the family because it manages to recognize the child and understand the reasons of learning difficulties that their children may have during development. It is important to apply different forms of cooperation between school and family as each form of cooperation has positive and negative sides. Therefore, the forms

of cooperation should be known by the school staff, the strengths and weaknesses of each form should be understood and then based on the situation and needs they must do combinations to achieve high positive effects in the upbringing and education of children. (Zuna, 2009) Communication and cooperation between school and family should start from the inclusion of children in kindergartens which should be well planned and realized in various forms in order to achieve success in children from an early age. This collaboration brings benefits to teachers because they take responsibility for caring for children to motivate and develop them, benefits for parents because they transfer child care to an institution that will have ongoing care, as well as benefits for the child who has to adapt to rules he has not previously followed and will develop them through play. (Cekani, 2010) Effective communication enables achievement of mutual information exchange between family and school, families are considered benevolent partners to help solve problems, and the school is open to the family and vice versa. (Department of Education) Partnership is achieved if the parent gains teacher' trust for the commitment he or she makes to the development of the child in achieving good results starting from kindergarten and further education. (Selmani & Zisi, 2006) "Parents and teachers need to recognize the complementary importance of each other in the student's life" (Fullan, 2001) The more time devoted to children by parents and teachers the more success will be achieved by the children, therefore children need advice, guidance, motivation and support from both parents and teachers to overcome difficulties in all areas of development. (Cekani, 2012) A close cooperation between the family-school-community is important for the fulfillment of the whole basic process related to the achievement of the proper education of the children. (Blandul, 2012) Children of parents who are more involved in school feel more motivated, focused and responsible

to show their skills in their learning and mastery of academic activities in school. (Gonzalez et al., 2005) Cooperation between family and school has the advantage of minimizing and overcoming learning difficulties in children by increasing children's motivation for better results, positive behavior, and for participation in more activities at school. (Office of Student services, 2002) Based on the data found by the research relating to the students' learning through online learning during the time of Covid-19 pandemic, it is understood by teachers that students' work and achievements have changed depending on their parents' support and monitoring. (Bubb, Sara & Jones, Mari-Ana, 2020)

Irregularities in schools are present starting from their management as parent councils and student councils in most schools do not function although they are established to represent students' interests, and maintain the quality of education. Also, there are no development plans that each school should have in order to increase the quality of education, or these plans focus on improving the school infrastructure and not on the improvement they can make to the process of teaching and quality learning. (KEEN, 2018) According to a research, teachers and parents think that if more meetings planned by the school and family are organized, such as individual meetings, home visits and other activities, communication would be at the right level by solving students' difficulties, and cooperation would be more effective. (SAVAŞ, 2012)

Methodology

In this study, quantitative methods were used to collect data through a questionnaire conducted with teachers to obtain information about family-school partnership through various forms of communication in ordinary learning times and in

Covid-19 pandemic times. Meanwhile, the qualitative method was realized through a semi-structured interview with principals, with chairmen of parents' council with the intent to collect data on which level of education the partnership is more present, in junior high school or senior high school; and if school-family partnership had changed prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research was conducted in four schools: EJHS "Emin Duraku", EJHS "Idriz Seferi", "Skënderbeu" High School, Technical High School "Feriz Guri dhe Vëllezërit Çaka" in the Municipality of Kaçanik – Kosovo. The purpose of the research was to pay attention to the forms of communication applied by school directors and teachers in relation to parents, to understand how and how much cooperation regarding the meetings was planned and realized and the reasons for holding meetings with teachers and parents during a school year at the level of junior and senior high school education. The questionnaire was distributed to four schools including 48 pre-pandemic teachers, as well as 48 teachers (same teacher in four schools) in pandemic times to see how school collaboration was conducted at two different times, whereas semi-structured interviews - through direct contact with the interviewers (Matthews & Ross, 2010) – were applied with 4 school principals, 2 chairpersons of the parents' councils in two junior high schools and 2 chairpersons of the parents' councils in senior high schools prior to the period of Covid-19 pandemic.

Data collection and analysis

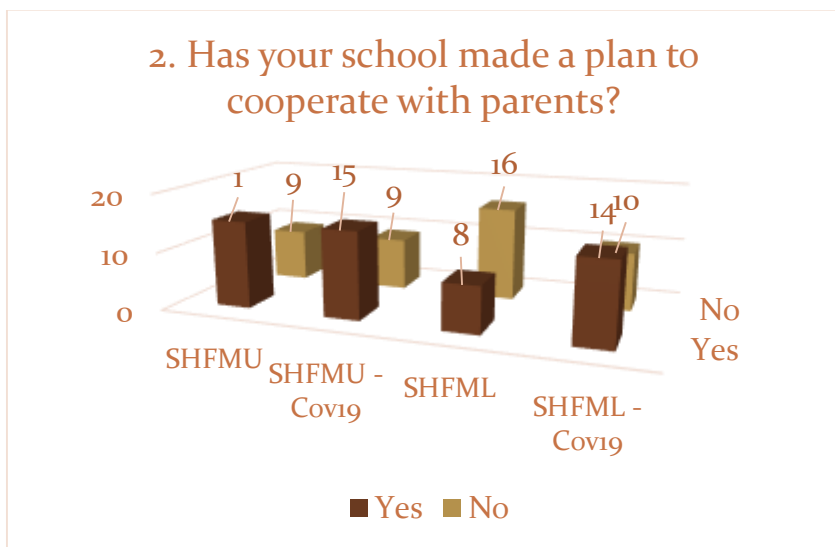
For the analysis of qualitative data, a thematic analysis was applied in interpreting the data (Matthews & Ross, 2010) of the interviews with school principals and parents. The qualitative method was analyzed through speech and without numerical operations by analyzing the data collected verbally, whereas the

quantitative data were collected as numerical data and analyzed using mathematical methods. (Vogrinc & Saqipi, 2020)

Results

The results of the study are based on the data collected through the planning and implementation of questionnaires with teachers for both variables. The dependent variable: student success and behavior and the independent variable: planning collaboration and forms of communication between school and family.

From the data it was understood that students' success depends on cooperation between school and family through various forms of communication. The results showed that schools do not have a plan for cooperation with parents and that direct forms of communication with parents have a greater impact on advancing the partnership between the school and parents before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of this analysis also show that there is more partnership between school and parents at the junior high school level compared to the senior high school before and during the Covid-19 pandemic because students have managed to be more cooperative, with better socio-emotional behavior and more focused on learning since meetings were held, whereas in high school there was no change as no meetings were held between parents and teachers.



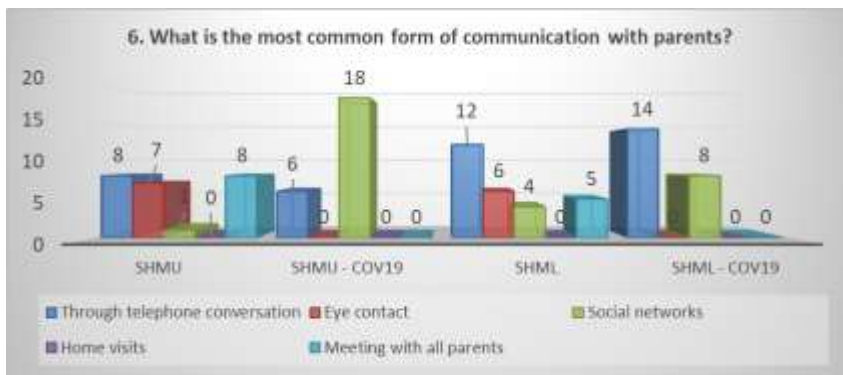
Graph 1. Has your school done a plan for the partnership with parents prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic?

		SHMU_Has_your_school_made_a_cooperation_plan_prior_to_Covid19_2.1.1	SHML_Has_your_school_made_a_cooperation_plan_prior_to_Covid19_2.1.1	SHMU_Has_your_school_made_a_cooperation_plan_during_Covid19_2.1	SHML_Has_your_school_made_a_cooperation_plan_during_Covid19_2.1
N	Valid	24	24	24	24
	Missing	97	97	97	97
Mean		1.38	1.67	1.38	1.42
Median		1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00
Mode		1	2	1	1

Table 1. Statistics: Has your school made a plan for partnership with parents prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic?

From the data it is understood that the average of the planned partnership between school and family has not changed in the junior high schools before the time of the pandemic and during the time of the Covid19 pandemic, where 62% of teachers

have indicated if there is a plan for cooperation between school and family; meanwhile in the senior high schools it is noticed there is a difference at the average of planned partnership before the pandemic and during the pandemic since the highest percentage (66%) of the teachers indicated that schools did not have a plan for partnership before the pandemics but 58% of the teachers indicated that their school had a plan for partnership with parents during the pandemic. The following answers to the research question RQ1 were given; that the junior high schools had a stable plan for partnership with parents before and during the pandemic. Also, based on the teachers' answers, the answer given to RQ3 was that junior high schools were and are more stable in terms of planning partnership with parents before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

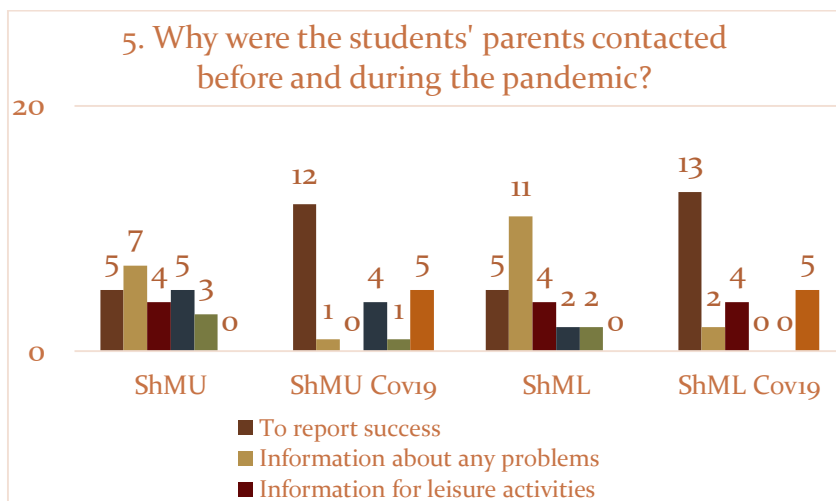


Graph 2. What is the most common form of communication with parents before and during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Based on the responses of junior high school teachers, it is found that they mainly have direct meetings with parents because before the pandemic, 29% of them had individual face-to-face meetings and 33% of them had meetings with parents, whereas in pandemic times meetings were not allowed. It is

found that direct cooperation with parents was to a large extent, where 100% have communicated by phone and through social networks. Senior high schools differ in the partnership before and during the Covid-19 pandemic but the main cooperation of the teachers with parents through social networks is found to be 66% before the pandemic, 91% during the pandemic, and 9% wrote that they did not have any parent meetings.

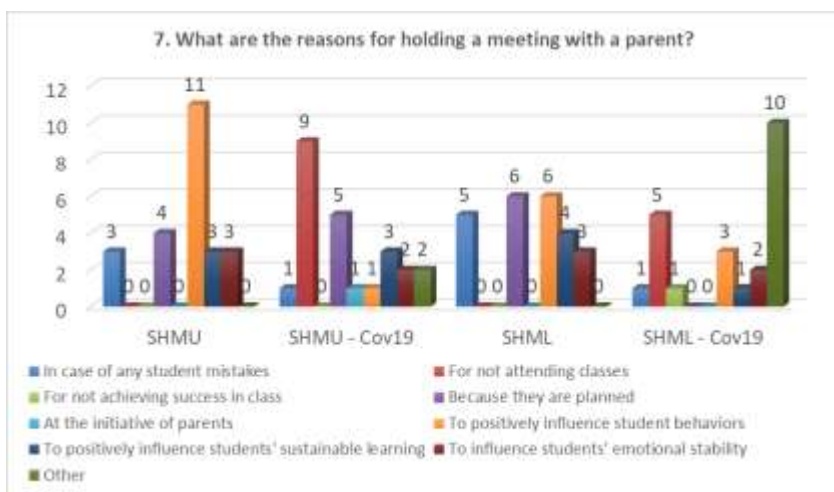
According to the answers of junior high school teachers, it is understood that the form of individual direct communication and the meetings with parents are more frequent and more effective for achieving student success. Also, it responds to the question RQ2 that the form of direct communication with parents has a greater impact on advancing the partnership between school and parents before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Graph 3. Why were the students' parents contacted before the pandemic and during the Covid-19 pandemic?

From the data it is understood that the junior high school contacts the parents in order to report success, informing them about any problems of the children, informing about free activities and artistic programs as well as to make decisions together with the parents, whereas at the time of the pandemic the largest percentage of teachers contacted parents to report success, holding scheduled meetings, and making joint decisions to help children.

Senior high schools with a higher percentage of teachers have indicated that they contact parents in order to inform them about any problems that their children have caused, while in the time of the pandemic they mainly contacted them to report the success achieved by the children.

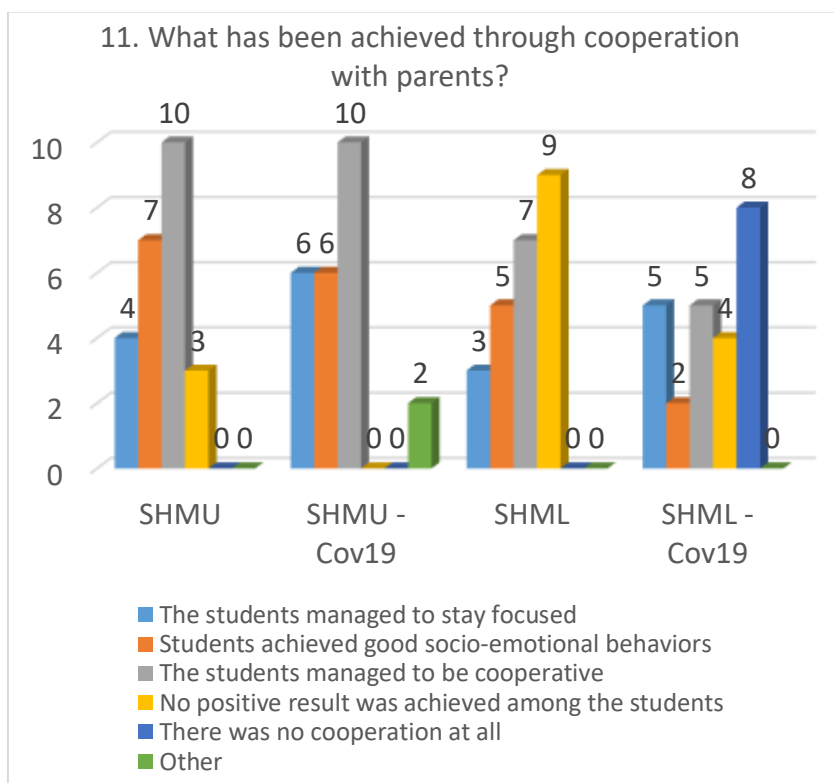


Graph 4. What are the reasons of meeting the parents, before and during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The highest percentage of junior high school teachers' responses indicate that before the pandemic, the reasons for having a meeting with parents are to positively influence student's behavior, whereas during the pandemic for the

inclusion of students in classes since they did not have much information about this form of learning and that they have had various problems with technology.

From the answers of the senior high school teachers before the pandemic it is found that they did not have a cooperation plan (also based on graph 1) as the answers are very different. We find the same percentage in the answers before the pandemic that the reasons for having meetings with parents were 25% because they had been scheduled in a plan and 25% to positively influence students' behaviors. The largest percentage of the teachers' responses which were written indicated that during the Covid-19 pandemic they did not meet with parents at all or did not have a caregiver class so they did not have the responsibility of communicating with parents. The answers given to RQ3 established more partnership between schools and parents at junior high school level compared to senior high schools before and during the Covid-19 pandemic?



Graph 5. What has been achieved through cooperation with parents before and during the Covid-19?

According to the data obtained from the teachers' answers, it is understood that through cooperation with parents before the pandemic and during the pandemic in junior high school, students have managed to be cooperative, have better socio-emotional behaviors and are more focused. Meanwhile, senior high school teachers show that no positive result has been achieved through cooperation, students have not managed to be cooperative and have not achieved good socio-emotional behaviors. At the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, the largest percentage of teachers indicated that there was no cooperation at

all between teachers and parents, and students failed to be cooperative, to be focused on learning and to achieve positive learning outcomes.

Through data from the teachers' responses it is possible to answer RQ5 that if there is trustful cooperation between parents and teachers, junior high school students manage to be more cooperative with good socio-emotional behavior and more focused on learning. This is not the case in senior high school where there is not much cooperation between school and family, students do not achieve less positive learning outcomes, fail to be cooperative and do not have good socio-emotional behaviors.

Initial topic	What is your plan to realize the partnership with parents?	Which forms of partnership do prefer parents of your school?	Which meetings are more effective and have positive results according to your experience?
INT1,2 With directors M.U.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four meetings: 2 in the first term and 2 in the second one. - We arrange meetings if needed. - Meetings are initiated by the parents' council. - Meetings are initiated by the students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents want speaking on the phone. - Parents want to communicate through social network. - Parents who have successful children prefer face-to-face meetings. - Parents who have troubled children prefer the phone. - Parents of troubled children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through direct meetings. Face-to-face meetings: - Problems are solved more easily. - Parents are convinced for a better cooperation.

School-family cooperation through different forms of communication in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic

		do not come to school.	
INT3,4 With directors M.L.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a plan but it is difficult to realize it. - Parents do not have any concern. - By regulation: we have 4 meetings a year. - The director has a special plan but it is difficult to implement because there is no concern from the parents. - The class tutor has a special plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indirect forms with telephone. - They prefer individual meetings rather than group meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct meetings. - Individual meetings, not group meetings.
INT 1,2 With parents M.U.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no specific plan, but we know we will have at least four meetings a year. - The class tutor did not tell us about the specific plan, but indicated that we will have 4 meetings in a year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct face-to-face meetings with the class tutor. - The phone is good just to get information and not for discussing the problem. - Social networks create misunderstanding between parent and teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct meetings bring more positive results. - Direct meetings leave less space for misunderstandings. - Face-to-face meetings are more serious. - Direct meetings show mutual respect.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There may be a plan but we are not informed. - Meetings are held according to the regulations. 		
INT 3,4 With parents M.L.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no specific plan. - They have never mentioned the partnership plan. - There are unplanned meetings. - Meetings are held neglectfully. -We have not been invited in the meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct meetings with the tutor or school principal. - Child-parent-teacher meetings. - Individual meetings and not appraisal in front of other parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face meetings with the class tutor. - Joint meetings with the principal, class tutor and children. - Meetings in school spaces.

Table 2. Interviews with directors and parents on the partnership between the school and the parents before the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the data obtained from the results of interviews with school principals and chairmen of parents' councils, it is found that meetings are held 4 times a year in junior high schools whereas in senior high schools no meetings are held or they are organized "neglectfully". Parents' council chairpersons also say that direct individual meetings with the class tutor or school principal are more effective in advancing the partnership because problems are more easily resolved and parents are more convinced of the cooperation but not much is

achieved in this form. Also, the chairmen of the parents' councils state that direct meetings bring more positive results in the partnership; they leave less space for misunderstandings and are more serious, and make achieving mutual respect possible. Parents prefer individual meetings rather than being criticized in front of other parents in group meetings stating that they are willing to meet with teachers and discuss certain issues.

According to the principals' responses, it is understood that schools do not have a specific plan for partnership with parents other than the four regular meetings scheduled for reporting students' success. It corresponds to RQ1 that schools do not have a plan for cooperation with parents.

According to the answers of the chairmen of parents' councils, the direct individual meetings have a more positive impact on the parents and students. By this we give the answer to RQ2 that direct forms of communication with parents have a greater impact on advancing the partnership between the school and parents.

In addition, the data collected through the interview with principals and chairmen of parents' councils provide an answer to RQ4. The application of appropriate forms of communication such as direct individual parent-teacher meetings have a positive impact on the school-family partnership because parents can discuss certain issues leaving no space for misunderstandings and achieving many positive outcomes for students.

Discussions

Parents must be motivated by the school to be actively involved in cooperation in order to achieve a good partnership and make decisions to build a success with special emphasis on their children's development. (Omerdić & Ridić, 2017) Schools and parents need to be actively involved in this process and

encourage each other to get involved. Support, cooperation through different forms of communication in junior and senior high schools before and during the pandemic Covid-19 were assessed using a questionnaire with the same questions and the same teachers before and during the pandemic as well as a semi-structured interview with the principals of the four schools and chairpersons of parents' councils. The analyzes based on the obtained results show that if we want to develop and nurture family and school partnerships, we need to involve parents more in school life, involve them in decision-making about their children, and respect their opinions about the children. Engaging parents with children through activities and the use of technology has had a positive impact on facilitating children's work, overcoming difficulties and insecurities, so interactive and technology learning can be applied to monitor, to measure and organize the work of students and teachers. (Bhamani, Shelina et al, 2020) Schools should create ways in which they can attract parents to be actively involved in school life. According to the quantitative analysis through questionnaires conducted with teachers and according to the answers of the principals through the interviews that were included in the research, the data show that parents are not invited to cooperate in school because the school does not have a special plan for cooperation with parents except four scheduled meetings for reporting on students' success, so all research questions are validated. From the teachers' responses which are presented in Graph 2, it is understood that the junior high schools have applied more direct communication through individual meetings and meetings with all parents whereas senior high schools in Graph 2 and Graph 4 show that they have not held any meetings with parents, or have applied mainly indirect communication mainly through social networks, Viber and telephone. But, during the pandemic both schools have applied indirect communication through the

phone, Viber, Zoom, Google meet, so we get answers for RQ2 that direct forms of communication with parents have a greater impact on advancing the partnership between schools and parents before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. We define the response for RQ3 that there is better partnership between schools and parents at junior high school level than senior high school level before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the answers of the teachers in Graph 1 and the answers of the parents in Table 2, we understand that schools do not have a cooperation plan, however according to the answers of the principals in Table 2 it is understood that schools have a plan but it is difficult to implement as parents are not interested in cooperation. Therefore, we answer RQ1 that schools do not have a proper plan for cooperation with parents.

According to the data in Graph 4, the responses of junior high school teachers before the pandemic show that the reasons for having meeting with parents were to positively influence students' behavior, whereas during the pandemic the meetings were held mainly for purposes of involving students in class after they had had various problems. Senior high school teachers before the pandemic held meetings mainly because they were planned and to positively influence students' behavior whereas during the pandemic it is found that the largest percentage of teacher responses who responded by writing their thoughts to the option 'other' did not hold any parent meetings or they were not class tutors so they did not feel responsible for communicating with parents. The answer to RQ3 is, therefore, that there is more partnership between schools and parents at the junior high school level than at senior high school level before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The RQ4 was answered from Table 2 through interviews with principals and parents that family school cooperation through the application of appropriate forms of communication

such as direct individual meetings between parents and teacher have a positive impact on school-family partnership because parents can discuss certain issues leaving no space for misunderstandings and achieve positive outcomes for students.

The data obtained from the teachers responses in Graph 5 provide an answer to RQ5, i.e. that there is cooperation between parents and teachers of junior high schools, and students manage to be more cooperative, with good socio-emotional behaviors and more focused on learning. However, it is understood that in senior high schools there is no cooperation between school and family and students do not achieve positive results in learning and fail to be cooperative and have good socio-emotional behaviors since proper school-family cooperation is lacking. In addition, from Graph 4 we get answers for RQ5 that there is no school-family cooperation as teachers have shown that they have not held any meetings with parents or have not been engaged as class tutors.

Children whose parents are active in their involvement in school, attend school regularly, have good behaviors, are socialized with other children, achieve better success and are more cooperative with each other. (Fraser-Thill, 2020) Based on other studies, it is understood that students have great academic achievements if parents manage to be actively involved and supported by school teachers for good cooperation in the educational process of their children (Mora & Escardíbul, 2016)

Therefore, further research and studies are needed relating to the planning and school-family collaboration through various forms of communication for the development of students of all ages.

Conclusions and recommendations

Through theoretical data from various authors and practical data from the responses of teachers, directors and chairpersons of parents' councils, it is concluded that proper and sustainable success, good socio-emotional behaviors, cooperation between students cannot be achieved without a collaboration of the school with the parents through various forms of communication. The school should keep parents as close as possible by providing information about the orientation of students towards the goal of learning through activities relating to the facilitation and acquisition of student learning. Parental support and active involvement in school is important for achieving a positive school atmosphere and building self-confidence in students' academic achievement. Therefore, a planned process of communication and partnership with parents would significantly help students in their sustainable learning.

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The 'new' invisible Landscapes of Covid-19

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Abstract

The landscape is the result of the relationship between the perception of a subject and an object. Such phenomena, in times of Covid-19, assume a new 'invisible' form, where the microscopic dimension re-orientates our way of using the space, influencing a consolidated idea of the landscape. Everywhere, at the first alarm, some form of self-protection will be triggered, making the 'ordinary' landscapes uncomfortable and potentially dangerous. However, there is also something positive in this unforeseen critical period. It is the emergence of territories able to play an antagonistic role in the spread of coronavirus. Spaces that were more marginalized territorial forms can now assume a unique, central role. The residual and enclosed space of large metropolitan areas appears as the centre of a new landscape design hypothesis, where new grounds impose themselves as antagonists to the dynamics that represent the crisis of our territories.

Keywords: Landscape; density; pollution; residual and enclosed open space; landscape design.

Introduction

In the extraordinary and recent popularity and also contradiction that accompanies the concept of "landscape", a fixed point is undoubtedly represented by the clarity that establishes the origin of this phenomenon. In fact, despite vast differences in the

way they understand its nature, meaning and purpose, most of the authors agree that the landscape is constituted by the relationship between a subject who perceives, feels and imagines, and an object (Roger, 1997; Jacob, 2008; D'Angelo, 2010).

For this reason, there is a line of research that reflects on the relationship between landscape and psyche, as a further extension of this complex concept. The Italian epistemologist Silvano Tagliagambe (2018) well described the theoretical nature of the space where this phenomenon develops. The landscape appears in "an intermediate area between exteriority and interiority that is inhabited by the balances and tensions between the physical space and the psychic universe. This is a sort of interactive field in which the outside enters in our perception and imagination which, in turn, penetrates in the landscape. For this reason, with an effective neologism, we can say that the landscape, which is 'environment, horizon, space, soil, territory', becomes mindscape, 'landscape of the mind', in the process of mutual influence and dependence. This process makes the scene in which we live not limited to a rigid and stereotyped series of stimuli producing only a restricted repertoire of standardized responses, but as something extended, where the exploration of an infinite series of possibilities can be combined in an infinite series of places in the psyche" (p. 15).

This is a perspective, shared with many scholars, that makes evident how everyone owns more experiences, part of each background that can be emotionally reactivated through a place or an object. Every time we are in front of something somehow stimulating, this process produces a change in the nature of our perception, giving freedom to our subjectivity. In these cases, which involve the landscape in an extended way, "our relationship with the object will have changed both the object and ourselves forever" (Lingiardi, 2017, p. 181). Under

those circumstances, it is clear that when we mention something related to a particular landscape, we always have to consider that we are talking about a sublimated reality, which everyone sees in a different and personal way.

From this reflection appears the complexity that underlies every definition and reasoning about landscape, for this reason, it is interesting analysing the role of a virus, as the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, questioning if it can represent the genesis of a 'new' landscape as well as discussing its possible effects or generative role on the existing 'ordinary' landscape. Correspondingly, another question is how this phenomenon can redirect the course of our territories in crisis and their design.

In front of a 'new, invisible' landscape

The worldwide spread of Covid-19 pandemic disease between December 2019 and January 2020 produced and will continue to generate a series of consequences of such magnitude that today it is impossible to think, understand and comment extensively and coherently. However, it is not unreasonable to make some considerations about the impact that the virus may have about a concept like the landscape. This is true considering that the virus introduces a new way of looking at reality and forces us to reconsider the existing reality from a new perspective.

Although there have been several pandemics during the last century, for sure Covid-19 has only one precedent, the 1918 'Spanish flu', in terms of diffusion, gravity, and social and economic implications. Since that time, people did not experience in such a universal, and obsessive way recalls to stay at home, use facial masks, keep social distancing, and worries about the severe economic impact. Such a scenario has been re-proposed only a century later, when the memory of the previous

one had almost disappeared, revealing many similarities and analogies (Hershberger, 2020).

In any case, the fact that should be stressed is that in the last months, on a worldwide scale, people have been able to realize the presence of a small enemy, invisible but intrusive, capable of influencing our habits and our way of inhabiting any space. As a result, the perception of a microscopic universe is now widespread, a universe which is invisible, dangerous, extremely effective in impacting and modifying our behaviour. Nowadays we are experiencing an active phase of diffusion of the virus, its presence is recognizable, and its dangerousness can be felt in many ways: for this reason, we have all concentrated on adopting measures to protect ourselves and others. Under those circumstances, it is difficult to speak of the manifestation of a 'new' landscape. Although it may already exist, its presence will be even more evident at the end of the pandemic, when the world will find a new 'normality'. At that time, the humanity will be immersed in a 'new' invisible but recognized and recognizable landscape, ready to manifest itself in the riskiest conditions, activated by our memory, following the resurgence of the emotions that have accompanied our lives during the pandemic period.

The seriousness of the current critical situation makes it clear that this memory will not be destined to disappear quickly, remaining latent for a long time, inevitably competing with the remembrances of the 'ordinary' landscapes. By all means, it can be supported with reasonable certainty that humanity will face a period of unexpected duration where the microscopic dimension will re-orient our way of inhabiting space, profoundly influencing the system of relations on which a consolidated image of the landscape has been based.

The gathering places in crisis

The well-known drawings and words of Louis I. Kahn on 'the room, the street and human agreement' (1971) help to understand and make clear how the invisibility of the post-Covid-19 landscape can change the way of living and perceiving every space. Starting from the room, the basic unit of architecture, up to the street, to the city, the potential or imaginable presence of viruses, bacteria, or other carriers of diseases, will redetermine our approach to each place and the public life, modifying our behaviour. The pandemic puts in crisis the most ancient ways of dwelling and awakens the provocations of the utopia that has always accompanied periods of revision and crisis. The 1965 metaphor of the Un-House by Reyner Banham and François Dallegret, a concept for Transportable Standard-of-Living Package included in the article "A Home is not a House" stimulates some interesting reflections. The hypothesis of a completely isolated life in an individual-based microcosm, as well as a close relationship with technology, is something that has never fully materialized: despite this, it assumes a critical meaning because of the Covid-19. During the lockdown, humanity experienced self-isolation, with many difficulties from the psychological, and emotional point of view, entrusting technology with the possibility to continue some 'normal' activities.

The previous reflection makes evident that the invisible dimension could, therefore, orient two strongly negative attitudes. In the first place, moving people away from conventional or less conventional collective spaces, and second, at extremes, producing phenomena of self-isolation and technological alienation.

Also, after the epidemy, always and everywhere, at the first alarm, our memory will be activated, and some form of self-protection will be triggered. The spaces of congestion, including

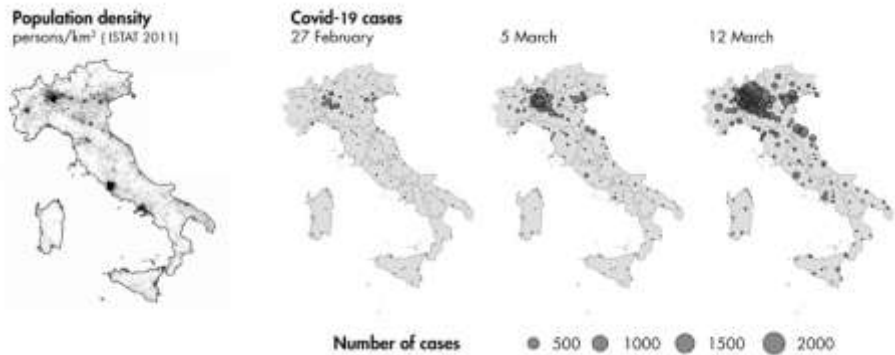
the places of globalization, will become the image of a universe where we should move with particular caution, paying utmost attention to preserving intact a lifebuoy, shield of our individuality.

Many places will no longer be perceived positively but as insecure. New fragilities will arise, which will involve particular forms of space and figures of the landscape that had imposed themselves as dominant, whose remains will indelibly mark our territories.

These effects are not only to be evaluated in negative terms but must be understood in relation to the current condition of urbanity and in a design perspective essential to reduce the possibility of risk. In this sense, it is interesting to explore some forms of a possible relationship between urbanization and infrastructure conditions, triggering factors responsible for the origins and the spread of pandemics, also looking for the way forward.

Urban condition, density, coronavirus spread and disease

The Italian case reflects a condition where it is possible to identify some relationship between higher density areas and the spread of covid-19. Comparing the map of population density with that of the virus spread at the beginning of the pandemic shows an exact correspondence between the most densely inhabited regions and the number of cases (fig. 01).



*Fig. 01 - Relationship between population density and covid-19 spread
(elaboration by the author)*

This condition certainly depends on the concentration of more population in the densest areas but is also influenced by some variables related to the character of the urbanization, and multiple geo-environmental determinants.

Several studies, among those recently published following the spread of the new coronavirus, clearly show the existing relationship between density, urban concentration, pollution and virus diffusion. The research of Mario Coccia (2020) is particularly relevant as it focuses on the Italian case and shows not only the importance of the relationship between population density and diffusion, but also reveals how “the accelerated and vast diffusion of COVID-19 in North Italy has a high association with air pollution of cities measured with days exceeding the limits set for PM10 or ozone”. The same study also clarifies how this situation is made even worse by the geographical condition where the pollution is associated to “low wind speed, a high percentage of moisture and number of fog days, that seem to have an environment that fosters a fast transmission dynamics of viral infectivity in society”. The findings of this and other papers also reveal the “importance of future improvement of air quality

in the area [Milanese region], according to the European Community standards in order to increase people's immunity to severe viral infections like coronaviruses are" (Zoran et al., 2020). Such necessity depends on scientific evidence that demonstrates how the "chronic exposure to PM 2.5 causes alveolar ACE-2 receptor overexpression. This may increase viral load in patients exposed to pollutants, in turn, depleting ACE-2 receptors and impairing host defences. High atmospheric NO₂ may provide a second hit causing a severe form of SARS-CoV-2 in ACE-2 depleted lungs resulting in a worse outcome" (Frontera et al., 2020).

With this in mind, it is easy to understand how these criticalities deal with a plurality of urban and socio-spatial implications (Bray, 2020; Salama, 2020). By all means, also considering the difficulty of objective analysis for an on-going pandemic, it appears obvious that viruses, bacteria, and other disease diffusers, will be significantly determining in re-orienting the project of the city, the territory and the landscape in the next years. This realistic hypothesis also confirms how we are facing the existence of the 'new invisible landscape' previously described, with all its implications: material and immaterial; visible and invisible; social and economic.

Spatial legacy of Covid-19 diffusion

The consequences of the emergence of this new phenomenon are not yet predictable with certainty. Indeed, they will depend on the evolution of the pandemic and the reaction of people. In any case, there will be several critical issues that could affect some places and types of spaces. It is the case of all the concentration places such as commercial malls, markets, meeting spaces such as cinemas and theatres, gyms, swimming pools, sports arenas, but also bars, pubs, restaurants; as well as nodal points, like

hubs, terminals and stations, and of course all the means of transport that move along public transport networks. People will undoubtedly continue to frequent these places, but at the announcement of the arrival of any form of flu, at the first sneeze or cough, the memory will be activated, and the way of perceiving their safety and comfort will change immediately. For this reason, it can be assumed a mutation of these types towards more open models, which include direct and immediate contact with the exterior for a better natural air refreshment.

This framework appears quite apparent and, although it offers an impression of uncertainty and negativity, it does not bring only negative consequences. As a matter of fact, the mutation of the way of using the mega-spaces of concentration and globalization, to which we have been accustomed in recent decades, could correspond to a revaluation of some more traditional forms of urban space. It is not easy, however, to make predictions in this sense. The unpredictability and habits acquired by people offer too many components that play for or against this hypothesis.

Conversely, what must change, at the expense of our own survival, is the relationship between the densely populated areas, large conurbations, sprawl territories, infrastructure networks and open spaces. Here it is essential to build biodiversity and provide new environments that can help resolve an impressive range of environmental imbalances.

Of course, this action also corresponds to a reversal of perspective that will perhaps bring to the revaluation of individual spaces of introspection between man and nature. A result that could have the not irrelevant advantage of reducing the dependence on the spaces of concentration and intensification. Moreover, forms of non-places (Augé, 1992) realized in recent decades, at the expense of vital environmental

resources, like the soil, and other environmental infrastructure, which design and protect, are now more necessary than ever.

A closer look to the Milanese region

Observing the density of the Milanese metropolitan region (fig. 2) and focusing the attention on the open space system, especially in proximity of the conurbations, means concentrating on a collection of fragments, the importance of which is now vital in the emergence of these new 'invisible landscapes'.

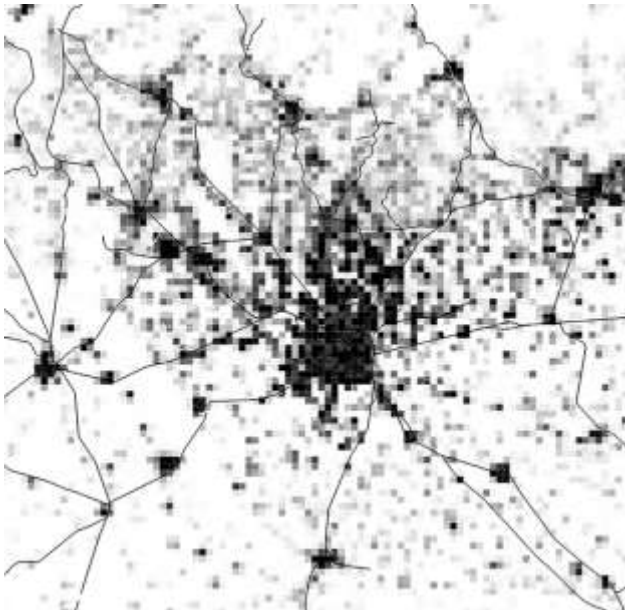


Fig. 02 – Urban density in the Milanese region (elaboration by the author)

These are residual open spaces, in part still active for agricultural production, fragmented and without evident environmental and aesthetic qualities. Their condition depends

on the unpredictability of the city's development dynamics concerning the economy and, more recently, from the legislative attempt to reduce land consumption.

The reality is a constellation of residual scraps, plots that miraculously survived processes of urbanization that seemed unstoppable, fragile areas, for their intrinsic condition and a set of economic, social and cultural problems. But at the same time, there will be privileged areas of redemption, constituting the only resources that the city can rely on to improve its resilience.

It is evident how those spaces can be meaningfully transformed into places and environments in which to experiment solutions aimed at reducing the pollution and creating biodiversity, as well as a reserve of green space for new forms of individual recreation. One can glimpse a future for these spaces in which they become resilient landscapes that will grow up as a response to the emergence of the 'invisible landscape'. Representation of territories able to play an antagonistic role in the spread of coronavirus. Spaces that until a few days ago were uncertain territorial forms, that now can re-assume a unique, central role. Open fields for new territorial networks, capable of reconstructing the biodiversity, providing ecosystem services and imposing themselves as significant spatial devices.

Residual open spaces as new landscapes

It appears that the new "invisible landscape" of Covid-19 has the strength to increase or improve the collective consciousnesses towards a greater awareness of environmental problems and their weight in ensuring the habitability of our planet.

This process requires a reversing course by a global society that has lost the ability to take care of and develop a fondness for the earth, its forms, its materials and its balance. The hope is that

this awareness will be translated into the desire to imprint a recognizable quality to the available forgotten, or misused resources. As architects, it brings forth the features of an experimental design program for the network of spaces of the proximity of our cities. It is a project based on the desire to combine environmental quality with beauty and a meaningful narrative plot, capable of stimulating every possible form of affection with space. Only in this way will it be possible to build new landscapes, capable of fostering a new individual and intimate relationship with our land, its shapes and its ecosystem. This vision should happen following a logic of degrowth, antagonistic to the dynamics of concentration and globalization (Latouche, 2017).

It is a process that requires reconsidering some indispensable components of the environment, as well as new strategies and introducing new figures of the landscape design, capable of responding the complexity and the contradictions of our age: the Anthropocene (Tsing et al., 2017).

The first component on which it is essential to make an observation is the soil. It is a vital infrastructure (Pavia, 2019) that regulates most of the essential mechanisms of the planet and guarantees the resources we need for survival. For this reason, it is unbearable that, especially in the densest territories, soil and sub-soil appear mortified by consumption and exploitation. Their nature is flawed, and their value reduced, lacking any form of complexity and narrative potential. At the same time, their airtightness reveals some precious relics as well as unexpected meanings that are still able to reveal some traits of the original complexity and offer an interpretative key capable of orienting new visions.

This particular interest for the soil should be combined with a reflection on another indispensable element for survival, water. The role of this matter must be rethought entirely, from

its cycle to its infrastructure (Oldani, 2020). To have an initial idea, suffice to think about the abundance that could represent the waterways buried under our cities concerning the management of the effects of climate change.

The theme of water, combined with soil, also speaks to us, however, of a procedure, that of depaving. This practice, born in an experimental and demonstrative context (Register, 2003), is slowly becoming part of the agenda of all the most virtuous cities. It is, therefore, necessary to dig, in a physical and metaphorical sense. Give backspace to the water in order to make itself running, filtering, and collecting. To make its vectors re-emerge from the ground and build around it a new identity of urban and peri-urban open spaces. The genetic code of a new landscape resides in the dense palimpsest of the soil and its redesign through the cross-section.

The scenario introduced cannot be compelling without rethinking the current way of intending agriculture. During the last seventy years, increased mechanisation, the spread of intensive forms of land use, monoculture, and extensive use of chemical substances have precipitated the quality of the rural landscape, and many of its original features have disappeared. Today, it is fundamental to reduce the land rush due to the ever-decreasing availability of fields, and to re-balance the quantity of ground given to agriculture and that one that is indispensable and vital to ensure biodiversity and life. In this sense, it becomes essential to think about new forms of agriculture, able to compensate for the increasing scarcity of soil and to protect the environment and its balance better, also recurring to technology, construction and innovation (Waldheim, 2010; Koolhaas, 2020).

Any effort to rethink the peri-urban territory in an ecological direction requires giving a predominant role to vegetation. In this sense, it is essential to abandon some consolidated forms of land-use in favour of more invention

(Gandy et al., 2020). The reorganisation will therefore have to be based on a variegated pattern, which includes some areas in which to experiment on wilderness, developing some techniques for the conscious displacement of high de-anthropized areas.

It seems almost obvious that this process requires a notable trend of change, which also includes some substantial renunciations. In addition to the already mentioned need to reorganise and modernise agricultural activity in a more sustainable way, there is also the need to demolish some urban and peri-urban strata, in search of lost land, and more convincing forms of urbanity. It is the case of many industrial, tertiary and commercial areas that are underutilised, degraded and abandoned. Nevertheless, this is the case of infrastructures whose design can be varied, improved and integrated, taking advantage of the great opportunity offered by a now obsolete allocation that needs intensive maintenance and that in some cases can be rethought more coherently with the needs of an environment in severe crisis.

Conclusions

The traced path allows us to summarise some substantial issues and formulate some conclusive considerations.

It is clear how the advent of the pandemic has led to the emergence of a new landscape. This phenomenon is an unexpected event, with an imperceptible power, that is demonstrating itself capable of destabilising the remains of an already fragile cultural, social, and economic framework. It is a process happening in a context characterised by an evident weakness, not only in the low resilience of the forms of the city and the public space but also and in a lacking political interest for the environment, considered as a complex, fragile and already ruined ecosystem.

It is paradoxical and destabilising that Covid-19 pandemic appeared almost at the climax of an on-going ecological-environmental crisis, whose effects are now visible, despite not fully recognised by politics and society. There is, in fact, a tendency to deny the existence of the problem and to consider the environment as something separate from life in general, continuing to preserve the arrogant right for unsustainable social and collective practices associated with a lifestyle that is the most natural fruit of capitalism and consumerism.

For this reason, the gravity of the situation we are experiencing every day must not be exhausted in the illusion that everything will go back to the way it was before because it is precisely those conditions that represent the trigger mechanism for the form of fragility we are facing now.

This contrast opens up a design hope (Maldonado, 1970), which can be summed up in the awareness of being able to bend events in favour of real progress, capable of recognising the points around which to build a project of differences, prefiguring an environment, and a society capable of responding to the present and future crises. The path described in the paper interprets this necessity, concerning a plural theme such as the landscape, placing a discourse that must naturally be not only a political-social programme but also a common intent and a manifesto of interdisciplinary dialogue.

The invisible landscape generated by Covid-19 will thus find an antidote capable of awakening interest in the ruins of the contemporary world around which our existence unfolds.

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Coronavirus-inspired Metaphors in Political Discourse

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Abstract

In the face of the great danger posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, political leaders worldwide, speaking from a position of authority, delivered carefully crafted televised speeches and press conferences, intended to inform the public about the pandemic, its implications and the preventive restrictions they were imposing. The main objective of this paper is to investigate how politicians used language, particularly metaphors, when talking about and interpreting the newly created situation with the Covid-19 pandemic. For the purposes of this study a corpus was compiled of coronavirus-related speeches delivered by several key world political figures – Boris Johnson, Donald Trump, Angela Merkel, and Emanuel Macron. The speeches were delivered on a timeline from March to May 2020, i.e. the period that saw the inception, the peak and the gradual withdrawal of the first ‘wave’ of the coronavirus in Europe and the United States. A contrastive analysis of the speeches was carried out in order to detect similarities and differences in the use of metaphors on the part of the politicians, at the three specific time points of the pandemic’s trajectory. The final aim

was to ascertain whether any correlation existed between the use of metaphoric language and the outcome of the pandemic, i.e. how people reacted and whether they followed the politicians' instructions and recommendations. The analysis showed that a range of different metaphors permeated the analysed political speeches; however, the war metaphor presenting the pandemic as a fight against a deadly and invisible enemy was the most persistent one. The usage of war metaphor was particularly frequent during the peak of the pandemic but the results suggests that it had no real bearing on the outcome of the pandemic, i.e. people's response to politicians' calls for caution and obedience to the preventative measures.

Keywords: *Covid-19, politicians, speeches, metaphors, persuasive effect*

Introduction

In times of great distress, like the Covid-19 pandemic, people try to find reassurance, guidance and comfort in their political leaders' words. Therefore, during such periods, heads of states, presidents and prime ministers, deliver speeches and hold press-conferences addressing the public, interpreting the situation and giving instructions for people's expected conduct. In such sensitive circumstances, politicians become very aware of the power vested in the language they use, and tend to craft their speeches with a great deal of deliberation and precision.

To increase the level of persuasion of the words they use in their political speeches, politicians resort to using figurative language very frequently. In fact, political discourse is very frequently permeated with figurative language, particularly metaphors. Research has shown that the role of metaphors in political discourse is not purely ornamental. Quite the contrary, being used to present one thing in terms of another, or in other

words, by drawing analogies between a source domain and a target domain¹, based on structure similarities of both domains, metaphors have proven, time and again, that they “play a central role in the construction of social and political reality” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.159). What this means is that, politicians use metaphors purposefully when addressing the public, as metaphors have proven very useful in construing people’s perception of the reality they live in.

The main objective of this paper is to inspect the use of a specific type of metaphors – *conceptual metaphors* (whose aim is to shape and constrain our understanding of the world) in political discourse in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which took the world utterly by surprise in December 2019 and continued to shake its very foundations throughout 2020. More precisely, a contrastive analysis aimed at identifying similarities and differences in the use of conceptual metaphors was carried out on 11 key political speeches delivered on a timeline from March to May 2020 by central political figures in Europe and the United States – Boris Johnson, Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel, and Donald Trump. Being the head of their respective states, right from the start of the coronavirus outbreak these politicians addressed their nations on multiple occasions in order to inform the public about the pandemic and its implications on the economic and social life as well as about the restrictions they were imposing in order to prevent the virus from spreading and claiming more lives. Given the horrific circumstances, with many cases of infected people and hundreds of lives being lost on a daily basis, on the one hand, and their hugely responsible

¹The terms **target** and **source domain** were introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The **target domain** is the domain that we try to understand (life, love, social structure etc.) through the use of the **source domain** (war, journey etc.).

positions, on the other hand, it was extremely interesting to observe the way in which these key political figures conceptualized the reality and put it into words, metaphorically, to make sure that their message resonates with everybody and really influences people's behaviour.

The final aim of the study is to ascertain whether any correlation can be established between the use of metaphors in political speeches and the outcome of the pandemic in the selected countries in terms of whether the political speeches had any real effect on the way people behaved during the pandemic, i.e. whether they truly obeyed the politicians' restrictions and instructions. A very clear indication of how seriously people took the politicians' orders, warnings and precautions can be found in the number of infected cases and fatalities.

Theoretical background

Cognitive metaphors

Metaphors have traditionally been studied in literature, rhetoric and linguistics, and were depicted as ornaments which decorate texts without affecting their meaning (Curticapean; 2006, p. 17), or ornaments which add a touch of aesthetical upliftment to otherwise prosaic language (Nie et al. 2016, p. 4). Aristotle originally defined the term metaphor as: "giving something a name that belongs to something else; or on the grounds of analogy ... metaphors are constituted on the basis of our ability to see the similarity in dissimilars" (in Nie, 2016, p. 5).

Cognitive linguistics "altered the status of metaphor from art to instrument, to a crucial device for the formation of concepts and the conceptualization of reality" (Gavriely-Nuri, 2009, p.155). Thus, metaphor was turned into "more than a figure of speech, it came to be viewed as a mode of thought" (Gavriely-

Nuri, 2009, p.155), which has a potential to “create social reality and guide future action” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.156).

Nowadays, it is increasingly acknowledged that metaphors shape and constrain our understanding of the world by framing it within previous knowledge structures (Bougher, 2012). Metaphors are viewed as a form of analogical reasoning which involves an intelligent transfer of knowledge across domains (Holyoak and Thagard, 1995). Hence, conceptual metaphors are viewed as a process of understanding one idea in terms of another, that is, as a set of correspondences between two conceptual domains, which are known as the source and the target domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p.4). More precisely, metaphors are effective when (a) the source domain calls to mind a salient knowledge structure (or feeling); (b) this knowledge is well known to speakers of the linguistic community; and (c) the comparison of the target to the source domain is apt in a given culture (Boroditsky, 2000; Bowdle & Gentner, 2005). In contrast, metaphors are ineffective when the source domain does not call to mind a salient structure (or emotion), when knowledge of the structure of a source domain, or its emotional connotation, has limited reach, or when the comparison of the target domain to the source domain is not apt (Flusberg et al. 2018, p.5).

Cognitive metaphors in political discourse

The fact that metaphors allow people to talk and think about complex or abstract information in terms of comparatively simple and more concrete information (Gibbs, 1994; Pinker, 2007; Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011), has helped them become ubiquitous (Geary, 2011 in Bougher, 2012, p. 147). Their presence is especially noticeable “in public discourse, particularly in political discourse” (Otieno, Owino and Attyang, 2016, p. 21).

According to Pérez López (2018, p. 2) the accurate use of metaphors in political discourse is a priceless weapon in the

arsenal of any politician, as metaphors not only enhance the message but also catch people's attention and provide a connection between what is already known to people (culture, history, etc.) and the ideology of a political party or a politician. Dittmer (1977, p. 567) claims that politicians employ metaphors to depict political events and relations as less complex and more concrete for citizens or voters. Put differently, choosing a word from our common language and using it in a metaphorical way gives the message a familiar meaning and allows politicians and journalists to move from a more abstract to a more concrete level.

The popularity of metaphors in political discourse is also attributed to the fact that it guides people's understanding and interpretation of political and social events in such a way that metaphors "stress certain details and connections while, at the same time, minimize others" (Van Teeffelen, 1994, p. 384). In fact, the clever use of metaphors in political discourse is regarded as "an ingenious strategy which controls some beliefs and ideologies over the prejudice of others" (Lakoff, 2008, in Pérez López, 2018, p.6).

Research in metaphors used in political discourse points to an existence of many different conceptual metaphors commonly used by politicians. Thus, for instance, Vestermarck (2007) analysed the conceptual metaphors in the inaugural speeches of a number of American presidents and detected the following metaphors: the *world as a community* metaphor; the *nation as a person* metaphor, and the *nation acting as human* metaphor. In her study, she argues that the conceptual metaphors used in political discourse are highly intentional, but not always easy to detect. Wei (2001) discovered that Taiwanese political discussions were inherently and inevitably metaphorical as politicians, in order to promote their visibility and propagate their political ideologies, used a variety of metaphors, such as the *marriage* metaphor, the *show business* metaphor, the *war* metaphor, the *weather* metaphor,

the *financial transaction* metaphor, the *revenge* metaphor, and the *journey of spiritual awakening* metaphor.

Taiwo (2010) studied metaphors in Nigerian political discourse and discovered that in Nigerian political discourse the nation is conceptualized as a *family* and as a *person*. He also identified the conceptual mappings of *politics as battle*; *politics as a journey*, and *the politician as a builder*. Shahla et al. (2012) explored metaphorical expressions that made use of *body parts* and the roles they played in Persian political texts. Their findings revealed that in Persian political discourse there were fifteen body parts used in political metaphors, with the *head* metaphor being the most prominent one.

It is important to note that research, so far, has shown that *military metaphors*, or more precisely *war metaphors*, are deeply embedded in public discourse, and in political discourse in particular (Nie et. al, 2016, Flusberg, et al. 2018, etc.). One plausible reason for that is the fact that violence and warfare have been humanity's constant companions for millennia, and people in general have a clear schematic knowledge for a prototypical war and, can easily do the knowledge transfer, i.e. the mapping with any target domain which includes at least two opposing parties. Or as Flusberg et al. (2018) explain:

Many common topics of discussion resemble war. They share structural relations and can evoke similar emotions. Everything from arguments, sports, politics, and relationships to healthcare, fundamental biological phenomena (e.g. "invasive" species), and even scientific research have something in common with war. Arguments, politics, and sports, for example, are like war because they involve a conflict between opposing forces, require strategic decisions to be made about how to allocate resources, unfold over time, and have identifiable winners and losers. As a result, the domain of war can serve as an apt source domain to structure how we communicate and think about a wide range of topics. (p. 4).

War metaphors are considered appropriate in political discourse primarily because of their potential to evoke a sense of fear (Flusberg et al. 2018), which, in turn, motivates people to pay attention, change their beliefs, and take action about important social issues (Hodgkin, 1985). Thus, for instance, when the war metaphor is used in the context of a disease, it helps people recognize the threat that the disease poses to public health, and, this, in turn, leads to increased funding for research on effective treatments (Hodgkin, 1985). Critics of the war metaphor claim that it lost its original effect and strength due to overuse (Flusberg et al. 2018, p. 11); and they also 'blame' it for being misleading at best, and harmful at worst; for leading to an increased political and cultural polarization, and for putting in danger the personal and social well-being of the individual (Flusberg et al. 2018, p. 2).

Research Methodology

As it was previously mentioned, the aim of the study is to investigate the use of conceptual metaphors in political discourse in very specific and rather novel circumstances, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. To attain that aim, 11 speeches in total, delivered by several very prominent world politicians, were subjected to critical discourse analysis. The politicians shortlisted for this study were: Boris Johnson, the British Prime Minister, Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, and Emmanuel Macron, the French President, and the President of the USA, Donald Trump. The speeches of the German Chancellor and the French President were originally in French and German, respectively, but for the purposes of this study the transcripts of these speeches (translated in English) were used.

Three speeches per politician were selected and analysed², one speech delivered in March, i.e. when the pandemic saw its inception in Europe and America; one speech in April, when the curve of the pandemic reached its peak, and one speech in May, when the pandemic started to lose ground and the number of infected cases and fatalities started to drop in Europe and the States. Only in the case of the French President, there were 2 speeches analysed - one in March and one in April, as no translated transcript in English of a May speech was available online, to the best of our knowledge.

The speeches were analysed in terms of: a) *the types of conceptual metaphors* the politicians employed in their attempt to depict the pandemic and to impose a proper understanding of the crisis on the part of their respective nations; b) *the incidence with which these metaphors* appeared in politicians' speeches at the beginning of the health crisis, when the health crisis reached its peak and when the pandemic started to recede in strength; and c) *the effect the metaphorical language* used by politicians had on the actual outcome of the pandemic in the politicians' respective countries, in terms of to what extent people followed politicians' instructions and orders, of which a clear indicator is the number of infected cases and fatalities.

Bearing these in mind, the research was based on the following three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The use of conceptual metaphors, just like the curve of the virus, will gradually intensify at the time when the pandemic reaches its peak and will subsequently subside towards the end of the first 'wave' of the pandemic.

² The links to the transcripts of all speeches analysed in this study are provided in the Appendix.

Hypothesis 2: The political leaders will use a variety of metaphors in their speeches to make their speeches more effective and persuasive.

Hypothesis 3: The more present the metaphors are in the politicians' discourse, the more their speeches will influence people's behaviour and the more positive the outcome of the pandemic (fewer infected cases and fatalities) will be.

Results

The presence of conceptual metaphors in politicians' speeches

The analysis of the Covid-19-related speeches of the selected politicians reveals that they all addressed their respective nations in order to bring people up-to-date with the latest developments regarding the health crisis. More specifically, in their March speeches, the politicians were mainly discussing the restrictions they were imposing to stop the virus from spreading; in their April speeches, the accent was placed on the steps their government were taking to relieve the negative effects of the pandemic, and in their May speeches, among the other things, the politicians dwelled on their plans to ease the lockdown measures.

The first step of the analysis was to detect and separate the metaphoric utterances from the fact-based utterances. The analysis of the speeches showed that although the politicians were using predominately fact-based language, their speeches were intersected with a varying number of metaphorical utterances as well (Table 1). In addition, all four politicians delivered the longest speeches in April, i.e. at the peak of the pandemic, and used more conceptual metaphors then, than in their other two speeches (see Table 1 below).

	Total no. of words	Total no. of utterances with metaphors
Boris Johnson		
March	867	8
April	1095	10
May	889	4
Emmanuel Macron		
March	2621	14
April	3541	33
Angela Merkel		
March	1062	6
April	3591	31
May	1454	8
Donald Trump		
March	1281	9
April	2770	6
May	1952	11

Table 1. The number of metaphoric utterances in the analysed political speeches

In fact, the results show that, generally speaking, Macron and Merkel were much more inclined towards using metaphorical language, and their metaphorical language use was evidently most pronounced at the peak of the pandemic, i.e. in their April speeches. Trump and Johnson's inclination for using conceptual metaphors was considerably lower in comparison to Merkel and Macron. However, Johnson's inclination towards using conceptual metaphors is identical with the one of Macron and Merkel. He too uses metaphors mostly in

his April speech, probably, because the situation with the pandemics gets more serious in the UK at that time. Trump, on the other hand, uses much less metaphorical language in April when the pandemic reaches its peak than in March and May, i.e. than at the beginning of the pandemic and when the pandemic started so show signs of abating in Europe (see Table 1 and Chart 1). Namely, he reduces the use of metaphors at the peak of the pandemic as the focus of his April speech is put entirely on how well his administration is handling the situation and on explication of the measures they are taking. However, the evident rise in the number of metaphors in his May speech can be attributed to the fact that the President realizes that despite all the preventive measures and restrictions put in place, the situation with the pandemic is still not put entirely under control.

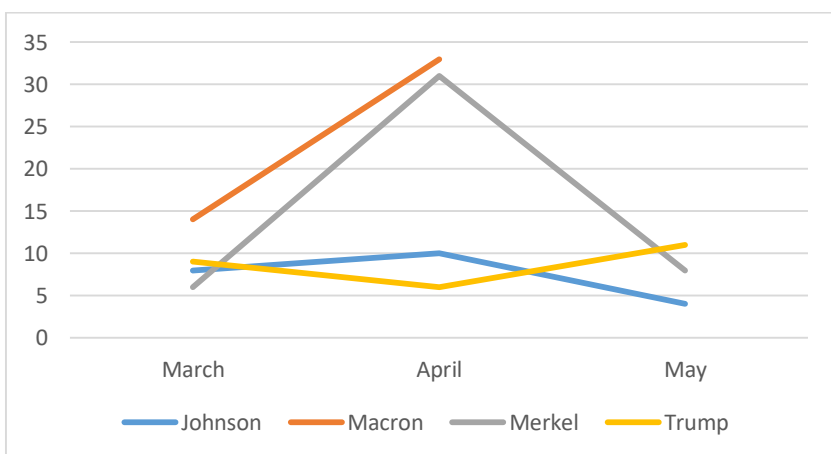


Chart 1. The use of metaphoric language in politicians' speeches

As the results show that three of the politicians use more metaphors in their speeches delivered at the peak of the pandemic, we can conclude that, in general, the overall tendency

indeed is as predicted with the first hypothesis (**Hypothesis 1:** The use of conceptual metaphors, just like the curve of the virus, will gradually intensify at the time when the pandemic reaches its peak and will subsequently subside towards the end of the first 'wave' of the pandemic.). This is a clear indication of politicians' heavy reliance on metaphors in shaping people's viewpoints and behaviour amidst the pandemic. When the stakes are truly high, the politicians wish to make a marked impression on people's perception of the severity of the situation and to persuade them to act in a specific manner. Metaphors seem to really come in handy in attaining that goal.

Types of conceptual metaphors in politicians' speeches

Regarding our second hypothesis (**Hypothesis 2:** The political leaders use *a variety of metaphors* in their speeches), we can safely state that the findings of this study confirm its validity. The Covid-19 pandemic clearly inspired politicians to use a number of distinct conceptual metaphors. More precisely, they made use of the *war metaphor*, the *journey metaphor*, the *ocean metaphor*, the *nation as human metaphor*, the *teacher metaphor*, etc.

Nevertheless, a clear predominance of the war metaphor in almost all analysed speeches is evident. Preference for the war metaphor over the other types of conceptual metaphors was particularly noticeable in Macron and Trump's speeches (Table 2 and Chart 2). Trump uses it more, both at the beginning stage of the pandemic and later on in May when the situation in America worsens.

	War metaphors	Other metaphors
Boris Johnson		
March	62.5%	37.5%
April	50%	50%
May	25%	75%
Emmanuel Macron		
March	78%	22%
April	61%	39%
Angela Merkel		
March	50%	50%
April	45%	55%
May	25%	75%
Donald Trump		
March	100%	0%
April	67%	33%
May	82%	18%

Table 2 The use of the war metaphor vs. the other types of metaphors in the analysed speeches

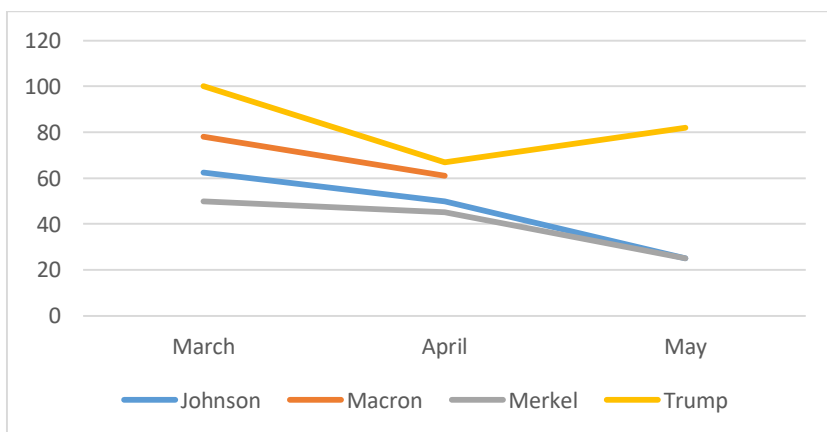


Chart 2 The use of the war metaphor in politicians' speeches

As can be seen from the results, Johnson and Merkel resorted to using the war metaphor in a more balanced way, intersecting their speeches with other types of metaphors as well. In fact, in their post-peak speeches in May, the predominance of the war metaphor is significantly reduced in their speeches and much more space is allocated to the other types of metaphors - the *journey* metaphor, the *body* metaphor, the *teacher* metaphor, the *machine* metaphor and the *servant* metaphor. This signals that as the force of the pandemic was abating, these two politicians aspired towards removing the pressure from the people by shining a different, more optimistic light on the pandemic.

The war metaphor in politicians' Covid-19 speeches

The war metaphor was built by means of vocabulary typically used in the domain of war: *to fight, to combat, to win, victory, fight, war, battle, to defeat, enemy, and frontline*, etc., now transferred in the source domain, i.e. the domain of the disease caused by the coronavirus.

Thus, the picture that the politicians create about their countries at the time of the pandemic, with the war metaphor, is one of a war zone. This is particularly true of Macron's first speech, i.e. when he announces the outbreak of the pandemic in France, and practically declares war on the pandemic. Macron acknowledges that France is 'at war' with the Covid-19 pandemic and that it 'fights' with all its resources to 'win a victory' over the virus (*We are at war, admittedly a health war: we're fighting neither an army nor another nation*). In order to amplify his war rhetoric, in his March speech, Macron repeatedly uses the same short but effective statement "*We are at war*".

Macron in both speeches depicts himself as a marshal who is at the head of a marching army, carrying his country's flag (*For my part, I will be carrying the flag for France ...; We must march on with calm and courage.*). He commends his 'soldiers' across all

army sections for their bravery and conduct; first, those “on the front line” (*Our civil servants, healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, ... on the front line are going above and beyond the call of duty to save lives and care for the sick.*); then, those who are “the second line of defence” (*Our second line of defence has been the farmers, teachers, truck-drivers, delivery people, electricians ...*), and, finally, those who are on “the third line of defence” (*And each one of us, in what I would call the third line of defence, through our civic responsibility, respect for the lockdown rules in cooperation with the police, have contributed to a flattening of the coronavirus curve*).

Macron particularly stresses the point that the ‘enemy’ i.e. the virus – is not to be underestimated and that they have to mobilize all their resources in the war against this ‘enemy’ (*But the enemy is there, invisible, elusive, and it’s making headway. And that requires our widespread mobilization.*). He also highlights the murderous nature of the virus which kills people in more ways than one way – either through infection or by means of the side effects it triggers (*...the virus is not the only thing that can kill you at this time; solitude, neglecting your health in other ways, these can be deadly too*).

In combating the outbreak, as a real army leader, Macron encourages his people to act in unison and solidarity (*I’m certain of one thing: the more quickly we act together, the more we’ll overcome this ordeal*), and in order to uphold the spirit of optimism, he reminds his people of the ‘victories’ they have won up to that point (*These last few weeks ... there have been important victories: the doubling of the number of intensive care beds ...*). In addition, he urges his ‘soldiers’ to stay vigilant and on alert as the fight is not over (*There is hope, as I have said, but the battle is a long way from being won*). He reassures them that they will prevail, but also prepares them for the new post pandemic reality (*Let’s take strong action, but let’s remember: the day after, when we’ve won, it won’t be a return to the day before*), and for the rebuilding of the country

that is ahead of them (*France must keep its financial independence and rebuild our agricultural, sanitary, industrial and technological independence*).

Johnson also gives credit to those fighting on the frontline (*I want to thank everyone who is working flat out to beat the virus, everyone from the supermarket staff to the transport workers, to the carers, to the nurses and doctors on the frontline*); calls on all his people to 'enlist' in the 'army' which is fighting against the virus (*But in this fight, we can be in no doubt that each and every one of us is directly enlisted*), and encourages the British people to fight jointly and in solidarity in order to save lives (*Each and every one of us is now obliged to join together, to halt the spread of this disease, to protect our NHS, and to save many, many thousands of lives*).

As to the war metaphor in Merkel's speeches, she also talks about Germany being under attack (*The pandemic has hit us in a time of healthy households and strong reserves*.) and the fight that the Germans are putting against it (*Because in the fight against the virus we must always bear in mind that the figures of today reflect the infections from about 10-12 days ago/ This also applies to the decision to combat the coronavirus pandemic, which is of utmost importance for the well-being of the people of this country*). Just like the other politicians, she too singles out and commends healthcare professionals for their participation in the fight against the virus (*Perhaps less seen in public, but equally crucial in the fight against the pandemic, is the role played by the public health service*), and acknowledges that they need to be fit or in proper shape, just like soldiers, in order to be able to withstand the attacks of the 'enemy' (*This is almost 400 local health authorities and if we are to manage to control and contain infection in the coming months, then we need these offices in a strong condition and I say in a stronger condition than they were before the pandemic*). To uphold this war metaphor,

she even uses weaponry-related terms (*It is about supporting our economy and raising a protective shield for workers*).

What is slightly different about her war metaphor is that the virus is not presented merely like an 'enemy' but also like an 'intruder' or 'imposter', who is holding the German people hostages and who is thus breaking their basic human rights (*We have been living with the pandemic for weeks; each of us has had to adapt our lives to the new circumstances, both privately and professionally/ The corona pandemic is a democratic imposition, because it restricts exactly what our existential rights and needs are*). She also warns her people that they should not expect their 'captivity' to be over soon, as the 'intruder' will remain with them for some time (*I understand that life under coronavirus conditions feels very very long for everyone.... We will have to live with this virus for a long time.*).

The outcome of the 'war' according to Merkel will undoubtedly be favourable for Germany and its people (*Nevertheless, we will eventually only end the coronavirus pandemic with a vaccine, at least according to everything we know about the virus today.*). Still she forewarns the Germans of the new and changed reality that awaits them after the pandemic (*It's clear that we initially can't return to everyday life as we knew it before the coronavirus. Everyday life will sometimes look different for the time being even when the current digital tracing models can be used*).

The American President, Donald Trump, also employs the war metaphor and talks about 'fighting' and 'defeating' the virus (*...we will significantly reduce the threat to our citizens and we will ultimately and expeditiously defeat this virus./ Each of us has a role to play in defeating this virus./ We are at a critical time in the fight against the virus*).

In his second and third speech, he upholds the war rhetoric and talks about the 'war' and the 'enemy' even more explicitly by using words such as 'war', 'enemy', 'fight' etc. (*Today I'd like*

to provide you with an update in our war against the coronavirus./ As we express our gratitude for these hard-fought gains however, we continue to mourn with thousands of families across the country whose loved ones have been stolen from us by the invisible enemy./ We also stand in solidarity with the thousands of Americans who are ill and waging a brave fight against the virus).

Trump particularly underlines the deadly force of the enemy, i.e. the pandemic, and the damage it has inflicted on his nation (*This global pandemic has inflicted great pain and hardship on our people... We mourn for every life the virus has claimed, and we share the grief of all of you who have lost a loved one...*).

The American President depicts his administration as a commander in chief on the battlefield and praises their strength and resourcefulness (*So we're deploying the full power and strength of the federal government to help States, cities to help local government get this horrible plague over with and over with fast./ To battle the virus, my administration marshaled every resource at our nation's disposal, public, private, military, economic, scientific and industrial all at your disposal./My administration is fighting relentlessly to protect all citizens of every color and creed from this terrible virus, the invisible enemy). He specifically commends the medical staff for their role in the 'war' by presenting them as incredibly brave warriors (*Day after day we're making tremendous strides with the dedication of our doctors and nurses, these are incredible people, these are brave people, these are warriors*).*

Trump, praising the ingenuity and the resourcefulness of his people (*...Americans do whatever it takes to find solutions, pioneer breakthroughs and harness the energies we need to achieve a total victory*), also calls on his compatriots to show solidarity and be united in the face of the 'enemy' (*We are all in this together. We must put politics aside, stop the partisanship and unify together as one nation and one family*).

Finally, the American President also shows optimism about the outcome of the 'war' (*If we are vigilant – and we can*

reduce the chance of infection, which we will – we will significantly impede the transmission of the virus. The virus will not have a chance against us./ Our future remains brighter than anyone can imagine), and prepares his countrymen for the process of rebuilding the country and its economy (...we will defeat this horrible enemy, we will revive our economy and we will transition into greatness).

The journey metaphor in politicians' Covid-19 speeches

In addition to the war metaphor, the *journey* metaphor, although less frequently used than the war metaphor, still kept recurring consistently throughout all politicians' speeches. With the journey metaphor the pandemic was portrayed as a precarious journey over a challenging, mountainous terrain. Thus, in Johnson's speeches there were 2 to 3 occurrences of the journey metaphor in each speech, and it involved climbing up the down the slopes and reaching peaks of mountains, going through tunnels, etc. (*The way ahead is hard, and it is still true that many lives will sadly be lost./ And yet it is also true that there is a clear way through./ We're past the peak and we're on the downward slope./ We've come through the peak, or rather, we've come under what could have been a vast peak, as though we've been going through some huge Alpine tunnel*). Johnson uses the journey metaphor to help him build a cautiously optimistic tone (*And we can now see the sunlight and the pasture ahead of us. And so, it is vital that we do not now lose control and run slap into a second and even bigger mountain*), and even depicts the rebuilding of the country as part of that journey (*These are careful but deliberate steps on the road to rebuilding our country*).

In Macron's April speech, the military rhetoric that was so vigorously and almost exclusively used in his March speech, was mitigated with the journey metaphor. With the help of this metaphor, which revolved around words/phrases such as: *path, to traverse, to go down a path, to arrive at, to find the path, to find new*

ways, to get off the beaten track, etc., the French President clearly tried to depict the crisis as a journey that will eventually take the French to a beautiful destination (*We need to get off the beaten track, reinvent ourselves find new ways of living, not least of all me./ In the coming weeks ... I task you with finding the path to that possible future./ My dear compatriots, better days lie ahead, happy days will be here again.*).

The journey metaphor which depicts the pandemic as a difficult travel across a precarious terrain recurs in Merkel's speech too, created with the help of a number of idiomatic expressions such as 'walking on thin ice', 'to be out of the woods', 'get out of breath', etc. (... *we are walking on thin ice, you can also say on the thinnest of ice. The situation is deceptive and we are by no means out of the woods./ Let's all remain wise and careful on the path to the next phase of the pandemic. This is a long route because we cannot lose the drive and get out of breath too early.*).

There was only one instance of the journey metaphor in Trump's May speech and, this one instance, interestingly, was combined with a war metaphor (*Day after day we're making tremendous strides with the dedication of our doctors and nurses, these are incredible people, these are brave people, these are warriors*).

The other types of conceptual metaphors used in politicians' Covid-19 speeches

The ocean metaphor was used, although rather infrequently, to compare the virus to a maritime phenomenon, i.e. a huge and daunting wave which has a potential to cause damage to anybody and anything nearby. The ocean metaphor which depicted the new cases of infected people with the coronavirus as an ocean wave that rises high and can be easily seen on the horizon from afar was found in Johnson's discourse (*That means we can also allow outdoor markets to reopen in a safe way that does not risk causing a second wave of the virus*), as well as in Macron's

March address to the nation (...otherwise they (doctors) will not be able to deal with the wave of serious cases which is already on the horizon in some regions).

In Macron's second speech, there were several instances of the *country as a human* metaphor. With this metaphor France was depicted as a human being which has its own bodily functions. According to the French President, although these bodily functions are currently weakened by the virus, but in time she will recuperate and rebuild her strength (*It is what we, as a country, need to do to limit the spread of the virus, ensure there are enough hospital beds for all and rebuild our strength.* / *The essence of what makes France great is alive and kicking*).

Merkel's coronavirus speeches, in addition to the war metaphor and the journey metaphor, instigated the use of the *body* metaphor, as well as several other types of novel and unusual conceptual metaphors: the *teacher* metaphor, the *machine* metaphor and the *servant* metaphor. Namely, in talking about the much needed unity and solidarity among people in such testing times as the coronavirus pandemic itself, she takes a clear recourse to the *body metaphor*, in which parts of the human body like *hands* and *heart* are used to present the idea that people should work together and should be compassionate towards each other (*This helps researchers and doctors at all German university hospitals to work hand in hand on these tasks./This is only possible if citizens do something for their fellow human beings with heart and reason, for their country, call it for the greater good*).

With the *teacher* metaphor the domain of the disease (i.e. the pandemic) as a target domain is mapped onto the teacher domain as a source domain. Thus, Merkel presents Germany like a student 'learning' from a teacher, i.e. the pandemic; the German health care system has 'passed the test'; and other countries are 'tested' by the pandemic too (*We have to learn from the situation, so to say./ The pandemic has taught us that it is not good*

when protective equipment is exclusively sourced from distant countries./ Thus, today, we can see that our health system has been passing its probation so far./ We were, with the decision to suspend all interest and amortization payments this year for the poorest 77 countries in the world able to take some pressure off these heavily tested states....).

The *machine* metaphor takes a machine and the way a machine operates as a source domain and the protection from the virus as a target domain. In other words, Merkel, here shifts from using the war rhetoric which entails waging a war in order to control and contain the virus, to putting in place ‘an emergency mechanism’ which just like a machine will be set to motion and ‘work under full power’ as soon as the virus reappears in any specific region in Germany (*...we also need to develop an emergency mechanism by saying that as soon as regional sources of infection occur, measures must also have to be able to be re-implemented there./ ... when infections go up somewhere, then we also have an emergency mechanism./ That is why we are working under full power on expanding capacities for protective goods in Germany as well as in Europe.*)

Hinting at the possibility that Germany might be the first country to invent a vaccine against the virus, Mrs Merkel makes a point that Germany will selflessly share it with the world. In that context she uses the *servant metaphor* depicting Germany and its scientific discoveries as someone that will be put at the service of humanity in general (*But science is never national, science serves humanity*). The same metaphor is found again when she discusses the disciplined way with which the Germans have endured the pandemic as a result of which they have ‘served’ or helped the health, the economic and social life of human kind in general (*The more enduring and consistent we endure at the beginning of the pandemic and thus push the infection down, the more we serve not only human health but also economic and social life*).

Trump's Covid-19-inspired speeches in April and May, were sporadically intersected with additional conceptual metaphors such as the *family metaphor*, and the *human metaphor*. In fact, there are several instances of *family metaphor* (*We grieve by their side as one family, this great American family, and we do grieve ...*), where the target domain is the domain of family and the source domain is the domain of country. In other words, just like a family that has lost loved ones due to an unexpected tragic accident, the entire country in this case is mourning the unexpected death of thousands of its citizens who died because of Covid-19. The *country as human metaphor*, where the human being serves as a source domain and the economy/nation/country as the target domain, helps depict the economy/nation/country as a human being whose health should be preserved and maintained (*Ensuring the health of our economy is vital to ensuring the health of our nation*).

Combinations of different types of conceptual metaphors

Although rarely, there were a few instances in which, within a single utterance the politicians were combining two distinct conceptual metaphors. The British Prime Minister, for instance, came up with a successful combination of two metaphors in a single utterance, by blending together the ocean metaphor and the war metaphor in "... we are accelerating our search for treatments, we're pioneering work on a vaccine, and we are buying millions of testing kits that will enable us to turn the tide on this invisible killer". The term 'tide' comes from the domain of ocean as a source domain; whereas, the term 'killer' from the domain of war. Also, at another point he combined the journey metaphor with the war metaphor (*Two weeks ago, I set out our road map for the next phase of our fight against Covid-19*), in which *road map* comes from the journey as a source domain and *fight* from the war as the source domain.

In Donald Trump's speeches, there were also several attempts at combining the war metaphor with another metaphor in the same utterance. Thus, there was, an instance, of the war metaphor being combined with the *country as human* metaphor (... we will defeat this horrible enemy, we will revive our economy and we will transition into greatness); and a combination of the *journey* metaphor and the *war* metaphor which was previously discussed.

One very plausible way of interpreting the combinations of metaphors in politicians' speeches is that these were attempts to intensify the persuasion potential of their speeches and to achieve the aim of curbing the devastating effects of the pandemic. More specifically, the combinations of metaphors were sometimes used in order to highlight the threat from the pandemic, but at times to mitigate it, so as to calm the situation down and give hope to the citizens that everything is under control.

The relation between the use of metaphors in politicians' speeches and the outcome of the pandemic

In this section an analogy is made between the use of metaphors in the selected speeches of the four leaders and the outcome of the pandemic in their countries, respectively. As we have already mentioned in the results section, Macron and Merkel were more inclined towards using metaphorical language, mostly at the peak of the pandemic in their April speeches. If we compare the graphs published on *Our World in Data* website of the coronavirus infected cases by month in France and Germany (see graph 3), we can see that in both countries the situation was most serious in April and probably that is what instigated the political leaders to impose stricter measures and use more metaphorical language. Obviously, their speeches had effect on the citizens

and influenced the outcome of the pandemic in the next month as the number of newly reported cases decreased.

Johnson, on the other hand, uses metaphor much less frequently than the other two aforementioned politicians. However, he still uses most metaphors in his April speech. As can be seen from Chart 3, the situation with the pandemic gets rather serious in the UK in mid-March and April, so we reasonably assume that this might have made Johnson intensify his metaphoric language use in his speech in April. Obviously, the citizens of the three countries took their leaders' words seriously, and as it can be seen from Chart 3, the number of the newly confirmed Covid-19 cases starts to decrease in May and is much lowered in June.

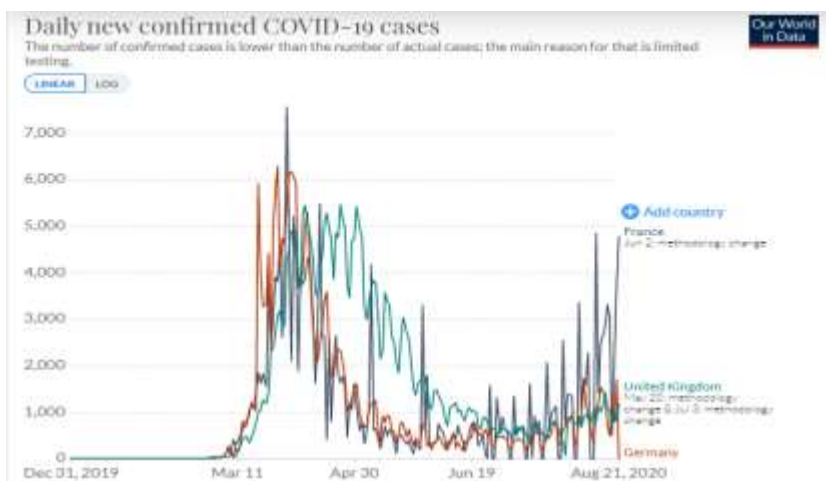


Chart 3. Daily confirmed cases France, Germany and UK,
<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>³

As for the American leader, Trump, although he used conceptual metaphors more or less during the three phases of the

³ Roser, M, Ritchie, H., Ortiz-Ospina, E. and Hasell, J. (2020) - "Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19)". Published online at *OurWorldInData.org*. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus> [Online Resource].

pandemic, during the peak of the pandemic in April he replaced his metaphoric rhetoric with fact-based rhetoric and focused almost exclusively on discussing his government's achievements in handling the health crisis. Given that the number of new cases in the USA persisted throughout May almost at the same pace as it did in April, he clearly did not achieve the planned aim – to curb the pandemic. Consequently, in May a shift is noticeable in the President's rhetoric once again towards using more conceptual metaphors, which points to an attempt to make people perceive the grave reality of the pandemic and to adjust their conduct accordingly (see Chart 4 below).

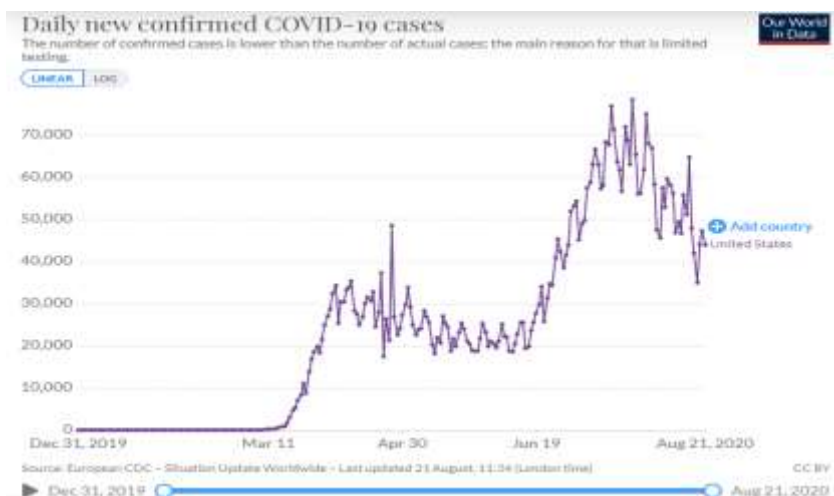


Chart 4. Daily confirmed cases US,
<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>

Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate how political leaders use metaphorical language during situations of crisis i.e. what type of conceptual metaphors they used and were predominant in

their speeches during the Covid-19 crisis, especially in March, April and May, the beginning phase, the peak of the virus phase and the ending phase of the first wave, and what effect their speeches had on the citizens and their behaviour. The selected speeches were delivered by the leaders of four countries: the UK, the US, France and Germany.

The analysis showed that in terms of content, in their March speeches, the politicians were discussing mainly the restrictions they were imposing to stop the virus from spreading; in their April speeches, the accent was placed on the steps their government were taking to relieve the negative effects of the pandemic, and in their May speeches, among the other things, the politicians discussed their plans to ease the lockdown measures. The research confirmed our initial expectations that all politicians would use a variety of conceptual metaphors, especially at the peak of the pandemic. Macron, Merkel and Johnson used metaphors mostly in their April speeches, which was the peak of the first wave of the virus in Europe, especially in their countries, France, Germany and the UK respectively. The American president, on the other hand, used metaphors mostly in his March and June speech, when the situation in the US was rather serious.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that the most predominant metaphor was *the war metaphor*, especially at the pandemic beginning phase in March, when the politicians presented the situation as a war-like one, which they have to fight. The politicians used other types of metaphor too. The *journey metaphor*, was also rather frequently used by politicians to present the pandemic as a difficult travel across a precarious terrain. In addition, they used *the ocean metaphor*; *the country as a human metaphor*; *the body metaphor*; *the teacher metaphor*; *the machine metaphor*; *the servant metaphor*; *the family metaphor* and *the country as human metaphor*. Frequently, the politicians used a

combination of few metaphors, mainly aiming to strengthen the illocutionary force of their statements, when they were expressing the threat they felt from the pandemic, or sometimes to mitigate it, when they were trying to calm the situation down and give hope to the citizens that everything is under control.

Finally, the analysis indicated, as we initially expected, that besides the obviously many factors which influenced the citizens to obey the measures their governments imposed, the use of the metaphorical language most probably also had an impact on their behaviour. The reports of the daily confirmed cases showed a decrease in the number of infected cases after the politicians delivered their speeches in which they used a great number of conceptual metaphors in order to present the dangerous and threatening Covid-19 situation to their citizens.

We believe that in order to confirm the results presented in this paper, it is recommended that an additional analysis is made on a greater corpus, involving more political speeches delivered from leaders of other countries in the world. However, this research gave indications as to how political leaders generally use metaphorical language during situations of crisis, what type of conceptual metaphors they prefer to use in such situations and what effect they have on the general public.

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Appendix

Emmanuel Macron	<p>March 16th, 2020 2621 words</p> <p>Address by President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron on the COVID-19 coronavirus</p> <p>https://franceintheus.org/spip.php?article9658</p>
	<p>April 13th, 2020 3541 words</p> <p>President Macron's April 13th Address to the Nation</p> <p>https://www.leadersleague.com/en/news/president-macron-s-april-13th-address-to-the-nation</p>
Angela Merkel	<p>March 22nd, 2020 1110 words</p> <p>Angela Merkel: Adhere to rules, show sense and heart</p> <p>https://www.lengoo.de/blog/angela-merkel-coronavirus-address-full-english-transcript-22032020/</p>
	<p>April 23rd, 2020 3591 words</p> <p>Full English transcript of Chancellor Angela Merkel government statement on the Corona crisis at the Bundestag</p> <p>https://www.lengoo.de/blog/angela-merkel-we-are-walking-on-thin-ice/</p>

	<p>May 6th, 2020 1454 words</p> <p>Angela Merkel: The first phase of the pandemic is behind us https://www.lengoo.de/blog/05-06-2020-angela-merkel-the-first-phase-of-the-pandemic-is-behind-us/</p>
Boris Johnson	<p>March 23, 2020 867 words</p> <p>PM address to the nation on coronavirus: 23 March 2020 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020</p>
	<p>April 30, 2020 1095 words</p> <p>Boris Johnson UK Coronavirus Briefing Transcript April 30: Prime Minister Returns from COVID-19 Absence https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/boris-johnson-united-kingdom-coronavirus-briefing-transcript-april-30</p>
	<p>25 May 2020 889 words</p> <p>Prime Minister Boris Johnson's statement at the daily coronavirus press conference on 25 May 2020 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-press-conference-statement-25-may-2020</p>

Donald Trump	<p>March 11, 2020 1281 words</p> <p>Speaking from the Oval Office, Mr. Trump announced a suspension of travel from Europe for 30 days, starting on Friday</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/us/politics/trump-coronavirus-speech.html</p>
	<p>Apr 27, 2020 770 words</p> <p>Donald Trump Coronavirus Press Conference Transcript</p> <p>https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/donald-trump-coronavirus-press-conference-transcript-april-27</p>
	<p>May 11, 2020 1952 words</p> <p>Donald Trump Press Conference Transcript on Coronavirus</p> <p>https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/donald-trump-press-conference-on-coronavirus-testing-may-11</p>

(De)legitimation of power of agency. A multimodal critical analysis of social practices during COVID-19 pandemic in Romania

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a real challenge to national and international authorities, bringing social and ideological implications. The shift from urgency to action and an appropriate message tailoring are essential in such a sanitary crisis. This article presents a multimodal critical discourse analysis of the Facebook posts of the Romanian Ministry of Health and of the online users' comments. The aim of the study is to examine how the Romanian authority and citizens use semiotic resources (multimodal texts) in order to give meaning and make meaning of the social practices related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reveal that the Romanian authority mainly focused its messages on (de)legitimizing the actions of various abstract participants in an information campaign meant to counter fake news. The salience of behavioural processes-as-instructions highlighted a reduced agency of the Ministry of Health and an increased agency for Romanian citizens. The online users employed polarization as a discursive strategy to legitimate the Romanian authority's calls-to-action that challenge the conservative liberalism ideology of the government and to delegitimize the tardiness of these actions.

Keywords: multimodality, COVID-19, pandemic, Romania.

Introduction

Medical pandemics represent social events that disrupt the social order (Teti et al., 2020). Serious threats to the health of people worldwide, uncertainty about the transmission or symptoms, anxiety turned into panic, divergent sense-makings or fake news are some of the challenges that organizations and citizens face throughout a pandemic (Jin et al. 2019; Ali, 2020). The year 2020 added the COVID-19 pandemic to the already known health epidemics and pandemics. Since people and organizations worldwide are affected, action is essential during a pandemic. The main actions taken by various countries were event prohibition, lockdowns, or shutdowns, which are seen as “the new normality” (Maesse, 2020).

In Romania, the first warning signs regarding COVID-19 came when 76 persons were reported to be infected with this virus in the Italian regions where a lot of Romanians work and live¹. The Romanian government took the first preventive measures on February 22: a 14-day quarantine for citizens returning from the affected regions in Italy. This measure was later extended to every citizen coming from abroad. A two-month state of emergency (March 11 – May 15) was declared and since May 15 Romania remains in an extended state of alert. Within this context of fear and drastic governmental measures, authorities have had to adapt their discourses, bringing a recontextualization of past social practices. The Ministry of Health plays a significant role in the group for strategic communication during this pandemic in Romania and this is the main reason for which this article will focus on the Facebook

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.” (2020) Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>, May 19, 2020.

posts of the Romanian Ministry of Health, as a legitimate voice throughout this health crisis in Romania.

During a pandemic, interests of institutions and citizens are more aligned and a coproduction of meanings is more visible (Hyvärinen & Vos, 2016, p. 97). The shift from silenced participants to prosumers of information during a health crisis is also emphasized in D. Lupton's definition of discourse related to health where the focus lies on a polyphonic web of texts, messages, talks, dialogue, or conversation from and among different players in the context of health (Lupton, 2003). In this dynamic process of coproduction, not only language, but also images become constitutive of the social world as well as constituted by other social practices (Phillips, 2006). Thus, it is clear that exclusive linguistically oriented analyses should be replaced by multimodal research. The European Communication Monitor emphasized this trend on multimodal communication (Zerfass et al., 2017, p. 19). Compared to previous years, organizational stakeholders demand more visual communication (69%) and organizations use more visual elements in their communication (86%). In this article, the focus will be on multimodal texts posted on the Facebook page of the Romanian Ministry of Health. At present, the Ministry of Health is part of a liberal government led by the National Liberal Party. By May 15, 2020 the Ministry of Health in Romania has had two ministries, both of them members of the National Liberal Party: Victor Costache (resigned on March 26, 2020), Nelu Tătaru (invested on March 26, former Secretary of State). As ideology, the Romanian liberal party belongs to conservative liberalism (Close, 2019), combining liberal values (economic liberalism, individual freedoms²) and policies with conservative stances (related to moral and religious issues).

² <https://pnl.ro/angajamentul-nostru/principii-si-valori/>, retrieved June 29, 2020.

Within this context of active and critical online users and organizations and of the fluidity and dynamicity of meaning making and giving, I will adopt a collaborative perspective (Heath & Palenchar, 2016). The main aims of this article are the following: (a) identification of the official discursive representations of social practices and agency related to the coronavirus pandemic; (b) identification of the commentators' topics (de)legitimizing the official social practices.

Methodology

Usually health crises are analyzed using crisis and risk communication theories, mainly focusing on how organizations communicate and on identifying successful strategies to preserve the organizational reputation. As Dunn and Eble (2015) highlight, the focus of the research using these theories is primarily on communication, and not on the context and power. Throughout health crises, authorities try to persuade people to comply to certain health and social behaviors, thus implying a control over one's choices. Unlike crisis and risk communication theories, critical discourse analysis emphasizes the significance of language in the production, maintenance and change of social relations and in the contribution to the domination of some people by others (Fairclough, 2001). The official measures taken within the COVID-19 context show a governmental dominance and control over citizens and also bring a challenge to (neo)liberalism. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic should not be tackled upon only from a mere typology of organizational crisis strategies, but from a critical discourse analysis with a focus on the recontextualization of the social relations and a revisiting and reordering of ideologies.

Legitimation is one of the main social functions of ideologies (van Dijk, 2000, p. 245), by aiming "to create an

ideological space within which the institution can operate, enjoying sufficient social acceptance to pursue its activities freely” (Breeze, 2012, p. 4). Operating in a top-down manner, legitimation applies to those groups which position themselves as power-holders. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Romanian Ministry of Health was one of the main power-holders, the Ministry of Health and the Secretary of State for Health being important members of the group for strategic communication. At the same time, the recontextualization of social practices and relations brings opposite opinions, conflict, and a challenge to legitimacy. Thus, delegitimation should also be discussed within a health crisis when the social practices and relations imposed by authorities may be disqualified.

Digitalization has brought big data and a prevalence of images upon writing. It is essential to acknowledge the power of images over words in the process of persuading people to comply to a certain behaviour. As critical discourse analysis allows to study lexical and grammatical choices in language, multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin, Mayr, 2012) shows “how images, photographs, diagrams or graphics also work to create meaning” (p. 9). Relying on the systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, Matthiessen, 2004), multimodality adapted the SFL metafunctions (textual, interpersonal, ideational) to social semiotics (the new metafunctions – representational, interactive, compositional meanings) and proposes three premises (Jewitt et al., 2016; Kress, 2010): (1) meaning is made of different semiotic resources (writing, image, layout, speech etc) with distinct potentialities and limitations, being constantly remade; (2) meaning making involves the production of multimodal wholes; (3) studying meaning implies attendance of all semiotic resources used to make a complete whole.

In this article, I draw on multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to analyse the 75 multimodal texts produced by the Romanian Ministry of Health. The data did not include those posts which had only a verbal component. Since during a pandemic, authorities try to make people to comply to certain social practices, the study of transitivity plays a significant role. Playing a key role in meaning making, transitivity “refers, broadly, to who does what to whom, and how” (Machin, Mayr, 2012, p. 104). Thus transitivity implies agency and action. Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 105) state that analyzing agency and action refers to three aspects of meaning:

- participants (people, things, or abstract things) – include the ‘doers’ of the process and the ‘done-toes’;
- processes – represented by verbs and verbal groups;
- circumstances – how and when something has happened.

The first step of the analysis was to import all 75 multimodal posts into QDA Miner 5.0.15, a qualitative data software. The codebook was created taking into account Machin and Mayr’s representation of people and action (2012) and Van Leeuwen’s social actor and social action networks (2008). A manual coding was conducted and the codebook included the following codes for social actor (Fig. 1) and social action (Fig. 2). After the manual assigning of a code to a multimodal text, the analysis focused on the identification of the degree in which the respective social actor or social action were related to legitimization (L) or delegitimation (DL).

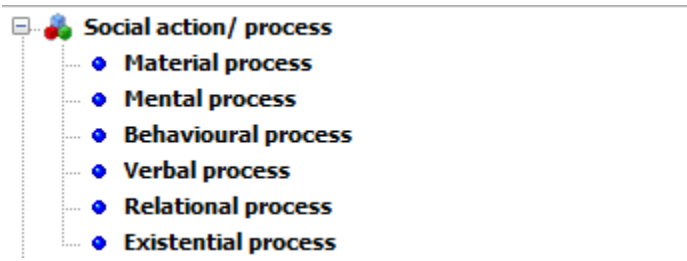


Fig. 1. Codes – social action/ process (imported from QDA Miner 5.0.15)



Fig. 2. Codes – social actors/ participant (imported from QDA Miner 5.0.15)

Crises bring alternative discourses, for example citizens-as-online users’ discourse. The interactive nature of new media and social media platforms allows the citizens-as-online users to be less mere recipient of messages and to become co-constructors of an organizational story, thus being empowered to

acknowledge or not the organizational commitment during a pandemic. Thus, the second step of the analysis focused on the 1427 online users' comments to the 75 posts of the Ministry of Health in Romania. Using QDA Miner 5.0.15, I imported all comments and then the content analysis was performed using WordStat 7.1.22. The analysis of the comments included an identification of macrostructures (global meanings). Using WordStat 7.1.22, I performed topics modelling in order to determine what topics are most salient. The topics identified were related to an examination of local meanings (salience of keywords and phrases associated with a topic). The qualitative analysis focused on the ways in which legitimization and/or delegitimation was/ were present in the topics identified and interpreted taking into account the codes presented in figure 1 and 2.

Findings

Romanian Ministry of Health – (de)legitimation of social actions

As observed in table 1, the Ministry of Health in Romania used more material processes both for legitimization and delegitimation. Whereas behavioural and relational processes were the other two social actions salient in legitimization of social practices, delegitimation was obtained through a reverse order of these two processes.

(De)legitimation of power of agency. A multimodal critical analysis of social practices during COVID-19 pandemic in Romania

Category	Code	Legitimation (%)	Delegitimation (%)
Social action/ process	Material process	38 (28.4%)	34 (25.4%)
	Mental process	1 (0.74%)	1 (0.7%)
	Behavioural process	19 (14.2%)	6 (4.5%)
	Verbal process	5 (3.7%)	1 (0.7%)
	Relational process	7 (5.2%)	22 (16.4%)
	Existential process	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Total	70 (52.2%)	64 (47.8%)
	Total	134 (100%)	

Table 1. Social action/ process coding frequency –
Romanian Ministry of Health – Facebook multimodal posts (adapted
from QDA miner 5.0.15)

(De)legitimation of material processes – Ministry of Health's multimodal posts

Defined as processes of doing, material processes imply an actor performing an action and a goal or the participant at whom the process is directed (Machin, Mayr, 2012). During the COVID19 pandemic, the Romanian Ministry of Health tried to answer various fake news regarding the transmission of the virus, the treatment, or the instructions to be carried out. Some of the multimodal texts posted by the Ministry of Health focused on clarifications regarding various agents responsible for the virus spread (figure 3) or for the coronavirus prevention and/ or treatment (figure 4).



Figure 3. Ministry of Health's Facebook multimodal post (March 6, 2020)³



Figure 4. Ministry of Health's Facebook multimodal post (March 13, 2020)

The Ministry of Health used these two types of images to address various uncertainties and rumours that circulated at the beginning of this crisis. The Romanian authorities issued 10 photos like figure 3 and 20 photos like figure 4 regarding various issues, such as pets as virus transmitters (figure 3), the role of sanitizers (figure 4), of cumin seeds, of air conditioning, of lemon, garlic consumption in virus prevention etc. Images like figure 4 were part of an information campaign run by the Romanian Observatory for Health, the Association of Universities of Medicine and Pharmacy in Romania.

As observed in figure 3 and 4, visual participants were rarely used. Writing, typography and colour were significant semiotic modes in these types of Facebook posts. At a compositional level, the information value was obtained through

³ All posts of the Ministry of Health were retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/MinisterulSanatatii/>.

the top placement of the questions which were foregrounded by a contrast colour or a bold typography. The salient elements that attracted the viewers' attention were: the center placement of the participants addressed in the question (in figure 3, the cat and dog as pets) and of the answer (YES, figure 4) made prominent by its positioning in the right-left green square. Colour contrast (figure 5) points to the meaning potential of legitimation (green square including YES), of delegitimation (red square including NO) and of uncertainty (blue form of a human head including question marks).



Figure 5. Ministry of Health's Facebook posts
(parts of multimodal posts in the information campaign)

The Ministry of Health legitimized various participants involved in material processes which bring changes to the virus transmission:

FBP1⁴ (March 13, 2020): Can sanitizers help in COVID-19 prevention? Answer: YES. Sanitizers (ethanol 70%) (...) can help in preventing the spread of coronavirus. It is recommended especially for surface disinfection.

FBP2 (March 19, 2020): Is it safe to donate blood? Answer: YES. One can donate blood. Blood donation is safe and it will take place under safe circumstance to prevent the virus transmission.

⁴ The Facebook posts (FBP) and comments (FBC) were translated into English by the author.

But at the same time, the Ministry of Health delegitimized the material processes with which various participants were associated. Lemon, garlic, cumin seeds, homeopathic cure, antibiotics, sauna sessions or flu vaccination were not legitimized as treatments whose beneficiaries might be cured of the COVID-19 virus:

FBP3 (March 12, 2020): Does the consumption of lemon prevent us from coronavirus infection? Answer: NO. Fresh lemon or lemon in boiled water does not cure or prevent us from the infection.

FBP4 (April 2, 2020): Does the consumption of cumin seeds treat or prevent us from COVID-19? Answer: NO. The cumin seeds do not help in the prevention or treatment of the virus.

Although most photos posted by the Romanian Ministry of Health focused on this textual paring of questions and answers which may legitimize or not the material processes in which abstract participants were involved, figure 6 illustrates a social actor whose action process (taking care) foregrounds human agency and it was one of the few images focusing on a human participant. The woman in the image is engaged in the material process of holding something between her arms. She is portrayed as a doctor, because she is wearing a blue protective equipment which acts as a 'prop' (Aiello, 2020) defining her identity. This visual transitivity was achieved through an action transfer between an actor represented as a doctor and a goal, a patient, metaphorically represented as the map of Romania. Colour appears to be an important semiotic mode in this post. The dominance of three colours (blue for the doctor's protective equipment, red for the map of Romania and yellow for the tissue in the doctor's hand) points to a specific meaning potential, red standing for the colour of sufferance (Romania, a victim of the virus) and to a generic meaning potential, blue, yellow, red

standing for the national flag of Romania, thus for the whole Romania.



Figure 6. Ministry of Health's Facebook multimodal post
(April 7, 2020)

(De)legitimation of behavioral processes – Ministry of Health's multimodal posts

Considered to be “a cluster of small subtypes blending the material and the mental into a continuum” (Halliday, Matthiessen, 2004, p. 255), behavioural processes also refer to actions, but these actions have to be experienced by conscious beings (Machin, Mayr, 2012, p. 109). The Ministry of Health is represented through its representative, namely the Ministry of Health, Nelu Tătaru, who was present in two multimodal posts. His actions were represented in terms of behavioural processes: ‘wearing a mask’.

Various behavioural processes were linguistically rendered through the imperative mood, the Ministry of Health

being implicitly represented as having the 'overseer' role (Mulderigg, 2011), tightening control from the center (the government) in order to guarantee certain goals (in this case, not to get infected). Mulderigg (2011) considers that this type of role is associated with managing actions which construe a reduced governmental agency and an increased agency for others. Thus, the imperative mood beyond the behavioural processes included in the Romanian Ministry of Health's posts convey an indirect agency from the Romanian authority and a direct agency from Romanian citizens who have to comply with the recommendations suggested.

These behavioural processes act as instructions. One of the best practices in crisis and risk communication is to acknowledge the level of risk tolerance (Sellnow et al., 2009, p. 24). This implies to provide instructions to the public about the levels of risk to be experienced and about how to protect oneself. These behavioural processes-as-instructions were either legitimized ('wash your hands frequently', 'cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough', 'inform yourself only from official sources') or delegitimized ('avoid contact with persons who suffer from respiratory infections', 'don't touch your eyes, nose, mouth unless you wash your hands', 'don't take antiviral or antibiotic medication without the doctor's prescription'). It is interesting to observe that the Romanian Ministry of Health uses an exclusive pronominalization (2nd person plural or singular) within these instructions, thus rendering an implicit 'us' (Ministry of Health) versus 'they' (Romanian citizens) division. Besides these behavioural processes-as-instructions, there is one graphical representation (figure 7) which includes both a behavioural process ('#we stay home') and a relational process ('doctors, volunteers, couriers, cashiers - superheroes'). Various props (buildings, masks, sanitizers, equipment) are used to represent these agents as responsible citizens.



Figure 7. Ministry of Health's Facebook multimodal post
(April 3, 2020)

(De)legitimation of relational processes – Ministry of Health's multimodal posts

Serving to characterize and identify (Halliday, Matthiessen, 2004, p.210), relational processes were used by the Romanian Ministry of Health to represent abstract participants (the virus, scientific evidence, treatments) or human social actors (elderly persons, or other vulnerable categories). As presented above, the Romanian Ministry of Health tried to counter the fake news about various treatments against the coronavirus. It delegitimized the actions of these treatments related to this particular virus, but it legitimized their action related to other properties. For example, garlic was represented through a relational process, emphasizing its healthy nature within a different context ('Garlic is a healthy food which may have some antimicrobial properties.'). Identification through relational processes was highly used by the Ministry of Health in order to

construe class-membership: ‘elderly persons are more vulnerable’, ‘packages and products produces/ received from China are not dangerous’, ‘there is no evidence that vitamin C may help in the prevention or treatment of the coronavirus’.

The representation of the virus through a relational process is essential since “naming a disease, its effects and symptoms can shape how it is understood and addressed” (Prieto-Ramos et al., 2020, p. 638). From the very beginning (February 24), the Romanian Ministry of Health provided a scientific explanation to characterizing and identifying the newly emerging virus. The Romanian authority included COVID-19 in the class of coronaviruses, but it clearly mentioned that a distinction should be made between SARS and COVID-19 (‘it is not the same virus’). The Romanian authority used qualifying adjectives that suggest uncertainty (‘the virus is new and different and it needs its own vaccine’) and fear (‘it has more severe forms for some persons (...), the persons who suffer from diabetes and heart diseases are more vulnerable’).

(De)legitimation of agency – Ministry of Health’s multimodal posts

The representation of participants of social practices is essential since through their presentation, agency is conveyed. As observed in table 2, references to agency through collectivisation, categorization - identification and genericization were salient both for legitimation and delegitimation.

	Legitimation (%)	Delegitimation (%)
personalization	0	0
impersonalization	1	0
individualisation	0	0
collectivisation/ assimilation	14	10

(De)legitimation of power of agency. A multimodal critical analysis of social practices during COVID-19 pandemic in Romania

specification	1	3
genericisation	7	10
nomination	2	3
categorization-functionalization	5	0
categorization-identification	15	14
objectivation	2	2
anonymisation	0	0
aggregation / assimilation	7	4
us vs them division	0	0
suppression/ exclusion	7	8
Total	61	54
Total	115 (100%)	

Table 2. Coding frequency – social actors/ participants

The daily report on COVID-19 in Romania (figure 8) included representations of social actors under the form of categorization through identification. Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 42) mentioned that this type of representation defined social actors “(...) not in terms of what they do, but in terms of what they, more or less permanently, or unavoidably, are”. In the multimodal post on updates on COVID-19, the Romanian Ministry of Health either legitimized such categories (‘healed persons’, ‘tests with negative results’) or delegitimized others (‘persons in quarantine’, ‘diagnosed persons’ or ‘dead persons’). As observed in figure 8, categorization through identification is combined with aggregation through quantification, the meaning potential being associated with the evolution of coronavirus at a national level.



Figure 8. Ministry of Health's Facebook multimodal post (March 22, 2020)

Collectivization was achieved through plurality. The usage of mass nouns, such as 'children', 'pregnant women', 'homeopathic remedies', 'masks', 'sanitizers', 'whole Romania' or 'thermal scanners', denotes a group of people or objects. The participants were either legitimized or delegitimized depending on the actions they were associated with. For example, 'children playing in parks' was labeled as unacceptable, but 'masks to be worn' was a legitimate behaviour.

Genericisation was used when it was implied a representation of a participant as a type. Figure 6 is clear example of visual genericisation, the doctor represented could not be individualized, she is standing for the generic category 'doctors fighting the virus' and her action is legitimised by the Romanian authority. Delegitimation of various treatments was realized through a usage of genericisation: 'Garlic is a healthy food which may have some antimicrobial properties'.

As observed in table 2, suppression or lack of agency is also used by the Romanian Ministry of Health both for legitimation and delegitimation. Van Leeuwen (2008, p. 28) considers that

“exclusion has rightly been an important aspect of critical discourse analysis”. The nominalization of verbs lays an emphasis on the (un)acceptable actions and not on the missing human agents. For example, the Romanian Ministry of Health legitimized vaccination (‘vaccination will help us’), or blood donation (‘blood donation will play an important role’), but at the same time, delegitimized lemon consumption or smoking (‘lemon consumption is not efficient for preventing coronavirus infection’ ‘smoking affects one’s health’).

Romanian online users’ (de)legitimation of agency and action

Table 3 reveals the five most salient topics present in Romanian citizens’ comments. The topic modeling extraction was automatically performed using WordStat7.1.22. The segmentation was performed by sentence. The topics were automatically extracted and then I renamed the first five topics using the resulted macrostructures. The salience was established taking into account the eigenvalues, the higher the eigenvalue is, the more important the topic is. The following step was the autocoding of the sentences in the comments using the topics below as content categories. The keyword retrieval helped in identifying each keyword or phrase for each topic. The qualitative analysis was performed on the sentences retrieved for each topic.

Macrostructures	Topic modeling (WordStat)	EIGENVAL	Keywords
Call-to-action	stay ⁵ home, quarantine, army on streets	7.57	stay, home, house, common, quarantine, Italy, army, streets
Protection	sanitizers, mask, wash	2.94	sanitizer, surface, good, alcohol, medical purpose, mask, hands, wash
	equipment	2.59	equipment, protection, doctors, protect, together, support
Official engagement	testing	2.14	tests, run, numbers
	ministry	2.02	ministry, health, Tătaru, Streinu- Cercel

Table 3. Topic modeling – online users’ comments (WordStat7.1.22)

‘Call-to-action’ macrostructure

The most present topic in the Romanian citizens’ comments referred to a multifold call-to-action. As observed in the extracted topics, three main actions were (de)legitimized by online users: to stay (home), to quarantine, and to control the population.

FBC1: Really? Stay home for three weeks, who can control a virus with a two-week incubation period? (February 23)

⁵ The Romanian form is ‘stăm’, conjugation of the verb ‘to stay’ for the first person plural.

FBC2: If you love your child, stay home (March 13)

FBC3: Everything is in vain. If some of us stay home, and other persons go out. (March 15); It's useless for us to stay home if the elder people of this country walk recklessly in the streets, in the parks (...) if children play in the parks. (March 20)

FBC4: You tell us to stay home but nobody gives some official document for this... (March 15)

FBC5: Police and army on the streets! You should stop all idiots to walk in the streets. (March 20)

FBC6: Close the borders! The army on the streets and do not allow people on the streets! Who many should get infected till you realize that people do not comply to self-isolation? (March 15)

In these comments the calls-to-action are attributed to various social actors: (1) Romanians who were urged to stay home, and (2) official authorities who were asked to take drastic decisions (closing of borders, or control population by force). Although the highest majority believed that staying home was a necessary action, there were online users who were reluctant about the utility of this measure (see FBC1), thus delegitimizing this official decision.

Online users provide a twofold reference related to other social actors: (a) a categorization through identification reference ('elder people walk in the parks'; 'children play in the parks', 'Romanians coming from Italy'); (b) objectivation through negative-laden keywords ('idiots'). Thus, the 'call-to-action' macrostructure focused on a polarization realized through 'us versus them' division (see FBC3, FBC5), legitimizing one's action of staying home and delegitimizing other categories of people who do not comply.

The reference to Romanian authorities was structured on an implicit delegitimation. The imperative mood used by online users regarding the urgency of some actions which should have

been taken has the meaning potential of lack of official involvement and commitment.

'Protection' macrostructure

As observed in table 3, the 'protection' microstructure is formed of two topics: the former may be associated to 'us-protection', the latter to 'them-protection'.

In the uncertainty created by this pandemic situation and within the context of the Ministry of Health's information campaign focused on combating fake news, commentators use implicit mental processes by providing their opinions on sanitizers, masks or vitamin C.

FBC7: The only difference between medicinal alcohol (ethyl alcohol) applied on skin is that you get a bad rash, the sanitizer based on alcohol also contains glycerine and oxygenated water and it hydrates one's skin, so the sanitizer for surfaces is one thing and the sanitizer for hands is something else. (March 13)

FBC8: The ethyl alcohol is good for external purposes and it helps in a certain proportion (nobody guarantees that if you use alcohol, you will be 100% virus free), but washing one's hands is important. (March 13)

FBC9: I saw on the WHO webpage and it is recommended to wash one's hands with soap for 40-60 seconds. It is the best Vitamin C, alongside with isolation. (March 14)

FBC10: A cotton mask does not protect, but it also doesn't do any harm. (March 20)

FBC11: Only those masks produced in China protect! What is produced here is not of quality! The food will also come from China! This country has been living on imports for 30 years that is why we are where we are now. (March 20)

They legitimized material processes ('wash one's hands') associated to an impersonal reference to a legitimate social actor,

namely World Health Organization (see FBC9). At the same time, commentators use relational processes to (de)legitimate various elements of protection: sanitizers and masks. The identification and characterization of these two protection elements were obtained through polarizations: 'fabric masks versus surgical masks' and 'hand sanitizers versus surface sanitizers'. Some commentators feel the need to provide scientific-like explanations related to the efficacy of masks and sanitizers within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (see FBC7).

Another type of categorization associated to masks was related to a geographical context (see FBC11). The meaning potential of the 'China versus Romania' division reveals a negative moral evaluation of Romania, thus emphasizing a delegitimation of all the governmental actions after the fall of communism.

The second topic modeling present in the 'protection' macrostructure refers to 'them', namely doctors, nurses.

FBC12: A year ago it was announced that a virus will come and some measures should have been taken. Why wasn't the equipment purchased at a good price back then? (March 29)

FBC13: Doctors do not need lights and thanks! If each of us donates 2 euro for equipment, they would be much happier! (March 15)

FBC14: If staying at one's window would provide the necessary provisions for hospitals (equipment, for protection, medicines), then you have my word that I will stay for a whole week with my family. All my respect for doctors, nurses etc. Now it is time for the Ministry of Health to do something. So just forget about these propagandistic measures and do something for hospitals and doctors. (March 27)

FBC15: How could this pandemic situation change the masses' way of thinking ... until a month ago, doctors, nurses were criticized, and now all of them are heroes. (March 15)

The 'now versus then' division could be observed in the commentators' posts. This polarization refers to two types of processes:

- a material process associated with the Ministry of Health that is accused of a lack of prevention (FBC12);
- a relational process associated with doctors and nurses who are now identified and characterized as heroes although in the past commentators delegitimized their actions (see FBC15).

Online users delegitimized the Ministry of Health's initiative of staying by the window and shining a light for doctors and nurses, as a sign of solidarity, but legitimized another material process having a financial value, namely to donate for doctors.

'Official engagement' macrostructure

Using impersonalization ('Ministry of Health') and nomination ('Victor Costache', 'Nelu Tataru', 'Streinu-Cercel'), commentators made references to the authorities and experts who were in charge.

FBC16: Why don't you show the number of tests run? It is very relevant. (March 16)

FBC17: You've got some nerve with this pathetic attempt of yours to disinform the public. What you show is not the number of daily tests, but the number of tests in total. Do you think that we are so stupid? I think that it would be better to acknowledge to admit that you are way over your head than to swipe under the rug as you always use to do. (March 18)

FBC18: WHO highlights that there should be run as much as possible tests in order to find and treat those infected. I do not understand your lack of not testing people in due time. (March 17)

FBC19: All European countries run thousands of tests daily, while we have some hundreds... how can Romania claim that we have few cases??? The truth is as sad as it could possibly be. (March 18)

FBC20: For those scumbags of MPs there are tests. (...) so we can say that the Ministry of Health does its job. But for common people there are no tests. (March 17)

FBC21: The lie comes from the Government through the Ministry of Health, everybody knows! (March 20)

FBC22: Happy birthday Nelu Tataru! May God give you health and force in this war! (April 7)

This semantic macrostructure is extensively obtained through a negative evaluation encountered in terms such as 'scumbags', 'why don't you show', 'you've got some nerve', 'lack of testing', 'the truth is sad'. Commentators challenged the social practices of the Ministry of Health, based on misinformation and lack of proper risk governance because of the bad management of testing people (FBC 16-19). The meaning potential of a decaying Romanian society associated with corruption and misinformation was highlighted by a twofold opposition:

- the 'common peoples versus members of the Parliament' polarization. The commentators delegitimize two main social practices of the Ministry of Health during this pandemic situation: (a) a selection of privileged persons getting tested; (b) a promoted confusion about the various types of masks to be worn and a misinformation spread about the fabric masks.
- the 'Romania versus other European countries' polarization. The comparison of the risk management

regarding testing (see FBC19) emphasizes a negative evaluation upon the Romanian authorities that are considered not to be able to face this crisis.

Besides this lack of trust, few commentators provided a metaphorical representation of the pandemic as a war and they legitimize the information campaign and the appointment of a new minister of health (FBC22).

Discussion and conclusions

This article focused on a collaborative perspective on the representations of agency of power and social practices related to the risk and crisis situation caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Medical pandemics bring a change within a society since both authorities and citizens are challenged to adopt and to comply to various measures to prevent a virus spread. The pandemic that the whole world has been going through for almost six months has brought a difference between the old western power centres and “old Europe” (Maesse, 2020). On the one hand, there are countries that focused on herd immunity and adopted “a right-leaning, economically liberal, socially conservative and individualizing policy trajectory” (Brown, 2020, p. 5) and on the other hand, there were countries (European states) that applied a strategy imposed by the European Commission and European Parliament which mainly focused on lockdown, on economic and social programs with a huge European investment (Maesse, 2020). Romania belongs to the latter category and this medical pandemic was a real challenge for the Romanian government, especially for the Ministry of Health, characterized by a conservative liberalism ideology.

The main aim of this article was to identify how the Romanian authority (de)legitimized various social practices and the power of agency associated with these practices. At the same time, since the freedom of speech is guaranteed, another aim was to identify how Romanian citizens (de)legitimized the proposed social practices and to whom/ what they assigned power of agency.

Since risk and crisis communication implies an acknowledgment of levels of risk tolerance by official instructions provided to the public (Sellnow et al., 2009), I analysed the reconfiguration of social practices represented in the multimodal Facebook posts of the Romanian Ministry of Health. The findings revealed a dominance of three types of processes: material, behavioural and relational processes. The Romanian authority ran an information campaign focused on combating fake news and the majority of material processes were related to abstract participants. Their actions were either legitimized (sanitizers) or delegitimized (garlic, vitamin C).

One important aspect within the official representation of social practices and agency is the presence of behavioural processes-as-instructions and of indirect agency. The imperative mood and the pronominal exclusion rendered that the Romanian Ministry of Health represented itself as an overseer, a controller of collective actions and not as an agent part of this community affected by the pandemic.

Naming agents/ participants/ social actors through relational processes is important in a crisis and risk situation. The Ministry of Health in Romania used references to agency through collectivisation, categorization - identification and genericization, did not use personalization and/ or nomination as discursive strategies associated to specific persons. This lack of specific references to public personalities who may have been used as agents sending messages is surprising since a national

survey (IRES⁶, April 2020) showed that the State Secretary for Health, Raed Arafat, and the Ministry of Health, Nelu Tataru, are considered the first (78%) and the third (37%) most trusted national public personalities.

The efficacy of Ministry of Health's multimodal texts was tackled in the analysis of online users' comments. The greatest challenge for liberal governments was "the state applying a multi tasking crisis management on several levels of social control" (Maesse, 2020, p. 1). Would the citizens comply or do they revolt? This was the big question that authorities have had to face. In Romania, citizens appreciated the governmental measures within the pandemic situation as very good (12%) and good (56%) and they agreed on an extension of the emergency state (83%)⁷. This national tendency on accepting a state intervention into the private sphere was observed in the analysis of the comments to the Ministry of Health's Facebook multimodal texts. The Romanian commentators legitimized the official calls-to-action (wear masks, wash one's hands, stay home etc.). They delegitimized the tardiness of these actions. The lack of urgency regarding some official actions led to a delegitimation of the Romanian authority's engagement: reduce number of testing, or closing borders. Of note is the extensive usage of polarization within online users' comments: for example, 'fabric masks versus surgical masks', 'hand sanitizers versus surface sanitizers', 'made in China versus made in Romania' or 'common people versus members of the Parliament'. Unlike the Ministry of Health, Romanian commentators made references to expert organizations and persons. The commentators' pervasive usage of negative evaluation through polarization and the specific

⁶ Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES). "State and authority. The trust in personalities and institutions. An evaluation of measures." (April 2020). Retrieved from <https://ires.ro/>, May 20, 2020.

⁷ Idem.

references to experts and institutions show that the Ministry of Health should have laid a much more focus on agency through individualization, specification or nomination and on a representation of social practices through difference (what to do versus what not to do etc.).

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(De)legitimation of power of agency. A multimodal critical analysis of social practices during COVID-19 pandemic in Romania

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Nurses Role in the Covid-19 Pandemic, Knowledge and Attitudes of Nursing Staff – Implications for the Future

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Abstract

Covid-19 created the biggest worldwide public health emergency. Nurses as the largest component of the health care workforce, play an important role both locally and globally in managing. The web-based survey lasted about two weeks between April-May 2020 assessed the nurses' knowledge of and attitude towards Covid-19. Eighty-one nurses from Vlore, Albania, were study participants. Most were female and belonged to the age group 20-29 years, with less than 5 years of work experience. The majority of nurses reported having sufficient knowledge about Covid-19. The sources of information included television, social media, work institution, and the Ministry of Health. All nurses refer that Covid-19 is a viral infection, while 14% of them refer that there is a vaccine available. About 39% state that antibiotics are the first-line treatment. The results suggest appropriate information sources, participation in programs for the prevention and control of infections, and mental health support for nurses.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, nurses, knowledge, attitudes.

Introduction

Six months ago, exactly on March 11th, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the status of a pandemic due to the rapid and high spread of novel coronavirus Covid-19 worldwide (WHO, 2020a). The first cases of this novel coronavirus were identified in the Wuhan, Hubei Province of China on 31 Dec 2019 (WHO, 2020b). The most common symptoms in Covid-19 patients are fever, dry cough, dyspnea, musculoskeletal symptoms, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, and anosmia (Larsen, J. R et al., 2020; Wang D et al., 2020). While persistence of at least one symptom in particular, fatigue and dyspnea, was observed in recovery Covid-19 patients (Carfi A et al., 2020). The most common routes of the disease transmission are by the droplets and aerosols in health care facilities (Jayaweera, M et al., 2020; Tang, S et al., 2020). The severity of the symptoms and the risk to get the disease is higher in cancer patients, people with chronic kidney disease, heart conditions, severe asthma, and obesity. More at risk are also people with type 2 diabetes, males and smokers (CDC, 2020; Williamson EJ et al., 2020; Zheng, Z et al., 2020). Currently, the therapies for Covid-19 are supportive, and prevention remains the best way to stop the spread of infection (Cascella M et al., 2020). In addition, health care workers including nursing staff, play a key role in the transmission of Covid-19 since they are dealing with the virus at the front lines (WHO, 2020c) and are more likely to get infected (Bielicki, J. A et al., 2020). Also, in comparison with the general population, health care professionals have a higher risk for infection, especially those who operate without the appropriate protective measures (Nguyen, L. H et al., 2020). But different studies carried out about health care professionals' knowledge and attitudes found misconceptions and insufficient knowledge in the management of the situation (Olum R et al., 2020; Kassie, B. A et al., 2020;

Abdel Wahed, W. Y et al., 2020). In Albania, the status of lockdown was declared on March 12th, and the present study was carried out a month later. At that time, the studies that assessed the knowledge of healthcare professionals, including nurses, for Covid-19 were insufficient, and the few ones were carried out in China (Zhang, M et al., 2020). As nurses present the largest component of the health care workforce (AACN, 2019), they play a very important role, both locally and globally, in managing a health crisis such as a pandemic (Corless, I. B et al., 2018). Besides, there is no sufficient evidence on the type of effective training interventions needed for health care professionals to enhance their disaster response knowledge and skills, including pandemics (Williams J et al., 2008). On the other hand, rural and regional areas, as well the absence of prepared health staff, are determining factors in managing a pandemic (Dewar B et al., 2014). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study investigating nurses' roles, knowledge and attitudes surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic in a Western Balkan country.

Methodology

Study design, timeframe and study population

This is a descriptive transversal study which was conducted online. The call for participation in the study included a two-week period between April and May 2020. The participation link was posted on social media where the nursing staff were invited to participate. The inclusion criterion was that the nurses should be only from the city of Vlora, Albania. A status of reminder was constantly posted throughout the data collection period.

Questionnaire

A literature-based questionnaire was developed for data collection. A variety of studies related to Covid-19 served as the basis for its design. It should be noted that the announcement of the state of the Covid-19 pandemic was very recent at the time the study was undertaken. Related studies were conducted mainly in China, where the initial outbreak of the pandemic took place. In addition to questions related to nurses' knowledge and attitudes about Covid-19 corona virus, the questionnaire included the section of socio-demographic data such as age, gender, and workplace, as well as various questions related to the nursing profession. Knowledge and attitudes were assessed with no/yes and multiple choice questions.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Ten participants were excluded from statistical analyses, specifically because they did not complete part of the questionnaire. Single variables were described with frequency distribution and percentage, and were grouped into tables. The Epi Info TM software version 7.1.3.10 was used for the statistical analysis.

Ethical considerations

Each phase of the design and implementation of the study was guided by ethical principles for medical research that include the human subject matter of the Helsinki Declaration (AMA, 2013) and European Commission ethics for researchers (EC, 2013). By completing the questionnaire, all participants gave their informed consent to be part of this study.

Results

Sample characteristics

A total of 81 participants, nursing staff, were formally enrolled in the study. As shown in table 1, the majority were women (81.48%) and aged between 20-29 years old, (62.96%). Most of them worked in urban areas, in hospital settings, and primary health care, and with less than 5 years of work experience (68.35).

Characteristics	Sub-category	N (%)
Gender	Female	66(81.48)
	Male	15(18.52)
Age (years)	20-29	51(62.96)
	30-39	14(17.28)
	40-49	7(8.64)
	>50	9(11.11)
Work place	Urban area	69(85.19)
	Rural area	12(14.81)
Type of work facility	Hospital	42(51.85)
	Primary health care center	34(41.98)
	Emergency department	4(4.94)
	Policlinic	1(1.23)
Work experience (years)	<5	54(68.35)
	5-10	6(7.59)
	>10	19(24.05)

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Participants' knowledge and attitudes towards Covid-19

Table 2 shows the knowledge and attitudes questions about Covid-19 with no/ yes answers. Most of the participants expressed good knowledge of Covid-19. Inaccuracies have been observed mainly in the treatment of the disease and in the willingness to be vaccinated if a vaccine is invented. Some

participants (13.58%) think that there is already a vaccine for Covid-19 available.

Questions	Answers	N (%)
Did you know that the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic is a worldwide problem?	No	2 (2.47)
	Yes	79 (97.53)
Is Covid-19 an infection caused by a virus?	Yes	81 (100.00)
Is Covid-19 transmitted by close contact with an infected person?	No	2 (2.47)
	Yes	79 (97.53)
Is the quarantine period for Covid-19 two weeks?	No	4 (5.00)
	Yes	76 (95.00)
Is there a vaccine for Covid-19?	No	70 (86.42)
	Yes	11 (13.58)
Are antibiotics the first line of treatment?	No	49 (60.49)
	Yes	32 (39.51)
Can frequent washing of hands with soap and water, and the use of masks help prevent the transmission of the disease?	Yes	81 (100.00)
Are chronic patients more at risk of disease and mortality from Covid-19?	No	2 (2.47)
	Yes	79 (97.53)
Are health professionals more at risk of getting infected?	No	1 (1.23)
	Yes	80 (98.77)
Can Covid-19 be life-threatening?	No	3 (3.70)
	Yes	78 (96.30)
Do you think that because of your profession you can get Covid-19?	No	5 (6.17)
	Yes	76 (93.83)
Are you afraid that any of your family members may be affected by Covid-19?	No	6 (7.41)
	Yes	75 (92.59)
If you are affected by Covid-19 will you be quarantined?	No	1 (1.23)
	Yes	80 (98.77)

Nurses Role in the Covid-19 Pandemic, Knowledge and Attitudes of Nursing Staff – Implications for the Future

Can Covid-19 infection be prevented by frequent hand-washing with soap and water?	No	13 (16.25)
	Yes	67 (83.75)
Would the prevalence of Covid-19 decrease if all health professionals participated in infection control programs?	No	9 (11.11)
	Yes	72 (88.89)
Are you ready to get vaccinated if a vaccine for COVID-19 is invented?	No	11 (13.75)
	Yes	69 (86.25)

Table 2. Knowledge and attitudes related to Covid-19, no/yes questions

Table 3 shows participant's knowledge and attitudes related to Covid-19 through multiple choice questions. The table presents the answers with the highest frequency.

Questions	Answers	N (%)
How do you rate your knowledge of Covid-19?	Insufficient Sufficient	14(17.28) 67(82.72)
How do you evaluate your attitudes towards Covid-19?	Insufficient Sufficient	2(2.50) 78(97.50)
Possible symptoms of Covid-19:	fever, dry cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing	65(80.25)
Why Covid-19 is not a common flu?	-There is no treatment or vaccine, - it is about 4 times more infectious, - it is also transmitted by people who are not sick (asymptomatic) -There is no treatment or vaccine, it is also transmitted by people who are not sick (asymptomatic) -There is no treatment or vaccine	31(38.27) 17 (20.99) 14 (17.28)
What worries you most about yourself and your family?	-That the immune system (yours or family members') may not be able to cope with the disease if you are affected by Covid-19, which may be life-threatening -That the immune system (yours or family members') may not be able to cope with the disease if you are affected by Covid19,	27 (33.75) 17 (21.25)

	-that your life may be threatened, -that you may not receive proper treatment due to hospital overload That it could be life-threatening I'm not worried at all	 10 (12.50) 9 (11.25)
What was your source of information on Covid-19?	-Television, -Social Networks, -The institution where I work - Ministry of Health -Television, -The institution where I work, - Ministry of Health -Television, -Social Networks, -The institution where I work, -Ministry of Health, -Friends / Family	21 (25.93) 12 (14.81) 11(13.58)

Table 3. Knowledge and attitudes about Covid-19 (multiple choice questions)

Discussion

Our analysis of socio-demographic data found that out of the overall number of 81 participants, 81.48% (n=66) were females, 62.96% belonged to the age group 20-29 years old, 85.19 % worked as nurses in urban areas, 51.85% worked in hospital

settings and 41.98% in primary health care centers. More than half of the participants (68.35%) had <5 years of experience and 24.05% (n=19) had more than 10 years of work experience (Table 1). Table 2 shows that of 81 nurses, 79 (97.53%) know that the outbreak of the Covid-19 is a worldwide problem. All participants report that Covid-19 is an infection caused by a virus. In this context, the results of the present study are not different from the results of a review study in which there was found a good knowledge of Covid-19 among different target groups of healthcare workers (Puspitasari, I. M et al., 2020). But in comparison with another study where the majority of participants were female nurses, our study participants showed better knowledge as all participants reported that Covid-19 infection is caused by a virus, compared to the study where only half of the participants gave a correct answer regarding this question (Marwa M et al., 2020). Human-to-human transmission through airborne droplets and close contact is by far the most confirmed way of transmitting the virus (Lotfi, M et al., 2020). In relation to this, the nurses participating in the study show good knowledge since Table 2 illustrates that 97.53% of them confirm this fact. As noted from Table 2, 60.49% of participants in the study have reported that antibiotics are the first line of treatment. While research studies suggest that, so far, there is no genuine treatment, and current therapies for Covid-19 are mostly symptomatic. For instance, the use of antibiotics is mainly suggested for patients with signs of pneumonia (Lotfi, M et al., 2020). All participants in the study agree that frequent washing of hands with soap and water and the use of masks is a very good way to prevent the spread of infection. This fact is supported by the literature as a study found that these simple approaches may help to slow the spread of coronavirus (Ma, Q. X et al., 2020). The results as seen in Table 2 suggest that nurses in the study are aware that chronic patients are at higher risk of infection and

mortality from severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Studies found that patients with chronic diseases and those with comorbidities are more at risk to get infected (Sanyaolu, A et al., 2020; Zhang, J et al., 2020). Also, studies found that health care professionals have a higher risk of getting infected with corona virus (Nguyen, L. H et al., 2020; Ali, S et al., 2020; Wang, J et al., 2020). Almost all nurses in the study agree that being a health care professional increases the risk of getting infected. 88.89% of them express that the participation of health care professionals in infection control programs helps to decrease the prevalence of infection. Current studies support this fact (Islam, M. S et al., 2020). Lack of information was noted regarding the coronavirus vaccine, since 12.58% of participants report that a vaccine is available for Covid-19 virus, while 13.75% report that they are not willing to get vaccinated. The majority of participants (92.59%) are worried that both their lives and the lives of their family members or relatives may be threatened by infection from the virus. The impact of Covid-19 on mental health among health care professionals in different countries, including Albania, found high levels of anxiety, depression, and fear of getting the virus and spreading it to relatives as well as the lack of mental support in workplace (Htay MNN et al., 2020). As seen in Table 3, nurses in the study have expressed that they have sufficient knowledge and positive attitudes about Covid-19 respectively (82.72%) and (97.50%). 80.25% (n=65) of the participants reported recognition of the main symptoms of Covid-19. A review study found the most prevalent symptoms in patients infected by the novel coronavirus were fever, cough, fatigue, and difficulty breathing (Grant, M. C et al., 2020). The majority of nurses in the study, 38.27% (n=31), report that Covid-19 is not common flu because there is no vaccine or treatment available, it is four-times more infectious than flu, and can be transmitted by people who are asymptomatic but have tested

positive with the virus. Only 17.28% of participants in the study link the Covid-19 severity to the lack of vaccine. Despite the fact that Covid-19 symptoms are similar to flu viruses symptoms (both affecting the respiratory tract and transmitted through droplets), Covid-19 infection is more severe and has a higher mortality rate than the common flu. In addition, there are vaccines available for the common flu or influenza. (WHO, 2020d). 33.75% of the nursing staff in the study are concerned that one of their relatives will be infected with Covid-19 and may not be able to cope with the disease. Fear of not receiving proper treatment due to hospital overloads was reported by 17 nurses. Similar attitudes of the health care professionals are found in other studies and for that mental and other types of support are recommended (Adams JG and Walls RM, 2020). In Table 3, 25.93% (n=21) of the participants in the study have obtained their knowledge of Covid-19 from several sources such as television, social networks, institutions where they work, and the Ministry of Health. Nurses are a source of information for their patients and the community in general and, in this regard, their resources of information on Covid-19 must be trusted and approved by relevant bodies (Karin T et al., 2020).

Limitations

A non-validated but simply literature-based designed questionnaire used for data collection, along with the small research sample constitute limitations that should be considered. This is a cross-sectional study conducted online, very close to the time of the declaration of a pandemic and the lockdown in Albania, thus limiting the generalization of results. Despite these limitations, our findings provide valuable information about the knowledge and attitudes of nursing staff in Albania at the early onset of the pandemic.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Supply of appropriate information sources from guidelines approved by relevant bodies is suggested. Participation in educative training programs for the prevention and control of infections related to Covid-19 should be assured for all nursing staff. Mental health support for nurses in workplace is recommended.

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Comparative Analysis of Contemplative Pedagogy and its Possible Applications within Current International Education

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Abstract

While the variation of pedagogies has evolved over time in public school settings, there has also been a significant growth of alternative pedagogies over the mainstream circuit (Bodinet, 2016). One of lesser known pedagogical approaches within those, Contemplative Pedagogy, as well as its applications, have been explored in mostly-independent schools. The question arises: would it gain acceptance in mainstream education? The purpose of this paper is to explore the possible applications of Contemplative Pedagogy in an evidence-based international context, through the analysis of various Mindfulness training techniques and exercises aimed at heightening student awareness and self-knowledge within their larger societal context, and to analyze the impact of this approach within mainstream learning environments.

Keywords: Alternative pedagogies, contemplative pedagogy, mindfulness, international education, emotional learning.

Background

Pedagogy is often understood as a learning theory and the practice of such theory through the learning process. Variations

of pedagogies have evolved over time, reflective of the social or political nature of that period as well as the historical or scientific stance of the times. Such evolution attempted to explain and define the role of the educator and the role of the student, which even now, some argue, have no definite construct: Mills and McGregor (2016), Smallhorn (2017) and Aksakalli (2019), for instance, suggest that there are many variations and most teachers use a combination of pedagogies in their interactions with students. However, the theoretical framework of learning is carried out through institutions that shape the design of curriculum through student learning outcomes. As pedagogies evolve and new methods are concocted, tested and used, we notice a shift in educational paradigms over time. Bodinet (2016) describes the educational system we use today as largely created during the industrial revolution, which had a strong focus on the values and norms of the 18th and 19th centuries. Since then, education around the world has changed and is continuing to do so based on research and evidence, political drivers and institutional methodologies. As the world advances, educational reforms have been developed and implemented to help individuals adapt and become more socially assimilated. In recent decades, however, scholars began to promote student-centered learning by utilizing different pedagogical approaches such as the flipped classroom, the Socratic Method and Inquiry-based learning. Given the above scenario, with classrooms becoming more multicultural and methodologies more blended, and in spite of the seeming constraints documented by Flores (2017), I would like to further explore what other pedagogical tools teachers can use to advance learning rooted in less explored areas, such as in social and emotional elements using techniques that nurture the students' awareness and concentration, specifically through the application of Contemplative Pedagogy.

Research and Literature in Practice

Alternative pedagogies, also known as alternative education (AE) are classroom practices that derive from what we now know today as mainstream education, or mainstream pedagogy. Somewhere outside of that, there is also a focus on alternative learning environments, which could be found in independent and private schools, virtual learning environments and home-based learning. According to McGee and Lin's research (2016), these alternative environments strive to be more supportive than mainstream schooling and promote smaller sizes, religion-based communities or independent learning. Pedagogically, the approaches can come in the form of an unconventional classroom such as the Flipped Classroom, or methodological approaches such as the Montessori Method, the Waldorf Method, structure-free curriculum and contemplative pedagogy. The framework of alternative education lies in its structure to provide youth with an education that will subsequently aid in meeting the standardized requirements from a traditional classroom to an alternative one. In this paper we will focus on Contemplative Pedagogy, as research continues to evolve in and around this lesser-known pedagogical approach. My rationale for choosing this is rooted in my current educational context, as many of my students who attend the virtual school I work at strive for holistic growth focused on organic learning rather than having outcomes measured through standardized testing; they aim at gaining quantifiable social experiences in school while achieving emotional peace and tranquility through disengagement with the traditional. Therefore, this paper aims to find and share information that could potentially be added to the knowledge-base of Contemplative Pedagogy, thus potentially helping learners achieve those goals.

Empirical studies on Contemplative Pedagogy have been measured in a variety of approaches, most notably through

observation, academic achievements as well as through social and emotional competence. O'Donnell (2015) and Bach *et al* (2015) takes us through some of the ways students have deviated from paying attention in the classroom, such as the sole focus for achievement starting at an early age, the increased spotlight on Capitalism and success, and sensory overload brought upon by the increase in technology. There are many forms of contemplative pedagogy, notably to shift systematic learning to connect students to be more aware of themselves and the world around them. Thomas (2016) describes it as pedagogy that includes mindfulness activities, meditation, and cultivating knowledge through understanding our role in the world, and develops a capacity of concentration even in the midst of noise. Gardner's (2020) recent research demonstrates the positive outcomes of Contemplative Pedagogy. Over a six-year period, she gathered reflection journals from over 228 students. Her research design includes a qualitative study using a narrative methodology analysis that took place in a 2-year period and consisted of 3 stages. The findings showed that most students embodied the learning process through direct and indirect mindfulness. Her research also showed that mindfulness regulates the attitude of a student's awareness intrinsically, and that the state of mind of most students revealed a deeper awareness of their social environment. Some of the techniques used were discussions on mindfulness, guided group meditation, taking time during class to write reflections and pose questions while using terminology associated with mindfulness. Additionally, some forms of yoga such as Yin and Restorative have shown to have a positive benefit in relieving anxiety and improving mood among students in school (Hylander *et al.*, 2017); however, it is not exclusive to education as there has been extensive evidence-based research done on the effects of yoga

(Ross *et al.*, 2013; Wang and Hagins, 2016; Adling and Bangar, 2017) for the general population.

Stance and applications of Contemplative Pedagogy

Overview

An example of a driving force in untraditional classrooms is the practice of Critical Pedagogy (Mclaren, 2019). Critical pedagogy is a practice that has its roots in Critical Theory, wherein the intent of the educator is to promote learning by using students' awareness of their societal positions in the self and enable them to form a relationship with the larger society. Giroux's (2020) stance on Critical Pedagogy is formed by empowering the students to take a critical stance on their surroundings, as this will allow them to become successful learners (*ibid*). He also goes on to link Critical Pedagogy as a critique against traditional pedagogy as it requires mastery of knowledge, logic and "fundamentalisms that require authority by erasing any trace of subaltern histories, class struggles, and racial and gender inequalities and injustices (*ibid*, p. 3). Lissovoy (2016) further injects that students are encouraged to reflect on experiences and connect knowledge to a greater level than they are expected and recognize that everything they learn can always be altered, since it is believed that education addresses the democratic usage of knowledge in an unequal context. Critical Pedagogy also identifies educational discourses that have morphed over the years, such as the roles of students and teachers as well as cultural manifestations. These elements bring us to another, lesser-known methodology that has slowly begun to gain recognition and which is the focus of this paper: Contemplative Pedagogy. The available literature details is as a way for students to apply skills they are expected to learn, while educators take

into account different techniques that aid in helping them integrate Mindfulness training and learning within the educational parameters (Rickert *et al.*, 2016; Franco *et al.*, 2016). Some learning approaches use techniques that help students reach a deeper, calmer state of awareness, such as mindfulness, open communication, certain forms of meditation and personal reflection (Barbezat & Bush, 2014; Beer, 2010; Cooke, 2015). These techniques also promote self-inquiry, decision-making and constructive thinking. Flores (2017) asserts that academic performance is linked to self-understanding and exploration of self-development. One example of a contemplative pedagogical technique is the practice of mindfulness meditation and mindfulness training, as documented by Hartel (2017). Furthermore, other researchers, such as Baird *et al.*, (2014), Chess (2013) and Penberthy (2016) have conjectured that activities that foster the practice of mindfulness training will show forms of student preparedness and raise motivation. If contemplative pedagogy aids the development of positive self-awareness, there can potentially be a significant improvement in the social and emotional behaviors of students, thus improving learning outcomes (Hartel, 2017; Flores, 2017). Mindfulness training could perhaps complement traditional education in public schools by using techniques that are designed to help quiet the mind to foster the learning process. It should be noted that earlier research showed that educators were less inclined to include meditation in the classroom due to the concern that the practice of the technique did not convey secular ethics and values, as established in the United States' Constitution (Hart, 2004). Other concerns lie in what Mayes and Ferrin (2001) refer to as "spiritual commitments", which describes how a teacher's delivery of mindfulness practices may be a conflict upon their duties as a teacher and their potentially own spiritual practice. Even earlier research (Dantley, 1990) describes mindfulness practice as a

show of misalignment with foundational education in social settings, and ultimately not making a positive contribution to social and economic realities in poor urban areas. While this is a particularly strong consideration, it is also true that alternative pedagogies were not explored in such depth due to more pressing educational priorities such as public school reforms and standardizations from the 1990s-2000 (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003)). During that period in the late 90s, the United States focused on creating assessments that met standardized criteria that complimented content tailored to course standards. With alternative pedagogies, it was difficult to implement in the public school sector, so charter schools and magnet schools that served as an alternative began to grow as it gave parents greater autonomy over choices for their children and their educational philosophies. Manno (1997) describes how during that decade, charter schools became the target for research and development as they were institutions that experimented with alternative pedagogies and had a stronger philosophical model on holistic and naturalistic learning models. However, what sparked a widespread progression of research was not due to stagnant curiosity but a spike in suicide among school aged children and teens during that decade (McKeown *et al.*, 2006). Improved pedagogical approaches became an important discussion due to the multitude of learning demands, assessments and learning challenges that students face. Over time, the stigma of mindfulness training in classrooms dwindled down as progressing research shows pedagogical purpose in what the students receive. Evidence-based research draws upon a variety of techniques that alienates religious and cultural foundations with the focus on creating a space of inclusion and adopting openness.

Contemplative pedagogy in an international context – the example of Japan

A country that ranks highly in education and safety amongst other OECD countries is Japan, with 7.8/10 in education and 8.4/10 in safety respectively (Japan – OECD, 2020). The way the Japanese live and conduct their lives has been rooted in their culture for centuries, starting with teachings from Japanese monk Hakuin Ekaku, who influenced the teachings of Zen Buddhism in Japan to cultivate awareness of self and the individual's role in society to achieve engagement with a holistic cognitive perception (Shoji *et al.*, 2018). This may be significant to the formation of Contemplative Pedagogy as many of its roots share similarities to how Japanese students behave in school and in society. Low crime rates and education may have a link to the country's introspective society as suggested by Kishi *et al* (2018). They did a study on social factors that prevented people from committing crimes, and the two elements mentioned most frequently were the damage a person could cause to family structure and becoming the source of stress for someone else. The link conveys incredible insights to the Japanese and their logical reasoning toward role in society.

In education, the term Contemplative Pedagogy does not exist in Japan, though the similar practice of what is aptly named mindful pedagogy is customary in the public school sector (Sevilla, 2015), integrating Buddhist ideology such as non-violence behavior, non-attachment and ethical conduct within the educational system. He offers an argument between the holistic idealism of Japanese education as well as the contradictions that occur in the overall social and emotional connection that is absent due to the rigors of academic achievement and stress management. Philosophically, the idea of mindfulness stems from the *vipassana* practices in Theravada Buddhism, which is the use of observation of physical and

mental changes in the body (Pagis, 2019). The Japanese have adopted and modified its existence to teach school children how to behave intrinsically. The same research by Sevilla gives four objectives to mindful pedagogy that are taught at an early age: building focus, developing a contemplative and introspective approach to course activities, cultivating compassion and improving self-understanding. By instilling these objectives in students early on, student traits are clearly connected to the cognitive social and emotional behaviors of these objectives. Alternatively, he presents an argument that the foundation of mindful pedagogy in Japanese students may lead to self-understanding as the most intimate part of their nature, though there may not be an awareness of the dogmatism that is also present with an assessment heavy, test-based curricula. Nonetheless, the awareness of mindfulness practices that is acquired intrinsically could perhaps be a model to be used in other educational contexts.

An example of contemplative pedagogy in a Western classroom

As a way of contrast, and to illustrate the possible benefits of Contemplative Pedagogy in contexts where mindfulness, meditation and self-reflection might be more foreign and not as integrated as in Japan, this paper will explore the current research in selected Irish primary schools as well as the ongoing circumstances in England.

In Ireland, Keating (2016) undertook a 2-year research on 70 Irish primary school students, ages 7-11 years of age, in mindfulness meditation. He piloted the study with participants that received guided meditation twice a week for one minute per year of age. The findings were collected through two 30-minute interviews several weeks apart. The interviews consisted of open ended questions that promoted the students to develop their own ideas in their meditation experience. Additionally, he used

photographs to elicit responses from the students to the capacity that they were able to identify metaphorically what image reminded them of how they felt during meditation. The findings in the study were presented as first-person narratives to convey a students' personal experience. The outcome of his research posits that mediation deepens students' capacity for awareness and leads them to unconsciously be a more critical thinker, which links Gardner's (2020) above research on the positive outcomes, especially though guided meditation.

Further to the above, English schools recently added Mindfulness as a subject and the British Government invested public funds in 2019 to launch research into the benefits of Mindfulness in classrooms (UK GOV, 2019). The study has been collecting data from 370 schools in England, with students taking part in a series of trials in different mindfulness exercises. The study, which is set to expire in 2021, has so far explored relaxation techniques to help regulate emotions as well as breathing exercises to strengthen mental well-being, and results are being collected by mental health experts that will use the data to find a link between significant roles that teachers have in school to developing vital care approaches to help students achieve a level of harmony that seems to be fluctuating in the modern world. The British government is piloting this trial to help identify mental health disorders and creating best practices for medical professionals. At the time of this research paper, the British government has not released any updates or data concerning this study publicly. The obvious difference is we can see between the U.K. and Japan is that the study in the U.K. is an initiative set by the government that they "will identify the mental health and broader wellbeing needs of these children, including whether a referral to a more specialist service is needed" (p. 16). The focus is on identifying mental health issues and to create procedures that ensure best practices are in place at

schools. Moreover, in the Japanese context, students learn mindfulness techniques intrinsically. Notwithstanding, there are cultural differences to consider, especially since the U.K. is not a predominantly Buddhist country as Japan as Shoji *et al* (2018) earlier concluded.

Drawbacks

Mindfulness training, which includes meditation of many forms: guided, seated, walking, reflection writing, intention setting, deep breathing exercises and stillness exercises have shown reasonable significance in schools at a steady pace as Gardner's (2020) research above suggests, and there is meaningful consideration to acknowledge that students have adopted the practices in schools and the general consensus does show effectiveness in the classroom. However, research shows that there have been adverse reactions among students pedagogically (Dobkin *et al.*, 2018; Wong *et al.*, 2018; Lindahl *et al.*, 2017). Some of the reactions reported through the last four decades have been signs of anxiety, traumatic memories, and spiritual confusion. Since the negative outcomes affected students' physical and mental health, it could be argued that the emergence of self-awareness through mindfulness training might result in emotional traumas that reemerge and cause unexpected distress. Mindfulness practice may heighten a student's awareness of the surroundings around them, but it could also trigger strong emotions that challenge medical complications they might be facing, and they may not even be aware of it. It is possible that evidence surrounding mindfulness training in classrooms could be at the heels of the enthusiasm that it receives. While Gardner's (2020) research showed well-founded benefits, long term research in clinical trials has also shown that in some cases mindfulness training has produced small improvements in

reducing stress or improving one's quality of life. Very little evidence supports the effectiveness on self-awareness, attention span improvement or sleep (Cebolla *et al.*, 2017; Lindahl *et al.*, 2017; Khoury *et al.*, 2013; Mesmer-Magnus *et al.*, 2017). In fact, most of the research showed that it did not lead to long-term outcomes compared to traditional drug-based medical intervention. Meanwhile, less formal research by Anderson *et al* (2019) was conducted on the online forum *Reddit*, curated publicly by individuals who have common interests, and collectively share topics and advice for others (Jhaver *et al.*, 2019). The questionnaire was designed with open-ended and closed multiple choice questions about their experiences of meditation, perceived benefits and any drawbacks. Of the 240 participants who completed the survey, more than 88% continue to practice mindfulness training, while 12% stopped. Of those 12%, a high number of participants say they stopped due to a negative emotional response, or a bad experience not triggered by medication but through the reliving of emotional traumas. Although not without its own contextual limitations - *Reddit* users are predominately from the United States, and disproportionately male in the-between-secondary-school ages to late 20's, according to Sattelberg (2020) - the findings were similar to those of Dobkin *et al* (2018), Wong *et al* (2018) and Lindahl *et al* (2017), whose research was not conducted online, but in a controlled study with targeted participants. *Reddit's* statistical research leads us to make a strong conclusion that mindfulness training could result in emotional traumas and distress, especially for young men.

Looking ahead

Based on the analysis and discussion thus far, it is my position that the notion that contemplative pedagogy has no room in conventional schools should be challenged; mindfulness training

as a pedagogical tool has shown positive significance in the classroom as Gardner (2020) earlier suggested. Kim (2020) asserts that mindfulness training in the classroom serves an important focus but pedagogically it should be delivered in a seamless, non-judgmental and non-obvious way which will take away from the focus that mindfulness training as an intervention. CASEL, or the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, an organization of experts in the field of Social and Emotional Learning suggests in their latest journal (2020) that mindfulness training in Contemplative Pedagogy is a stimulating trigger for intellectual development in students. Some of the activities they recommend be integrated in the classroom could include:

1. Pinwheel breathing: This could help students practice deep breathing in a large classroom.
2. Class Contracts: This may encourage students to be responsible in collaborating with their classmates on their expectations as a student and you as their teacher.
3. Journaling Prompts: This could help students reflect, especially on internal and external feelings that they are experiencing.
4. Body Scanning: This may help students focus on physical and emotional sensations. This could also be combined as a form of meditation.
5. Snack Exercise: Using food as a way for students to practice their five senses; with questions such as: what do they smell like? What does it look like? What does it feel like? What does it taste like? And, what does it sound like?

In analyzing the validity of approaches to students' social and emotional development in Contemplative Pedagogy, all of these techniques promote self-inquiry, decision making, exploration as Flores (2017) and Keating (2016) earlier suggested,

with Flores also noting the importance of making a link between academic performance and exploration of self-development, and Keating making a link between a students' experience and meditation practices supporting a student's educational path. We could perhaps accept that as best pedagogical practices go, the activities above could work with most students. It is important that activities used in classrooms support student preparedness and raise their motivation as a few researchers have mentioned earlier (Baird *et al.*, 2014; Chess, 2013; Penberthy, 2016). Since public schools are largely standardized in what students are expected to learn, complementing aspects of Contemplative Pedagogy into teaching may give students support and all of the benefits without sacrificing academic performance.

Conclusions

Does Contemplative Pedagogy have a place in mainstream public schools? In looking at the research covered above, and though not without criticism from educators, Contemplative Pedagogy has made its way into the mainstream education through the evolution of Alternative Pedagogies. As noted above, educational paradigms shift as societies evolve and values that are important during one period may take on a different value system in another period. As such, we can see by how methodologies are constantly being redeveloped, the focus to adapt to student needs. In practice, this paper shows evidence that there is strong merit in Contemplative Pedagogy, especially with the increasing academic pressure, bullying and learning difficulties faced by students today. In Gardner's (2020) research mentioned earlier, mindfulness practices have shown to increase in student awareness and their relationships to learning. Having that pedagogical element reveals a positive impact in learning,

whether students are in realization of it or not. It does not take away from the curriculum nor does it have a particular negative disadvantage to students. Because of the lesser-known techniques in the classroom (mediations, reflective journaling, breathing exercises), students are also able to take stronger control of their learning by being able to manifest their focus in becoming more self-aware. Additionally, the UK has been collecting data on a Mindfulness study across various British schools, which shows that there is potential there to make Mindfulness a regular practice in the curriculum. The drawbacks of Contemplative Pedagogy have not shown significant adverse effects on the mainstream population though students with medical pre-conditions may be distressed as researched by Wong *et al* (2018). Overall, the research that has been produced have not shown long-term disadvantages, and very little evidence supports long-term drawbacks in general.

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Museums of Scarcity and Art Deserts

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Abstract

We review the unwillingness of artistic institutions to engage with their audiences as mirrored in their incapacity to develop meaningful alternatives to art access during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. An analysis of the pandemic offerings of some of the biggest museums in the world will allow us to identify their perceived offerings and their understanding of their function in society in contrast with their own statements of purpose. As the cost of accessing any cultural manifestation decreases, we turn from an economy of scarcity to an economy of visual consumption where there is an abundance of resources and attention is scarce. Art institutions and their encircling dynamics of limitation become less interesting for the public, and this results in the exclusion of art from the semantic bubble of a great part of the population.

Keywords: museums, scarcity, art, COVID, visual economy, social distancing

The COVID pandemic has presented an unparalleled situation in the arts, after the end of the 20th century brought aesthetic reflections on liquid and gaseous art, and the beginning of the 21st century was marked by reflections on the objectual turn. We found ourselves in a situation where solid, physical objects were inaccessible for such a period of time that it allowed art practices to take decisions, build and execute strategies. Furthermore,

many institutions already had electronic presence and significant electronic audiences that kept digital contact for a number of reasons (Kravchyna & Hastings, 2002; Mansfield, 2014).

This conflagration of circumstances allows us to identify trends in the responses of institutions to social distancing needs. These responses are shaped by the resources available, the nature of the collections and by the objectives conformed by the institutions' perceived place in society. Since regular in person interactions are paused, we can observe the way the institutions interact with the audience beyond the placement of objects in physical space, revealing what kind of institutional priorities are privileged when pushed to restructure their function remotely. If "[e]very aspect of a museum, gallery, or heritage site communicates. From the architectural style of the building or layout of a site, to the attendants at the entrance, the arrangement of the exhibits or artefacts, the colour of walls, and the positioning and content of labels and text panels (...)" (Mason, 2005), then we can gain valuable insights of what is placed online instead of those purposefully designed spaces, given that all the efforts of these institutions were limited into electronic outlets for months.

For the purposes of this article, we have chosen as examples of the trends of international museums with statements of purpose available online, as their objectives are clear and allow for an informed analysis. We have picked museums and not other artistic institutions because their positioning contrasts with the for profit goals of galleries, as commercial intent would impose its own set of priorities and the balance between these financial ends and their social concerns is not always clear (Krich, 2020). Coronavirus pandemic prompts visual art to turn virtual. The museums studied also carry particular responsibilities as they receive public funds, grants and tax exemptions based on their purported social goals, or they

receive funds from fiscally privileged foundations (John, 2013; Plaza, 2007).

The institutions examined are big enough that they would have budgets and staff to respond, connections with professionals and technical infrastructure, in order to isolate management philosophy from resource constraint. We understand that any institution has constraints, but we will also contrast these examples with successful efforts of smaller, less connected and well funded institutions. Some of the trends we identify actually made efficient use of expensive resources that nevertheless perpetuate structural social problems.

1. The diminished experience

One of the strategies museums used to connect with remote audiences is to promote previously produced content, content that was designed for outreach efforts before the pandemic (Bogardus Cortez, 2016). The google Cultural Institute has a number of technologies and projects that promise to "...preserve and bring the world's art and culture online so it's accessible to anyone, anywhere." (About Arts and Culture., n.d.)

However, these technologies are seldom used to actually make accessible art and culture, but instead they are used to reproduce the physical space of museums without taking care to allow for an engaging relationship between the viewer and the work; distorted yellowed walls, tiny paintings in long carpeted hallways, darkened sculptures and unclickable far away planes are hallmarks of the "virtual tours" offered by the British Museum, Guggenheim Museum, National Gallery of Art, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Pergamon Museum, Rijksmuseum, The J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Uffizi Gallery.



Figure 1. Uffizi Gallery. (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from <https://www.virtualuffizi.com/botticelli-room.html>.
Screenshot by author.



Figure 2. National Gallery. (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from <https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/the-national-gallery/hgFGLzj1GiNxTg>. Screenshot by author.



Figure 3. Pergamon Museum. (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from

https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/pergamonmuseum-staatliche-museen-zu-berlin/0QEALap3qf0s1g?sv_lng=13.3966447&sv_lat=52.5214685&sv_h=103.13056816785165&sv_p=-1.251949398793542&sv_pid=JuPTlwm1z9Yl-fLTp-p0qw&sv_z=1.

Screenshot by author.

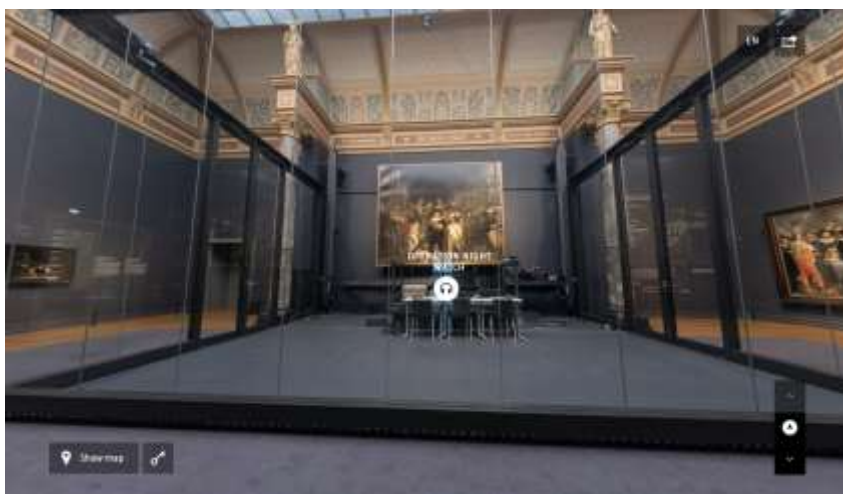


Figure 4. Rijksmuseum Museum. (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from

<https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/masterpieces-up-close>.

Screenshot by author.

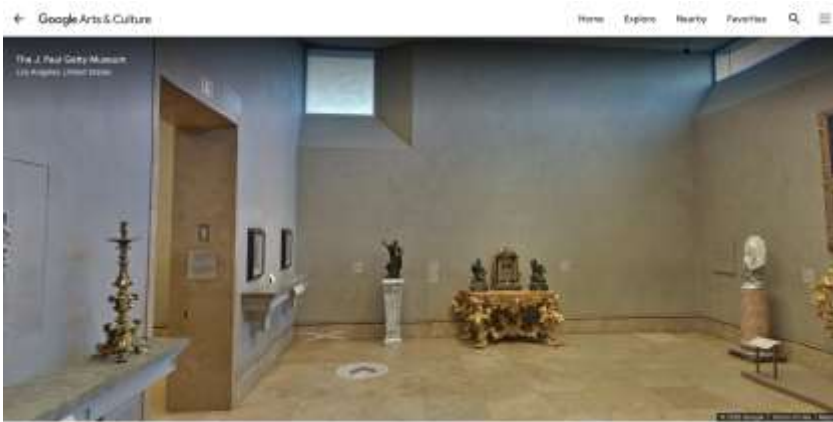


Figure 5. J Paul Getty Institute. (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from <https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/the-j-paul-getty-museum/cwFdGYSXlaOg6w?sv lng=-118.4735542&sv lat=34.0772014&sv h=331.6280520085428&sv p=2.928693879815512&sv pid=UCIJ08R3-O3sfXiTZjjSt2A&sv z=1>. Screenshot by author.

The Guggenheim is a great example of how lost an institution can become when offering online exhibits. When Frank Lloyd Wright (1959) wrote in his notes on the design of the physical space about the "...atmosphere of the unbroken wave – no meeting of the eye with angular or abrupt change of form," he was referring not to abstract whims, but to the architectural experience for the enjoyment of art. Yet when one visits the virtual tours the museum has on offer, one is faced with vast amounts of text and a clickable image that do not contribute at all to an experience connected with the philosophy set by the people who founded the museum. The difficult navigation, the distance with the works, the irreparable change in hues in a situation in which the human eye cannot adapt to the lighting conditions, everything adds up to a barrier that is erected between the art and the spectator.

The resulting experience, of clicking through a meaningless image, reinforces the idea in the viewer that it is the physical presence of the object that is worthwhile, and that visiting an online museum is a futile exercise, and that decentralization efforts on the part of the museums are laudable but misguided.



Figure 6. Guggenheim Museum. (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from https://artsandculture.google.com/streetview/solomon-r-guggenheim-museum-interior-streetview/jAHfbv3JGM2KaQ?hl=en&sv_lng=-73.95885824579308&sv_lat=40.7829175413439&sv_h=261.59081717075435&sv_p=-4.629350871041012&sv_pid=nQeVZZzZZrrmdxerxRQ6A&sv_z=0.9645743015259166. Screenshot by author.

These virtual tours are at best diminished experiences, where digital mediation has interposed its limitations, optical, navigational, temporal, between what is a complete experience in the original space, and a partial digital experience. At worst, this mediation strips the works of any aesthetic significance and turns them into low quality photo copies, in detriment of the

cause for art in general and of the digitalization and democratization of art in particular.

This does not mean that the tools developed by Google Arts and Culture are flawed in themselves, but that they are not designed to provide a meaningful aesthetic experience, the predominant “(...) focus of the system is to provide a compelling, engaging user experience through storytelling with cultural material” (Seales, Crossan, Yoshitake, Girgin, 2013). The developers of these tools understand culture in terms related to archive, conservation, and focused literary narratives rather than visual arts.

This bias towards literary, linear narratives is very clear when we look at the manner in which artworks are stripped of some of their essential characteristics by the process of integrating them into the system in a number of ways. Paintings in particular, when they are fragmented in sequential pieces on digital exhibits, and when navigated by “(...) moving pointing devices, the angles of the artwork are not always based on the artist's original intention. (...) [Imposing] a problematic view that provides misleading interpretations and understandings of artworks.” (Zhang, 2020)

While it is still impossible to digitally recreate all of the sensory elements that make an object aesthetically relevant, disregarding key characteristics of the work when digitally displaying them greatly impairs their relevance as a public exhibit.



Figure 7. Painting close up in a Google arts and Culture painting display from the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (n.d.). ©2020 Google. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/national-museum-of-modern-and-contemporary-art-korea>. Screenshot by author.



Figure 8. The national gallery with oculus (n.d.). ©2020 The National Gallery, retrieved 2020, from <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours/sainsbury-wing-vr-tour>. Screenshot by author.

The referential absence

While these previously developed tools are implicitly exclusionary, we can see a confirmation of the biases behind their use in other strategies, where the generation of new content for the pandemic has centered on referencing the absence of the “real experience” of the museum that is inaccessible due to social distancing, MoMa for example designed a series of kids coloring books where you could remind yourself of the greatness of the works you are not available to actually enjoy. (Estiler, 2020)

Another of the actions taken by MoMa was the reactivation of online courses they had already produced (Vaughan, 2020) (Halliday, 2018), where you could gain a better understanding of how interesting and great the works hung on their inaccessible walls are. The experience always remained limited to referencing, not to create a worthwhile experience in itself for

everyone, but to augment the value of what can only be experienced in the physical, privileged space of the museum.

This is just a very visible example of a widespread attitude towards remote artistic initiatives. A number of public and private institutions concentrated on video studio visits (MOCA, 2020), interviews (Widewalls, 2020), documentaries and even yoga lessons (Graves, 2020), among other vehicles for underlining the importance of the works missed during the peak of social distancing measures. All of these second class experiences kept reminding visitors what they were lacking, as institutions poured themselves in producing empty references that only derive their worth from inaccessible experiences.

These problems are primarily epistemological, as the same or similar tools can be used to construct highly meaningful experiences, in contrast to the drab Google Culture virtual visits, we can find examples such as the Frida Kahlo Museum in Mexico City, that through a commercial contractor¹ built a clickable virtual visit that chose great angles, chose camera placements for their enjoyment, changed the height of the perspectives to fit the rooms, and above all, recognized the characteristics of what makes the museum enjoyable and made an honest attempt to create an enjoyable experience for the visitor online. The colors, lines and textures have been carefully captured in order to present them in an organized, easily accessible manner.

¹ <https://www.recorridosvirtuales.com/>



Figure 9. Museo Frida Kahlo (n.d.). ©2020 Museo Frida Kahlo, retrieved 2020, from https://www.recorridosvirtuales.com/frida_kahlo/museo_frida_kahlo.html. Screenshot by author.

The age of the institutions is not a factor either in the approach to online exhibits, long standing institutions such as the Tate founded in 1897 and the New Museum founded in 1977 have created standalone, deeply aesthetic experiences for the viewers. The Tate's UNIQLO collaboration in the Tate Lates Nights, using poetry, performance and music created highly meaningful streams that didn't only concentrate on the work that couldn't be visited (Tate, 2020). The New Museum is another good example, having created Augmented Reality exhibits that could be visited without having to be inside enclosed spaces, by incorporating the cityscape in the digital exhibit. (Ciecko, 2020)

While museums claim to be "(...) in the service of society (...) exhibit[ing] the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity (...) for the purpos[e] of (...) enjoyment." (ICOM) And the micro-utopies of relational aesthetics have been integrated into the artistic practice of artists and to the programming of museums

(Blanes et al. 2016), COVID has led us to look beyond the words and recognize two different fundamental approaches in how cultural institutions faced social distancing needs.

One of the approaches we recognize is based on what we will call a Culture of Lack, distinguished by an Object Centered Inclination, where, as in Benjamin's *Aura* (1969), the value of the collection is tied to what cannot be really shared, the authenticity of the objects in the collection. Since this "(...) most sensitive nucleus (...)" (ibid.) would be jeopardized in making an authentic aesthetic experience available in absence of the physical object, works are only allowed to exist meaningfully inside the physical space of the museum. For an institution committed to a culture of lack, the limitations in access are inevitable, because what is valuable is something that should not be recreated or communicated without the presence of the object, it can only be pointed to, or expanded, but it cannot be offered as a real experience otherwise.

On the other hand, we have institutions that in their approach reflect a Culture of Plenty, in which the value is centered in the spectator's experience of artistic assets, and therefore all of the characteristics of the physical object that can be meaningful though any media should be used to construct a relevant experience. In a culture of plenty, it is the encounter between object and subject that is valuable, and therefore the greater the experience, and the more people can share it, makes the object more valuable. We identify some of the characteristics of these different approaches in the following table.

Culture of Lack	Culture of Plenty
Object centered	Experience centered
Public value is bigger as less people have access to the full aesthetic potential	Public value is bigger the more people have access to the full aesthetic potential
Barriers for user experience are fetishized	Barriers for user experience are examined for a solution
Experience is augmented by privilege, differentiation from other people	Experience is augmented by social connection, sharing an experience with many others
Finds convenience inside the limitations of technology in order to maintain focus on the restricted object	Uses the possibilities of technology to create meaningful experiences
Values context as data to be archived	Values context as part of an effort to generate knowledge through lived experience
Depends on scarcity	Depends on abundance

Table 1. Comparison between characteristics of a Culture of Lack and a Culture of Plenty

If after this fall of the curtain they do not reassess and radically change the way they structure access to aesthetic experience, then these are clearly not details to work out, but essential to how the institutions see themselves beyond the discourse, and they are misusing public resources to the detriment of social wellness.

Even since before the pandemic, “[a]ccess to the Internet is fast becoming seen as a basic utility not dissimilar to gas,

electricity or water (...)” (Walton, Kop, Spriggs and Fitzgerald, 2013) but as the technologies used to connect online are more pervasive in all social classes (ITU, 2020), it has become apparent that for electronic technologies to bring about a real positive social change you need more than having access to the material means of access to the internet (Recabarren, Nussbaum, Leiva 2007). Koss (2013) uses the term “Universal Digitisation” to describe a goal for policy making, where “individuals and organisations in every sphere can fully exploit the potential benefits of being online.” (Koss, 2013)

The misalignment of digital strategies and announced goals from cultural institutions is not only a misuse of public resources, but it also results in a redefinition of audiences, digital demographics complicate the access of broad swaths of the population to cultural contents. The limited dedication of institutions to the user experience results in second grade offerings that further marginalize people already disconnected from the cultural centers. The reinforcement of the differences between first person physical experience and a secondary digital experience also reinforces the exclusionary relationship between a first rate public that can connect with the cultural institutions through an already established nexus, and a second rate public that is not really being communicated with.

While the privileged public can remember or imagine their past or eventual connection with the physically present objects, the marginalized public is further estranged by their perpetuated inaccessibility to ‘real’ worthwhile cultural experiences. Since the internet implies “(...) selective exposure because it provides such an abundance of information that selective exposure is not only possible, but also necessary.” (Johnson, Bichard, Zhang, 2009) This means that there is little purpose for a member of these culturally marginalized

communities to engage and share digitally with artistic institutions.

If digital communication technologies were already breaking the location - community nexus (Barney, 2004), the substitution of “[a] space of flows [...] for [a] space of places” (Castells), whose new geographies are based on common interests (Balaguer, 2003), a “common world of things” (Barney, 2004), was accelerated by social distancing measures, which of course meant physical social distancing, to the detriment of offline social networks (Gauthier et al, 2020) while digital communities were strengthened. (Pérez-Escoda et al, 2020)

This also means that part of the population were increasingly isolated in already existing digital neighborhoods estranged from cultural institutions and the value they purpose to represent, contributing an artistic component to the formation of so called “cyberghettos” (Ebo, 1998), art deserts with very limited cultural capital where artistic expressions are very limited, while internet art exhibits are predominantly visited by people from communities defined by their cultural capital, indicated by characteristics such as having higher education degrees. (Enhuber, 2015)

As more people have access to the internet, being excluded from the possible benefits of electronic communications “(...) may become the major social justice challenge of our time” (Perlgut, 2011) because as the world in general becomes more digitally mediated, either because of temporal occurrences such as the COVID pandemic, or because of a general trend, an inadequacy of internet art exhibits could contribute, because of the reciprocity between online and offline worlds and digital acculturation (Dey, Yen, Samuel, 2019), to an alienation of sections of the public from organized artistic practices in general.

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Integrating culture in ELT using an indigenous folktale, Poireiton Khunthok

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Abstract

Language, literature and culture are interdependent and their contributions to the teaching and learning of a second language are immense. The study aims at examining the purviews of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach to teach language skills and culture. As CLIL has a dual focused learning approach, it seeks to examine the various possibilities of using the folk narratives of *Poireiton Khunthok* as the main teaching material to integrate the teaching of English language skills and culture. *Poireiton Khunthok* is a folktale of Manipur, a state in India which describes the long journey of Poireiton's migration and settlement from the netherworld Burmese side to Manipur. The study was conducted with the students of one of the schools of Manipur. The testing of the language skills was conducted with the student participants using the pre-test and post-test method. In the pre-test method, a conventional prose prescribed by the Board of Secondary Education Manipur was used. In the post-test method, the folk narrative of *Poireiton Khunthok* adopting the CLIL approach was used. The study indicated that the CLIL approach using the indigenous material assisted in developing the English language skills as well as understanding culture.

Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Culture, English Language skills, *Poireiton Khunthok*, ELT

Introduction and background

Researches in recent years have deliberated on the use of literature and its practical deliberations in ELT (English Language Teaching). The process of language learning consists in the development of language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language, according to Halliday (1965) is neither an “organism” (p. 9) nor an “edifice” (p. 9) but an activity consisting of listening, speaking, reading and writing (p. 9). Halliday’s definition on language brings out the four important aspects of language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing. In language learning, the main focus is to develop the language skills by involving more on ‘doing’ and ‘practising’ to ‘know’. In developing the language skills, it is conducive to examine the language use in various contexts. Undeniably, language is an integrated skill and is learnt through language use and practice. The sequence of mother tongue acquisition is L-S-R-W (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The home and the surrounding environment are usually conditioned to acquire listening and speaking skills. The language skills of reading and writing are usually learnt in schools. Indisputably, the learners get ample opportunity to practice their mother tongue at home and the surrounding environment. On the contrary, learning a second language like English needs a formal classroom in a school environment. So, the formal classroom environment has to be equipped with a supportive language setting to condition a natural learning environment. Furthermore, in the schools of Manipur, English is taught as a second language from classes I to XII. There is too much emphasis on teaching grammar and students hardly get an opportunity to get actively engaged in the

process of language learning. It is observed that many of the English language learners in the region are poor in all the language skills. This is due to the fact that teaching-learning is still dominated by the behaviouristic approach, teaching-learning is always teacher fronted and the cognitive perspective has taken a back seat. It is therefore, favourable, to provide abundant motivation and opportunities in the classroom through various well designed tasks and activities consisting of values and culturally sensitive contents to enhance their cognitive level that will assist to their natural learning.

The term Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) was coined by David Marsh and defined as “situations where subjects, or parts of subjects, are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims, namely the learning of content and the simultaneous learning of a foreign language” (Marsh as qtd. in Ruiz, 2015). CLIL is further defined by Dalton-Puffer et al., as “an educational approach where subjects such as geography or biology are taught through the medium of a foreign language, typically to students participating in some form of mainstream education at primary, secondary but also tertiary level” (2010, p. 1). Therefore, CLIL can be described as an educational practice where the instructions of the curriculum subjects are given through/ by a language which is not generally used by the instructors and the learners. Furthermore, Dalton-Puffer asserts that CLIL has its principles drawn from Bruner’s constructivism learning theory which is based on the idea that learning involves an active practice where new ideas, information, perceptions or concepts are constructed by the learners with their existing knowledge as the basis (2007). The existing/ present cognitive structure of the learner is relied on to select, assess and transform ideas and information in the learning process (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Cognitive structures like mental models, schemata, etc., are employed to experience and unravel

meaning so that the learners can integrate their already existing knowledge system with new information in a highly organised manner (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Adding to this point, in the learning process, the teacher has to give instruction to the learners' existing comprehension and then embraces them to discover certain principles on its own while learning (Dalton-Puffer, 2007). Additionally, Coyle (1999) states a framework called the *4Cs Framework for CLIL* (qtd. in Coyle, 2008) which encompasses the second language learning process. They are: Content, Communication, Cognition and Culture. Coyle explains that in order to equally integrate learning, i.e., 'content and cognition' and language learning, i.e., 'communication and cultures', the framework first focuses on the content like the themes, the subject matter, etc., and then comprehend the close interconnectedness "between content (subject matter), communication (language), cognition (thinking) and culture (awareness of self and 'otherness')" (Coyle, 1999, qtd. in Coyle, 2008, p. 103). Therefore, according to Coyle's 4Cs Framework, in the CLIL learning approach, to acquire knowledge of the subject, critical thinking and creativity are required and then the acquired language skills are used to communicate understanding of knowledge within the environment, culture and society. The 4Cs Framework as formulated by Coyle is thus seen fulfilling the endeavour of simultaneous learning of language and content of CLIL.

Language skills can be developed through practice. Liubinienė (2009) argued that the use of CLIL methodology enhances the cognitive skills and also the development of the language skills of the learners. Further researches by Lasagabaster (2008) showed that the CLIL student participants fared better than the non CLIL student participants in the English language skills test. In the light of the preceding discussions, the

English language skills of listening, speaking and writing have shown better development by adopting the CLIL approach.

Culture and ELT

Culture, literature and language have always been closely interconnected. Hall (2005) observes that understanding people's interaction particularly their language use can assist in understanding culture. He further argued that the study of literature and teaching can be viewed as social practice and to understand it, the discourse of the contexts in literature with its participants be it instructors, learners or others needs to be analysed (Hall, 2005). Concurrently, he argued that a well crafted and effective implementation of the literature and language pedagogies can help promote cultural awareness as the literary texts describe in detail about the society and the interactions of the people in it thereby enhancing an individual's cultural identities, ideas, values and beliefs (Hall, 2005). Relatedly, Billington et al. (1991) asserted that culture is related to various disciplines concerning people's values and beliefs. Therefore, it is evident that cultural awareness through the teaching of language and literature is crucial for the development of the holistic development of an individual. Further, Brown (1990) is of the view that culture acts as a catalyst in learning a target language. Adding to this point, Byram and Morgan stressed on the idea that cultural learning and language learning has to take place side by side (in Hinkel, 1999). A cultural environment is required for learning a language, so a learner's cultural competence is favourable for an effective language learning process. This illustrates that the teaching of culture is fundamental in a second/ English/ foreign language classroom. Relatedly, cultural narrative accounts and details the existence, function and history of a community. Such cultural narratives

can be in the form of creation stories, folktales, religious texts and rituals, astronomy, etc. which recount a story depicting the origin, cultural and ethical values of a community. A folktale can be defined as a traditional story that has been generally passed orally before the advent of the writing systems. *Poireiton Khunthok* is a folktale of the Meiteis (the Meiteis are an indigenous ethnic group of Manipur, a state in India), rich in culture and values reminiscent throughout its narrations. As it is rich in cultural traditions, it may be used as the content in the CLIL approach to impart culture and to teach English language skills in the schools of Manipur. CLIL focuses not only on learning content and language but also on the ability of the learner to apply their learning in real life situations. Relatedly, Morton (2013) pointed out the significant role played by authentic learning materials for a successful CLIL classroom. Therefore, the use of indigenous authentic folktale in ELT may enhance the English language skills and also helps in understanding culture.

Methodology

Having deliberated on the importance of culture, literature and language, the objective of the study is constructed to incorporate the teaching of English language skills and culture through the CLIL approach using the folk narrative of *Poireiton Khunthok* in the upper primary schools of Manipur. In CLIL approach, conceptualisation is a cognitive process where the learner becomes acquainted with the language and the content. It is assumed that the learner's familiarisation of the language and the content is achievable through a literary text which can be used to learn the content as well as the language. For the content, the folk narrative of *Poireiton Khunthok* is taken up for the study. The study was conducted with the students of class VI from one

of the schools of Imphal, Manipur. The number of students who participated in the study is 86. The testing of language skills was conducted with the student participants using the pre-test and post-test method. The pre-test method used a conventional prose, prescribed by the Board of Secondary Education Manipur (BSEM) which was already taught in the English class.

In the post-test method, the folk narrative of *Poireiton Khunthok* adopting the CLIL approach was used. The assessment of the language skills was done based on the student participants' understanding the knowledge of the content and application of the knowledge of the content in real life situations. Based on the content, the tasks and activities are carried out in two parts. The first part tests the student participants' understanding of the knowledge of the content. In the second part, the student participants are tested based on their ability to apply the knowledge of the content in real life situations. The assessment was done using a rubric. Some of the tasks and activities which are used in the post-test are:

1. group discussion based on the topic 'Culture of my community';
2. write and enact a one-act play based on the story incorporating cultural elements drawn from the text;
3. group activity: to find out, write and speak on the various folktales of the diverse communities of Manipur;
4. reading the text and asking them to critically comment and discuss in the class.

Cultural implications in *Poireiton Khunthok*

Poireiton Khunthok uses the allegorical folk narrative, fable intertwined with myth and history to narrate the beautiful story of Poireiton and his journey to establish a new culture and

society in Manipur. The story begins by introducing the three brothers, Tokpa, a wild cat, Waba, a pheasant and Sabi, an underground rodent who were reigning on the earth. It has an allegorical element with Tokpa representing the destructive force, Waba who is always on the move and Sabi brings out the zeal and the spark, which is present in a man. The story is set in the beginning of the universe when there was no system of justice and law and order. One night, the eldest brother Tokpa went searching for Waba and ate him up. This incident scared the youngest brother Sabi.

So, Sabi went to the king of Netherworld, Thongaren to seek help. Thongaren was in a predicament as to who will go and start a society on earth as he was already married with children and wives. So he asked his younger brother, Poireiton for the mission to survey the possibility of settling down on earth. As Poireiton was a bachelor, his brother, Thongaren sends his youngest wife Leinaotabi as his consort to continue the life of existence on earth. After a wearisome journey, Poireiton and his sister-in-law Leinaotabi, reach the earth. The story of *Poireiton Khunthok* brings out a synthesis of myth and historical narrative. With the arrival of Poireiton and his people in Manipur and the nearby areas, comes the establishment of a new culture. It is more of a mythological account but it has reference to some historical incident as well. After travelling the tedious journey, they reached a place called Serou on the banks of the Tumbi river in Manipur. In the course of their journey, Poireiton met prince Yoimungba thus interlocking mythology and historical incident which establishes the function of the narrative (Singh, 2003). Poireiton and his followers were dispersed in different parts of Manipur and the neighboring regions. Some of them went on to start a society as a group of people called Cacharis, Burmese, Meiteis, Tripuris, Moirangs, Tangkhul Nagas, Maring, Khoibu, Lamsang, Chakpa Tangba and Tarao. The objective of Poireiton

and his people were to establish a certain standard of civilization in the human world. They were also in search of immortality in the realm of mortal beings. In the course of their journey, they also suffered the loss of many of their dear ones. So, in order to achieve permanence, the king of Netherworld, Thongaren advised them to do certain rites and rituals. This traditional culture is still prevalent in recent times. When a person is sick of some incurable disease, she/ he consult the Maibas (priests) and carry out the rites and rituals which Poireiton and his family had performed. A trace of historical and cultural traits from the mythological story can thus be seen in the present cultural practices of the Meiteis. In the narrative of *Poireiton Khunthok*, another aspect of their travel is that many of the places they have visited are still known by their names thus giving discrete characteristics. There was an exchange of traditional culture and the way of living with Poireiton and the people already living there. Thus came the beginning a new era of the way of living in a group and the construct of a society. The narrative techniques of fable, folk narrative, myth and history intertwined to narrate the beautiful story of Poireiton and his journey to establish a new culture and society in Manipur.

Findings: Results and Discussions

The following table shows the assessment of the student participants when using the conventional prose and *Poireiton Khunthok*:

Criteria of assessment	Pre-test score (%) (Conventional prose)	Post-test score (%) (<i>Poireiton Khunthok</i>)	Difference (%)
Development of language skills based on understanding the knowledge of the content	56	61	5
Development of language skills based on the ability to apply the knowledge of the content in real life situations	23.4	43.7	20.3

Table 1: Development of language skills when using the conventional prose and Poireiton Khunthok

The above table indicates that there has been an integrative learning of content and language in both the cases, when conventional prose and *Poireiton Khunthok* was used. However, it is seen that there has been a gradual rise in the post-test when the folk narrative, *Poireiton Khunthok* was used. In the first criterion, in the pre-test, 56% of the student participants have shown development in the language skills based on understanding the knowledge of the content and in the post-test, there is a rise to 61% of the student participants. So there is a slight rise of 5% when *Poireiton Khunthok* was used. It is seen that in both the cases, the development of the language skills based on understanding the knowledge of the content takes place. This entails that the student participants can comprehend the

knowledge of the content used. Concurrently, in the second criterion where the application of the knowledge of the content is tested, it is seen that there is a rise in the development level of the language skills from 23.4% when the conventional prose was used to 43.7% when *Poireiton Khunthok* was used. So a difference of 20.3% was observed when using *Poireiton Khunthok* as the content. The reason of the increase in the learning level of language skills and content in the post-test might be attributed to the use of the indigenous cultural folk narrative which is familiar to the student participants. This is one of the characteristic features of CLIL where effective learning takes place with their existing knowledge as has been emphasised by Bruner's constructivism learning theory. Another observation is that the difference in the development level of the language skills in terms of application of the knowledge learnt is higher than understanding the knowledge of the content while using *Poireiton Khunthok*. This may be attributed to the use of the indigenous folktale thereby enhancing the cognitive level of the student participants.

Furthermore, according to Coyle's 4Cs Framework, in CLIL learning approach, to acquire knowledge of the subject, critical thinking and creativity are required and then the acquired language skills are used to communicate understanding of knowledge within the environment, culture and society. In the study, the tasks and activities used in the post-test enhanced the critical thinking and cognitive level of the student participants. This enables them to perform the tasks and activities with ease. It greatly enhances their motivation and creative skills. Further, the tasks and activities used in the post-test also helped the student participants to augment the application of the knowledge learnt in real life situations by a form of examining the various cultural traditions in the community. They enjoy as they learn the content. In the task to

speak on 'Culture of my community', the student participants interacted with their family and friends encouraging in applying the knowledge learnt in real life situations. In the writing and performing of the one-act play based on the story incorporating cultural elements drawn from the text, the student participants exercise their creative and cognitive skills. In the process they develop their writing, speaking and listening skills. In the activity to find, write and speak on the various folktales of the diverse communities of Manipur, they had a chance to explore and learn about the various communities residing in Manipur. This task made them reflect on the rich cultural diversity of Manipur. The folktales of the various communities bring out the cultural nuances and intercultural relationship of existence among different communities of Manipur. This in turn creates a platform of understanding other's culture and further leading to a peaceful co-existence among the various communities. In the process, they also enhance their language skills. These tasks and activities greatly increase their motivation level, critical thinking and creativity. One of the characteristic features of CLIL approach is that active learning of the content takes place based on the learners' existing knowledge. The student participants, in the study, were familiar with the indigenous culture. Undeniably, active learning can be observed in the study. Moreover, as environment plays a vital role in second language acquisition in CLIL approach, the use of indigenous folk narrative in the study is found to be effective.

Conclusion

The study illustrated that there has been concurrent learning of the language skills and content when the curriculum of BSEM and the folk narrative, *Poireiton Khunthok* was used. However, there has been an observance of the increase in the learning level

of the language skills and content when the indigenous cultural folktale was used. The findings thus show that the use of an indigenous cultural folktale as content in teaching English language has helped in enhancing the cultural knowledge as well as the language skills. The use of the cultural content has assisted in improving the motivation, cognitivity and creativity level of the learners. The preceding deliberations, therefore, establishes that the indigenous folktale, *Poireiton Khunthok*, representing significant cultural myths, using the CLIL approach assisted the student participants to augment the English language skills as well as to understand culture.

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The Macedonian Language in Regard to Covid-19

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Abstract

The new disease that appears in December 2019 affects all spheres of people's everyday living and functioning. Bearing in mind that language reflects social phenomena and that lexicon is the most flexible language segment, new words and phrases inevitably enter the lexicon on a daily basis. These novelties generate new problems not only in the lexicon but in other language segments as well. Thus, this paper addresses the new words which emerge from the disease presence as well as the problems caused by their occurrence and use, in regard to the Macedonian orthography, morphology, syntax and lexicology. This is a qualitative research that has a descriptive design, and the corpus consists of numerous articles issued in electronic newspapers. Analysis and synthesis are the methods used for processing the data and reaching conclusions. The research results indicate that the Macedonian language lexicon undoubtedly is enriched with new words. However, this extension in the lexicon has plenty of orthographic, morphological and syntactic implications related to the Macedonian language norm.

Keywords: COVID-19, Macedonian language, implications.

Introduction

The mutual connection between the society and the language, which is the most sophisticated means used in communication, is seen in the way the language reflects all social phenomena and thus, constantly changes in order to satisfy the needs of all its users. As Koneski (1987) said the most open and flexible part of the language which is subjected to change over time is the lexicon. Therefore, some words become a part of the passive lexicon, some words disappear, some words develop new meanings, and some words enter the language as new words (neologisms). Nowadays, we can see these new words and trace the way they change the language and cause further implication on all language segments.

As Minova-Gjurkova (2003) states, these changes in the lexicon related to the new words are most evident in the scientific language, in the conversational style and in the language of the press. They undoubtedly enrich the language given that borrowing is one of the ways of enrichment of the language lexicon is. On the other hand, these changes in the lexicon have to be in accordance with the language norm. Therefore, the writers and editors of an article in an online newspaper have to be fully aware of the significance of the language they use. Improper language solutions regarding various language segments can affect people's everyday written practice and encourage the use of incorrectly written words. As said by Minova-Gjurkova (2003), the language of the press should keep, preserve and actualize the Macedonian language norm.

The role of the proofreaders should also be stressed. They should have an important and inevitable role in shaping the text to convey a message which contains language that is in accordance with the norm. However, it has to be acknowledged that their essential role is diminished. Although each online newspaper has a proofreader, the deviations from the standard

norm are so obvious, and this imposes issues that are not part of this research.

Regarding the Macedonian language during the period of this crisis, it can be seen that the lexicon has never changed so fast, that new words have never emerged with such speed, and that the implications of the crisis on each language level have never been so obvious, thus facing the Macedonian linguists with the need to propose correctly written solutions for them. Surely, these changes and these new words have to be in accordance with the Macedonian language norm, and have to be adapted in the already existing categories of the Macedonian language.

Previous research in the field

Bearing in mind that this disease appeared at the end of December 2019, so far there have been no articles in the Macedonian linguistics focusing on the new lexicon connected with it, and the implications they produce. Therefore, the results cannot be compared with the results of new articles. However, many universities, faculties and other institutions are realizing that the end of this disease is uncertain, as such they will start to organize online conferences on this topic, and results are yet to come. What follows is a short survey of previous researches related with the issues that have been elaborated in this paper.

Macedonian standard norm regarding all language segments is in the centre of a lot of Macedonian linguists and researchers. Various language aspects regarding the language norm have been elaborated so far, and they indicate that little attention is paid when it comes to the language used in the articles of electronic newspapers. Dilemmas regarding the use of the capital or small letters in the Macedonian written practice have been analysed by some researchers (Miovska, 2000;

Pandeva, 2011; Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Further, some researchers stress the relevance of distinguishing the orthographic and the punctuation marks, such as dash and hyphen (Jurukovska, 2016; Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2016). Furthermore, English language influence on Macedonian language is interesting for a number of researchers (Makarijoska, 2009; Gruevska-Madzovska, 2010; Karapejovski, 2012; Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska, 2018; Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Additionally, the orthography of the compound nouns has been elaborated (Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2017), the foreign words, new words (neologisms) and loan words (Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2015; Lazarevska & Janusheva, 2019), as well as the issues connected with acronyms (Janusheva, 2019b).

On the other hand, in contrast to the Macedonian language, there are countless researches on neologisms in other languages, especially in English, which clarify the complex nature of these words, and are relevant for this research too (Niska, 1998; Jansses, 2005; Zhakhanova & Luchkova, 2013; Konoplekina, 2017 and many others).

Methodology of the research

This is a qualitative research that has a descriptive design, and the corpus consists of the new words which are present in numerous articles issued in electronic newspapers. Analysis and synthesis are the methods used for processing the data and reaching conclusions.

Results and discussion

In continuance, the research results and the discussion are presented.

The notion korona-virus (coronavirus)

According to the World health organization (WHO), *corona-viruses* (CoV) are a large family of viruses that can cause various diseases, such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS-CoV) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV). From here, it is obvious that the two diseases are caused by *corona-viruses*. Thus, the WHO definition proves that the name *corona-virus* has been present for quite a long time and is well known in the medical world and beyond, especially in the countries that were affected by them. The WHO also states that the term *corona* stands for parts of a body, which have a form resembling a crown. This statement is in correlation with Merriam Webster's online dictionary which claims that "*The word was introduced by a group of virologists as a short article "Coronaviruses" in the "News and Views" section of Nature (vol. 220, no. 5168, November 16, 1968, p. 650)*". In the opinion of these eight virologists, these viruses are members of a previously unrecognized group which, according to them, should be called the *coronaviruses*, to recall the characteristic appearance by which these viruses are identified in the electron microscope."

In regard to the Macedonian language, it has to be stressed out that the word *korona* (*corona*) is not a new word. This word is registered in the Tree volume dictionary (in this paper the edition from 1986 is used, although this Dictionary was published in 1961/1965/1966) from the beginning of the Macedonian language development, in the Monolingual Macedonian language dictionary (2005), and in Belchev's dictionary of foreign words in the Macedonian language (2002)

as a synonym of the word *kruna* (crown) meaning 'golden corona (crown) or a type of hat with precious decorations for monarch as a symbol of authority and dignity'. Furthermore, the word *korona* (corona) has also Latin origin (Belchev, 2002). This indicates that the compound word *korona-virus* (coronavirus) is structured of one Latin loanword *virus* (loaned almost 60 years ago) and one domestic word, *korona* (corona), which has existed in the passive lexicon. In their everyday communication, Macedonians use the word *kruna* (crown) instead of *korona* (corona), although they both have the same meaning. From this, it is obvious that as a compound the word *corona-virus* (coronavirus) in the current meaning is a new word in the Macedonian language. This is, in fact, a new type of neologism, according to Janusheva and Jurukovska's classification of neologisms (2015), in which one of the components is an actualized word from the passive lexicon and the other one was borrowed long time ago.

The term COVID-19

In addition, the WHO claims that the *corona-virus* we are facing today is, in fact, a novel *corona-virus* n(CoV) which has not been previously identified in humans. Therefore, it should be clear that the term *corona-viruses* refer to the family of viruses and not to the disease. This novel *corona-virus* causes the disease which is named *COVID-19*. Like the term *corona-virus*, the term *COVID-19* is also a neologism and what is said about the term *corona-virus* also applies to *COVID-19*, with regard to its appearance and presence in the Macedonian language as well as its frequent use. In addition, it can be said that the Macedonian language is enriched with another acronym, because *COVID-19* is, in fact, an acronym where CO stands for *corona*, VI for *virus* and D for *disease*. As for the number 19, it refers to the year 2019, when the virus was first discovered. Given that the Macedonian language has various acronyms in regard to the way they are created,

which is in correlation with Janusheva's research (2019b), this acronym belongs to the group of acronyms which are formed by transliteration of the English name of this word with Cyrillic letters, using the two first letters *KO* (*CO*) from the word *corona*, the two first letters *BM* (*VI*) from the word *virus* and the first letter *Д* (*D*) for the word *disease*. In the same time, so far, this is the only acronym in the Macedonian language which has a number in its structure.

Unlike other neologisms which are hard to track in relation to the period they have entered the language, which is confirmed by Janusheva and Jurukovska's research (2015), this case proves that neologisms may enter the language almost instantly, in Macedonia in the mid of December, when the first diseased patient was recorded Italy. As neologisms, these words have another peculiarity. Namely, it is also known that neologisms do not become instantly a part of the active lexicon and are not used frequently right after their entrance by almost everyone (Niska, 1998; Zhakhanova & Luchkova, 2013; Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2015; Konopelkina, 2017). However, these neologisms prove that to be wrong, because they become a part of the everyday communication in all spheres of people's living and functioning among medical specialists as well as among ordinary people. Bearing in mind the research conducted by Niska (1998), Janssen (2005), Zhakhanova & Luchkova (2013) and Janusheva & Jurukovska (2015), in which they actualize, among others, the lexicographic and the time criterion, and where they claim that a neologism has to be in use for at least 15 to 20 years and after that it is not considered as a neologism any more, it is clear that regarding the Macedonian language, if a new dictionary comes to light before 2030, these two words will still be regarded as neologisms.

Moreover, the appearance of these two words has an implication on the orthographic level. The newspapers are

overloaded with the word *koronavirus* (*coronaviruse*) which contains two words (nouns) that are written solid/closed. English influence can be seen here, and this is in correlation with the research of many researchers who stress the English language impact (Makarijoska, 2009; Gruevska-Madzovska, 2010; Karapejovski, 2012; Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska, 2018, Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Namely, the Orthography of the Macedonian language (2017, pp. 57–80) regulates the orthography of the compound nouns which are written solid/closed, with a hyphen and as two separate words. In this case, the Macedonian term *korona-virus* contains two separate words, such as *korona* (*crown*) and *virus* (*virus*). According to the Orthography (2017, p. 62), two nouns that refer to one notion, i.e. the first noun complementing the meaning of the second, should be written with a hyphen. Thus, the proper and right orthography is *korona-virus* (*coronavirus*), with a hyphen. This suggests that the word *korona-virus* (*coronavirus*) is a compound noun and this result is in accordance with Janusheva & Jurukovska's research (2017).

As for the word *KOVID-19*, it is already said that it is a new acronym in the Macedonian language. However, it is very obvious that in the newspapers, at least two orthographic variants are noticed, i.e. the word is written in five capital letters or the word is perceived like a common word and not like an acronym, thus written in small letters. It is not unusual for an acronym to be perceived as a regular word (Janusheva, 2019a) due to increased frequency of use, as in the acronym *LASER* which is accepted as a common noun and written in small letters like the general nouns. In this case, the period of time is especially relevant. Namely, it is assumed that a period of time has to pass in order for an acronym to become an ordinary word used in everyday communication. Here, we face another peculiarity, namely we see that after several months of use, this

acronym began to be comprehended as a separate word. Hence, the two variants can be accepted. From here, if it is perceived as a regular word and not as an acronym, then the question arises why it is written with first capital letters? Undoubtedly, the English language influence is present, which is in correlation with the researches conducted by Miovska (2000), Pandeva (2011), Janusheva (2019a) and Janusheva. As a name for a disease, it should be written with first small letter, *kovid-19* (*covid-19*) and not *Kovid-19* (*Covid-19*), except where it is placed at the beginning of a sentence. However, as an acronym it should be written as *KOVID-19* and this is the recommended form.

The presence of these two words has many other implications. On the word-formation level, due to the frequent occurrence and use of these two words, a lot of compound nouns with a first component *korona* (*corona*) or *kovid* (*covid*) have been noticed in newspapers as well as in everyday communication, such as: '*korona izbori*' [*corona elections*] (25.5.2020); '*korona kriza*' [*corona crisis*] (20.5.2020); '*korona povratnik*' [*corona recidivist*] (28.5.2020); '*corona-uredba*' [*corona-statute*] (Pochivalec, 30.5.2020); '*korona - krizata*' [*the corona - crisis*] (Pochivalec, 30.5.2020); '*koronazharishte*' [*coronafocus*] (4.6.2020); '*korona bran*' [*corona wave*] (Bozhinovska, 6.6.2020); '*korona panika*' [*corona panic*] (11.6.2020); '*Korona dijalozi*' [*Corona dialogues*] (11.6.2020); '*korona-hibernacija*' [*corona-hibernation*] (Frangovska, 21.5.2020); '*kovid-menadzer* (*covid-manager*) (10.5.2020); '*kovid krizata*' [*the covid crisis*] (Mirchevski, 28.5.2020); '*kovid-stresot*' [*the covid-stress*] (Frangovska, 21.5.2020); '*kovid koordinatori*' [*covid coordinators*] (3.6.2020); '*kovid-koordinator*' [*covid-coordinator*] (Damchevska, 3.6.2020); '*kovid - koordinatori*' [*covid - coordinators*] (Damchevska, 3.6.2020); '*kovid klaster*' [*kovid cluster*] (5.6.2020); '*Kovid-19 pik*' [*Covid-19 peak*] (5.6.2020); '*Kovid mapata*' [*The Covid map*] (6.6.2020); '*Kovid zarazata*' [*the Covid infection*] (6.6.2020); '*Kovid-*

grad (Covid-city) (B. A., 11.6.2020); '*Kovid-proboj*' [Covid-breakout] (11.6.2020) etc.

Given that these are new words, they still have to respect the rules of the Macedonian language norm, but it seems they have not. Although there are rare exceptions regarding the orthography of these compounds, almost all of them are written incorrectly, they are written as solid: '*koronakrizata*' [*the coronacirsis*] or separate words '*korona krizata*' [*the corona crisis*]. Both ways are incorrect. As seen above, according to the Orthography of the Macedonian language, the two nouns in the compounds should be separated with a hyphen. This refers to all new words with the first component *korona* (*corona*) or KOVID-19. However, here, the English language influence in the orthography is obvious. These results are in line with the researches conducted by Janusheva & Jurukovska (2017), Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska (2018), Janusheva (2019a) and Janusheva.

The appearance of these two words has morphological implications as well. In one of the sources, this following sentence was noticed '*Brojot na smrtni sluchai od kornavirus vo Italija se zgolemil denes za 92...*' [*The number of death cases from coronavirus in Italy increases to 92...*] (25.5.2020). The article was published on May 25, and it is clear that the notion *korona-virus* (*coronavirus*) refers to COVID-19. However, this is not morphologically correct because, as shown in the preceding, there are three known diseases caused by the *korona-virus*, SARS, MERS and COVID-19. Thus, this means that the noun *korona-virus* (*coronavirus*) used in the article without the definite article, refers to all three diseases and not only to KOVID-19, which is actually the case.

The notion karantin (quarantine – verb)

According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the word *quarantine* is both a noun and a verb, and its first known use is from 1801 in the meaning 'to detain or exclude by quarantine'. As for the Macedonian language, there is no such verb, only the noun 'karantin' (*quarantine*) exists with the meaning 'isolation of people sick with contagious diseases in order to protect and to restrain the spread of the epidemic disease'. However, in one newspaper, the verb *karantinira* (to quarantine) is noticed: 'Ako vladite vo Germanija, Rusija ili Amerika go karantiniraat sekoj shto kje se vrati vo nashata zemja, togash turistite nema da dojdut ovde' [If the German, Russian and America's government quarantines anyone who will return in our country, then the tourists will not come here] (6.5.2020). Here, English influence can undoubtedly be seen and again, this is in accordance with many researches (Makarijoska, 2009; Gruevska-Madzovska, 2010; Karapejovski, 2012; Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska, 2018, Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Further, in relation to the future of this word, it is most likely that it will not have a very frequent use, primarily because its appearance has been recorded only once from the beginning of the crisis, and it has not spread further among the Macedonian language speakers until now. They rather use the English word 'lock down' which is only transcribed in Cyrillic letters as *lok daun*. As it can be seen in Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the noun *lock down* has a similar meaning with the noun *quarantine*, 'an emergency measure or condition in which people are temporarily prevented from entering or leaving a restricted area or building during a threat of danger', meaning that both notions refer to the same thing.

As it is seen, in Macedonian 'to be in quarantine' means that people who have contracted a contagious disease are isolated in order to contain the disease spread. According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the noun *quarantine* has four

meanings, with the third meaning being similar to the Macedonian one '*a restraint upon the activities or communication of persons or transport of goods designed to prevent the spread of diseases or pests*', and this period lasts 40 days. However, in newspapers and everyday use of this word, it is obvious that it extends its meaning, because it is quite obvious that *karantin* (*quarantine*) refers to healthy people as well, or even to all people who live in one country or in restricted areas of that country. As for the period of quarantine, it varies and depends on each country's government decisions regarding their perception of the seriousness of the situation. However, this new word can easily adapt to the Macedonian language norm, to the group of verbs which end in the suffix *-ira(-izira)* as *daunlodira* (*to download*). Still, it is a new and foreign word and it confirms Lazarevska & Janusehva's research (2019) that various foreign and new words in the Macedonian language have a different status and that there is a difference between the foreign words and the loan words, although in everyday communication these two notions are perceived as referring to the same one.

The term pik (peak)

The use of this term has increased during this crisis. It is an English noun which, according to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, has 5 meanings, and among them: '*the highest level or greatest degree*'. According to the same dictionary, *peak* is also a verb with several meanings, and entry 2 refers to it as an intransitive verb meaning '*to reach a maximum as of capacity, value or activity*' and a transitive verb meaning '*to cause to come to a peak, point or maximum*'. It can be said that in the Macedonian language, this term is taken directly from the English language, again with Cyrillic transliteration, and taking into account that it is absent from the monolingual dictionary, it still remains a neologism, i.e. a new word. Although this word has been present

in the Macedonian language for a while, and has occasionally been used mostly in newspapers and everyday people exchanges, nowadays this word has reached its most frequent use and, thus, become a part of the common language. In the Macedonian language, *pik* (*peak*) is used only as a noun and there is no record of its use as a verb '*Pominat e pikot na zarazata*' [*The peak of the infection is over*] (Spasovska, 27.4.2020).

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the research. First of all, new words will continue to enter the Macedonian language since it is an inevitable phenomenon. They will proceed to produce implications in the Macedonian language system and challenge the Macedonian linguists who have to find ways to adjust them to the Macedonian language system and Macedonian language norm as well. Second, the analysed words are indicative of the presence of English language influence, especially in relation to orthography, but also other language segments. This is not uncommon. Yet this should urge the Macedonian linguists to find out solutions to decrease this impact and preserve the Macedonian language norm. Third, profound and significant insights that diminish and disprove all that has been said about neologisms until now can be traced. Namely, the exact time when these new words entered the lexicon is known (mid-December 2019) and their mass and frequent usage has been recorded on a daily basis among scientists, journalists, and ordinary people as well, which is not specific and common in the case of other neologisms that have made their way into the Macedonian language. Finally, bearing in mind the research results related to the introduction of new neologisms in the Macedonian language, it can be concluded that only time will

show what will happen with regard to the status of these new words.

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Analyzing business environment- Power outages as an obstacle for firms

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Abstract

An efficient firm infrastructure is considered as one of the key factors of the firm performance considering its impact on time and cost savings. The positive impact of the quality of infrastructure on firm performance is very cognitive, but the lack of adequate infrastructure remains an important obstacle especially on transition economies. Thus, primary objective of this paper is to provide information regarding the power outages as an obstacle to firm's performance. This paper focuses on the cross-country comparison with the intention to show the progress done by governments in improving this obstacle to the private sector using survey data provided by World Bank in partnership with EBRD. This is the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS) database which offers a wide range of topics of business environment. The results show that Kosovo leads regarding the average hours without electricity, number of power outages in a typical month and the percentage of sales loses due to electricity insufficiency. The panel data techniques, respectively the fixed effect model, show a negative and significant impact of the average number of power outages on the sales growth.

Keywords: quality of infrastructure, power outages, capacity utilization, performance.

Introduction

Public infrastructure in the Western Balkans is of low quality as consequence of some factors which are transmitted over the years. The Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia) are continuing at a slow pace, among others due to the political history that this region has. As pointed out by Atoyan et al. (2018), in most of these countries, such as Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia, public investment, especially during the 1970s, was part of a plan adopted by the former Yugoslavia. After 1990, there were conflicts in some of these countries that affected the destruction of public infrastructure, and limited public investments, hence in general there was an economic stagnation for most of the countries in the region. After the conflicts, the "Stability Pact"¹ was created by international organizations with the main aim to support the growth of public investment in these countries. Public investment in these countries supported by international initiatives has been large, but the region is still lagging behind compared to the European Union (Atoyan et al., 2018).

Western Balkans countries have a low density of railways, highways, airports, etc. On the other hand, the electricity generation capacity is a key problem for these countries. The situation is slightly better in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where electricity supply is at a better level compared to other Western Balkan countries such as Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. Electricity as a key factor to production can contribute to the firm performance also by reducing the operational costs.

¹ For more information on The Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe see authors such as: Bendiek (2004), Watanabe (2010) etc.

The main objective of this paper is to present a theoretical viewpoint, supported by quantitative evidence on how infrastructure affects firm performance. Therefore, we hypothesize that power outages have a negative impact on firm growth. For this purpose, we use cross-country methodology. Cross-country comparisons for different indicators have been a long-standing interest for many researchers. This methodology enables the examination of different phenomena between different countries. Kosovo and other Balkan countries are facing low-quality infrastructure which combined with other factors has a great impact on firm growth. Here we refer to infrastructure as access to electricity, water supply and telecommunication channels. The quality of infrastructure is especially important for manufacturing companies taking into account the losses caused during the production process which have a large impact on firms' performance and capacity utilization. Our research's main focus is on indicators which express the perception by firms of the impact of electricity outages on capacity utilization or firm performance. The physical infrastructure consists of electrical connection, water supply, telephone connection, and information and communications technology (ICT), but in this paper we are limited to the problems caused by electrical outages.

Inadequate transport networks limit the connection between producers and consumers in regional and global markets, while electricity and water shortages have a direct impact on firm production performance. The other sections of this paper are organized in function of the main objective continuing with literature review, data and methodology, an overview of the electricity infrastructure in Kosovo compared to some other Western Balkan countries and conclusions.

Literature review

The empirical literature for many countries states that infrastructure is an important factor for firm growth. The infrastructure-performance relationship has been analyzed in many studies (Olawale and Garwe 2010; Barringer, Jones & Neubaum, 2005; Sambamurthy et al. 2003; Hellriegel et al. 2008; Herrington and Wood, 2003), distinguishing which variables have been used for infrastructure. It is worthy to say that most of the empirical evidence of the importance of infrastructure on either economic development in general (Akan, Doğan & Işık, 2010) or firm growth or firm performance in particular, is concentrated in the regions such as Africa or Asia for whom it is a great obstacle (Commander and Svejnar, 2011; Reppen, 2015, Oseni and Pollitt, 2015.; Ekene & Mbobo, 2019). Modeling the firm performance and infrastructure relationship is a hard task. To measure the direct impact of infrastructure on firm's performance we should bear in mind the large number of factors which impact it, such as internal factors related to firms' financial factors, management behavior, product and process organization etc., and external factors such as competition, public infrastructure, customer demand and so on, thus all of the factors which represent the business environment (Beck and Demirguc-Kunt 2006). To construct a model which involves all these factors is not possible. Another constraint on reaching concrete results is the impossibility of measuring each variable in the appropriate way. The first problem is related to firm performance measures. There are many indicators to express firm performance. Olawale and Garwe (2010) show that firm growth may be measured using absolute or relative changes in sales, assets, employment, productivity, profits and profit margins. Sales data are usually readily available and business owners themselves attach high importance to sales as an indicator of business performance. In addition, sales growth is

also easier to measure compared to some other indices and is much more likely to be recorded. Sales may also be considered a precise indicator of how a firm is competing relative to their competitors (Barringer, Jones & Neubaum, 2005). Additionally, the growth of firms and their performance is also affected by lack of experience and management skills (Hellriegel et al., 2008; Herrington and Wood, 2003).

The empirical models used to quantify the impact of improved quality infrastructure on different business indicators are wide-ranging. Using a seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) technique Iimi (2008) uses the cost function to show the importance of the quality of infrastructure (electricity, water supply and telecommunications) on operational costs. Using firm level data collected by BEEPS database, he shows that a one-hour reduction in electricity outages could provide firms savings on operating costs of 1.5 percent on average. Moreover, USAID report (2015)² on the impact from irregular electricity supply on Kosovar businesses finds an average of four percent increase in the prices of products due to usage of alternative sources of energy supply. Many companies cannot quantify the direct losses from the lack or low-quality infrastructure, therefore when asked by surveyors they hesitate to answer. Considering this, some researchers use a country level indicator considering it as a public good which should be equal for all firms (Carlin et al. 2006), while on the other side researchers express infrastructure variable as a component built on firms' perceptions of the degree of constraint that infrastructure inadequacy causes to them (Reppen, 2015).

² Valmira Rexhëbeqaj, Berat Abdiu and Valon Feka (2015) Follow-up assessment on impact from irregular electricity supply on Kosovar businesses. USAID report

An overview of the electricity infrastructure in Kosovo as compared to some Western Balkan countries

Frequent and long power outages are an obstacle specially to manufacturing companies. Frequent interruption of the production process due to interruption of electricity causes an increase in production costs due to loss of time, breakdown of the product in the production process, use of power generators as a replacement, etc. When asked about the electricity as an obstacle to the current operations, companies in the respective countries gave the answers as presented in Table 1. Looking at Kosovo, we see that for most respondents, about 47%, the electricity was a very severe or major obstacle in 2013. While comparing the same data with year 2019 we see a worsened situation, where about 63% declare that the electricity was a very severe or major obstacle. Compared to other analyzed Western Balkan countries Kosovo is the top country with the biggest electricity problem for the private sector.

	Kosovo			Albania			Serbia			N. Macedonia		
Electricity an obstacle to the current operations	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change	2013	2019	Change
No obstacle	20	6	-70%	30	25	-17%	67	52	-22%	30	40	33%
Minor obstacle	9	7	-22%	13	15	15%	10	12	20%	0	7	-22%
Moderate obstacle	11	15	36%	20	17	-15%	10	17	70%	8	5	-38%
Very severe obstacle	21	22	5%	8	29	263%	0	5	500%	4	7	75%
Major obstacle	15	26	73%	22	7	-68%	5	6	20%	11	3	-73%
TOTAL	76	76		93	93		92	92		62	62	

Table 1. Electricity an obstacle to the current operations of this establishment?

Source: Authors calculations using BEEPS data. Panel data 2013 and 2019

To have a clearer overview of the situation regarding power outages, BEEPS in the 2019 round go further by asking companies about the duration of power outages in hour or minute. Thus, making possible to calculate the average duration of power outages during a month. Compared to the region, North Macedonia and Kosovo also lead with 17.1 hours without electricity during a month, respectively 15.91. These results show once again the bad situation regarding the electricity infrastructure in Kosovo.

Country	Number of power outages in a typical month	Average duration of power outages	No. of hours without electricity during a month.
Kosovo	8.02	1.98	15.91
North Macedonia	5.49	3.12	17.10
Albanian	3.79	1.66	6.28
Serbian	2.03	2.12	4.31

Table 2. Average hours without electricity in a typical month – 2019 survey

Source: Authors calculations using BEEPS data

We go deeper in our analysis by showing the average number of power outages in a typical month. Compared to 2013, power outages are 7.6 time lower in Kosovo. We see a noticeable improvement in 2019, but still we are far from other regional countries, who have done a great improvement in this regard.

Country	2013	2019
Kosovo	11.4	3.8
Albania	4.2	1.5
Serbia	0.6	0.7
North Macedonia	1.6	1.1

Table 3. Power outages in firms in a typical month (number)

Source: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#>

Considering that electricity is essential to run the daily operations, and that unexpected outages can lead to potential losses, companies tend to compensate this by self-generation. When electricity is insufficient, power generators are a good option, especially for electricity dependent businesses (Attigah and Mayer-Tasch, 2013). Losses due to downtime are different for companies. To eliminate or at least lower these losses and due to the long power outages, many companies are driven to buy a generator. Generators have long been a fixture in states with frequent power outages as shown in the table below. Even if the situation improves, companies will find it difficult to resell these fixed assets considering their depreciation and low demand due to the regulation of the problem with electricity. Also, as shown in many items of evidence, sometimes self-generation is more expensive than public electricity (Foster & Steinbuks, 2009; Rentschler et al. 2019).

Country	2013	2019
Kosovo	42	29
Albania	51	50
Serbia	15	13
North Macedonia	7	0.00

Table 4: Companies that have a generator
Source: Authors calculations using BEEPS data

Having a generator is directly related to the lack of electricity as we see higher rates of self-generation in Kosovo and Albania.

The impact of power outages on firm capacity utilization

Capacity utilization is a ratio of the actual level of output to a sustainable maximum level of output, or capacity (Corrado & Matthey, 1997). Capacity utilization rate may be different for different industries. It is determined by many factors, including power outages. What is the relationship between capacity utilization and power outages? If the maximum utilization of a machinery which works based on electricity is to produce a defined number of outputs, then the electricity interruption will disable reaching the maximum. Rentschler et al. (2019) find that interrupted activity due to power outages reduces the utilization rate by about \$38 billion a year and sales losses by about \$82 billion a year. A positive and significant impact of power supply on capacity utilizations is also found by Mojekwu and Iwuji (2012). Similarly, the expenditure incurred by companies in generating power supply for productivities (output) constitutes nearly 36 percent of the total cost (TC) of production (Enang, 2010; Udejah, 2006).

Analyzing the BEEPS data, we see an increase of capacity utilization of firms in Kosovo, Albania and Serbia. This increase

may occur due to many factors, including improvement in power supply.

Country	2013	2019	Change
Kosovo	56.91	71.45	26%
Albania	64.12	83.93	31%
Serbia	71.85	82.69	15%
North Macedonia	76.67	70.00	-9%

Table 5. Capacity utilization rate
Source: Authors calculations using BEEPS data

Additionally, we compare the average losses due to electrical outages, as a percentage of total annual sales. Once again, comparing 2019 with 2013, we find the same order led by Kosovo, but with an improved situation.

	2013	2019
Kosovo	9.8	3.7
Albania	5.7	1.9
Serbia	0.8	0.9
North Macedonia	2.9	1.9

Table 6. Value lost due to electrical outages (% of sales for affected firms)

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.FRM.OUTG.ZS>

As we pointed out earlier, sales are a very important indicator on firm performance, therefore analyzing the impact of a very important factor of a business environment, such as insufficient electricity, is very useful.

Data and methodology

We used cross-country comparisons methodology with special focus on comparing Kosovo with other region countries. The data used for this purpose are those conducted by surveys of the World Bank in partnership with EBRD. The Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS) offers a wide range of business environment topics. The best about this database is that it is developed in rounds enabling panel data analysis. We use the data of firms from six countries: Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also comment on different indicators representing electricity infrastructure problems for companies. For observations that at least one of the variables included in the model is missing, we applied the cleaning data procedure. This reduced the dataset but we have strongly balanced panel data which consist of 494 observations of 247 groups.

Modeling the impact of infrastructure on firm performance is a very complex process, considering the wide range of other factors impacting it. We are aware that using panel data analysis techniques, such as panel regression which controls for fixed and random effects, gives a more comprehensive view. Using the data on annual sales we computed the growth measures.

We run the equation model as follow:

$$\log Y_{jt} = a_i + a_c \log P_{jt} + a_g G_{jt} + a_s \log S_{jt} + a_o O_{jkt} + u_{jt}$$

$$u_{jt} = \varepsilon_{jt} + w_{jt}$$

ε - is the fixed or random effect, while w - is the residual, where, Y is annual sales growth, which is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the firm sales in the respective year show an increase

and zero otherwise. Our main variable of interest is P_{jt} . P is the infrastructure variable represented by the average number of power outages in a typical month, G - stands for generator, while S - denotes the firm sector. The variable O - stands for other factors such as management behavior considering the number of years on the respective sector. j -observation and t -time

We run panel regression and control for fixed and random effects.

$$\text{Fixed effect model: } y_{it} = (a + u_i) + X_{it}\beta + v_{it}$$

$$\text{Random effect model: } y_{it} = a + X_{it}\beta + (u_i + v_{it})$$

Fixed effects models intend to show the relationship between time-varying predictors and outcomes. It shows the heterogeneity across countries (or entities) and heterogeneity across years. On the other hand, random effects models estimate the effects of time-invariant variables. We used the Hausman specification test (Hausman, 1978) to compare the random effect model to its fixed counterpart. The null hypothesis is that the preferred model is random effects. Based on the result of the Hausman test, $\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = 0.0115$ we reject the null and accept that the right model for this dataset is the fixed effect model.

Results

The following table presents the conducted model results. As we have already discussed, the applied model is the fixed effect model. The coefficient signs are in accordance with our expectations, while the significance for some of the variables is not.

As expected, the results show a negative impact of the average number of power outages on the probability of having a sales growth in the respective year. The p-value of the variable

which expresses the infrastructure of power supply is small enough to reject H0, so we conclude that the increase of power outages for 1 time will have a negative impact on the probability of having a better performance for the firm.

Dependent variable: Sales change	Fixed Effect Model
The average number of power outages	-.0296 (0.033) **
Generator	-.1125 (0.158)
Sector	-.0902 (0.349)
Management experience (years)	.0016 (0.622)
F-test (model)	0.0048
Number of groups	247
Number of observations	494
rho	.44127

Standard errors in parentheses*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7. Presenting Analysis Results

Having a generator as self-energy generation shows a negative impact, as expected, but its p-value is not small enough to reject H0. The same stand for being in the Manufacturing sector compared to other sectors, such as Retail or other sectors. Considering the large number of factors which impact the sales growth, we controlled for management years of experience working in respective sector. The results show a positive but not significant impact.

The F-test, which is a test to see whether all the coefficients in the model are other than zero, confirms that the specification and fixed effect model is appropriate. Rho shows that 44.1% of the variance is due to differences across panels.

Similar results for Western Balkan countries are found by Kresic, Milatovic and Sanfey (2017). They find a negative impact

of electrical issues and some other factors on annual sales in countries such as: Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Conclusions

This paper provides an overview of the situation of the main infrastructure factor, such as power outages and its relation to sales growth. Using descriptive panel data, this study concludes that comparing years 2013 and 2019, the situation has improved. This conclusion applies to all countries included in the analysis. With the improvement of electricity supply we also see an improvement on capacity utilization and the percentage of sales lost due to electrical outages. This paper points out many implications for business environment as a key element in global competition. On the other side, the results of the fixed effect model show a negative and significant impact of the average number of power outages on the sales growth. This is an indicator of the business environment and shows that the power outage is an obstacle for firms in the Balkan countries.

We are aware that the expansion of the model with other variables, as well as the inclusion of more countries, would give even more accurate and meaningful results, therefore we recommend this to other interested researchers in the field.

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Online learning challenges and opportunities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in developing countries

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Abstract

The rapid development of information technology has influenced the change of concepts of the learning environment. Today, educational institutions are increasingly focused on teaching through technology. Many universities around the world are practicing online learning thanks to the use of technology and broadband capacity that developed countries have implemented in their core and access infrastructures. Seeing the benefits of learning through technology, developing countries are also seriously considering using the benefits of technology for learning. However, there are some challenges that need to be overcome, especially in developing countries, such as poor network infrastructure, lack of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) knowledge, poor content development, and so on. This gap is seen not only between countries, but also within countries. In this paper, we will discuss the main challenges and opportunities that online learning brings in HEIs in developing countries, with emphasis in Kosovo.

Keywords: Online learning, technology, education, HEI, digital learning, Kosovo

Introduction

E learning is defined as a learning process in which learners can communicate with their teachers and their peers, and can access teaching materials over the Internet (Curran, 2004). Online learning involves some applications and processes used to learn. It comprises mostly web-based learning, discussion boards, online assessment, course administration, virtual classroom, etc. However, online learning is delivered through the Internet and LMS (Learning Management Systems) systems through the use of technology. There have been many attempts to identify what is needed to promote the adoption of technologies within higher education institutions (HEIs). Higher education has a greater impact on society and economy, so greater emphasis should be given to it. The benefits of online learning in higher education include comparable access, quality education and the ability to close the digital divide. Learning online saves teaching delivery time, helps students explore learning, and complements essential physical interaction in a hybrid learning environment. Major universities with large on-campus teaching programs, such as Queens University in Canada, the University of London in the United Kingdom, and the University of Wisconsin in the USA, have been offering distance education programs for over 100 years (Bates, 2001). The main institutions in the USA historically have been involved in distance learning and education, such as Penn State University and the University of Wisconsin. Therefore, learning at a distance is not new!

With the development of web technologies and more ubiquitous Internet access, online learning is becoming more and more acceptable to people. Different projects were established, such as CALAT; WebCAI; The University of the Air; WDE University, etc. (Shee and Wang 2008; Rovai, 2004). Teachers and students both benefited by online publishing courses on the web (Barolli et al., 2006; Fachinger et al., 2004).

Mobility in higher education is contributing to the expansion and exchange of knowledge and ideas. Mobility is essential to ensure a quality education and cooperation with other parts of the world. Therefore, it is of particular importance to create the necessary infrastructure, mainly technical infrastructure, so that students and teachers can exchange knowledge among them, regardless of their location. The development of e-learning tools increases the mobility possibilities. Virtual mobility programs for students and academic staff is a growing trend worldwide. These e-learning tools are used not only for virtual mobility but also for complementing physical mobility programs (BEST Symposium on Education, 2007).

Even before COVID-19, there has been a high growth in the use of technology in education. It is worth mentioning that in 2019, investments in this area reach the value of 18.66 billion dollars only in US. The overall market for online education is projected to reach 350 billion Dollar by 2025. However, a significant increase in the use of e-learning technology has been observed during COVID 19 (Cathy, 2020).

Online learning has been proposed for years, but received very little enthusiasm from universities, students and academics in some countries, especially in developing countries. With the current requirements for higher education in developing countries, online learning can provide a reliable access to course materials, open quality educational resources and enable HEIs to use a variety of pedagogical and collaborative tools for involving students in reflective and critical thinking. Unlike on-campus learning systems, students in online learning are not under unfair pressure to learn; on the contrary, they may have sufficient flexibility to learn.

Despite the many benefits of online learning, many of the educational institutions in developing countries, such as Kosovo

are challenged by the network's insufficient capacity to provide stable Internet access for online learning. Many of the institutions do not have enough capacity to synchronize student learning, technical support systems as well as use innovative educational technologies. Also, ICT systems and general infrastructure including data security and privacy, high speed internet, users' competencies and institutional policies are the main barriers for successful online learning.

In Kosovo business is in the daily lives of its people, technological services such as the internet, smart phones, social media and e-commerce are also widely used. However, these services generally have not been applied to education.

So far, many researches have addressed the importance of online learning implementation in the higher education system, but there is still a lack of a well-accepted model. Therefore, the development of a unique platform that defines the learning outcomes and manages knowledge is very important.

In the next section of this paper, we will describe the literature review. In section 3, we will describe online learning in developing Countries; case study Western Balkans. In section 4, we will present the Transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning in Kosovo during COVID-19. Conclusions and recommendations are drawn in the last section.

Literature review

For years, numerous studies have been focused on identifying factors that make technology integration successful in online learning. However, many scientific researchers have addressed the online learning issue and the implementation of different learning models in HEIs. In this section, we will analyze the scientific work done by others with a special focus on online learning in the higher education system.

The authors in Babu (2015) discussed the e-learning environment in both the developed and developing countries. They concluded that the main factors of the successful implementation of online learning are financial support from government as well as motivation of students and teachers.

Online learning strategies are discussed in several papers and journals. Curran et al. (2004) examined the online learning strategy adopted by universities, from the perspective of: widening access to education opportunities, quality of learning enhancement and reducing the cost of higher education. It was concluded that the most striking characteristic of the e-learning strategies adopted by universities is their diversity, and inherent characteristic of adaptability in use and flexibility in application.

There are also many strategies and plans proposed for online learning that provide opportunities for the development of a more comprehensive approach to the provision of information and services via technology. Glasgow et al. (2013) have discussed the strategy for developing a specific approach for service provisioning via mobile devices that many staff and students carry around with them every day. By establishing an initial service with a small number of mobile devices, the University and the student can build together confidence in the approach and the reliability of mobile delivery as a viable option for service delivery.

Strategies, drivers and barriers for online learning are discussed in several studies, such as MacKeogh et al. (2009), Sharp et al. (2006). Students' Perceptions of E-learning in University Education is discussed in Keller and Cernerud (2002). E-learning models and investigating their value for developing an e-learning strategy are discussed in Engelbrecht (2003), Lee et al. (2009), Carver et al. (2007), McLaren (2008).

Critical success factors for e-learning in developing countries are discussed in Bhuasiri et al. (2012). They identified

multiple factors that influence the success of e-learning systems from the literature, and compared the relative importance among two stakeholder groups in developing countries, ICT experts and faculty.

The effect of individual-level cultural values on users' acceptance of E-learning in developing countries is examined in Tarhini et al. (2016), where a structural equation modeling of an extended technology acceptance model was presented.

In this paper, we will discuss opportunities and challenges that online learning brings to HEIs in developing countries. There will be a particular emphasis on the challenges that Kosovo will face during the process of transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning.

Online learning in developing countries; case study Western Balkans

Higher education institutions in the Western Balkans (WB) have begun to use ICT as one of the main facilitators for educational innovation and the economic model for online learning. Universities are in a situation where they need to improve their educational resources and current practices in order to survive. Western Balkan countries, as developing countries, are facing great difficulties in successfully transitioning to online learning. Almost all WB countries have approximate characteristics, in terms of ICT infrastructure, education system, but also teaching curricula. In the following subsections, we will describe shortly the main challenges and achievements of Western Balkan countries toward implementing online learning.

Systems of Higher education are experiencing a significant change, thus the regulatory environment will be affected by these changes as well. As we can see from Table 1, none of the Western Balkan (WB) countries has developed a regulatory

framework for e-learning, also the WB have yet to create skilled workforce to support online learning. WB countries have developed Education Strategies where e-learning is mentioned within these strategies. But, with the exception of Serbia, other WB countries do not have any strategy only for online learning.

Connectivity is considered the main indicator of e-Learning readiness (Barolli et al., 2009). In order to compare WB countries we have used the data from Networked Readiness Index rankings of the World Economic Forum, 2019 (Dutta and Lanvin, 2019). Figure 1 will show only the ranking of WB countries.

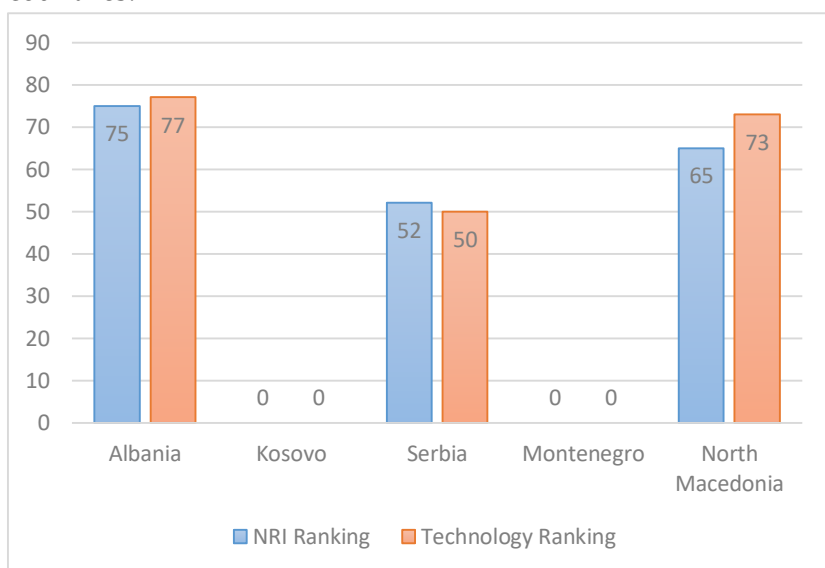


Figure 1. Network Readiness Index 2019 (Dutta and Lanvin, 2019)

The Network Readiness Index 2019 ranks a total of 121 economies. The top performer in this year's index from WB Countries is Serbia, followed by North Macedonia and Albania. The highest-ranked country when it comes to the Technology is again Serbia, followed by North Macedonia and then Albania. Kosovo and Montenegro are not listed in this document.

North Macedonia

Recognizing that there is a constant and very dynamic change in the teaching environment, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Northern Macedonia have given special importance to the use of ICT at all educational levels. A Strategy for Education 2018-2025 and an Action Plan 2018 have been launched. One of the goals of this strategy is intensification of the usage of ICT in education through establishing an e-learning portal and learning management system. Also, this strategy states that there is a need to continuously develop teachers' skills to use new technologies and ICT tools in education. Therefore, in order for these goals to be reached, the strategy mentions the need of developing advanced competences which also include technology and digital competences. This means that there is a need to incorporate digital technology and ICT into teaching, but also providing training to teachers in the use of the new technologies and ICT in online learning (EACEA, 2019; Aram Avagyan et al., 2018).

There are some initiatives from HEIs in North Macedonia for online learning. There is a small community in higher education in North Macedonia that uses Moodle as a tool for E-learning. Moodle is used mainly at the private Universities (Poposki, 2010). These private Universities, through digital platforms are offering to their students the latest advances in the e-learning environment. In particular, private universities in Northern Macedonia are promoting their modern and flexible curricula in accordance with the demands and needs of students. This modern approach is very well received by students.

*Online learning challenges and opportunities in Higher Education
Institutions (HEIs) in developing countries*

	North Macedonia	Kosovo	Albania	Serbia	Montenegro
National strategy for e-learning	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
Planning techniques and approaches for e-learning	Ad-hoc	Ad-hoc	Ad-Hoc	YES	Ad-Hoc
Number of skilled workforce to support e- learning	Small	Small	Small	Small	Small
Governmental support in broadband Infrastructure	Medium level of support	Medium level of support	Medium level of support	Medium level of support	Medium level of support
Regulations	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
E testing	Some Private Universities	Some Private Colleges	Some Private Universities	Some Private Universities	Some Private Colleges

Table 1. Online learning activities in Western Balkans Countries

Albania

Albania is increasingly encouraging the use of ICT at all levels of education. With the support of the United Nations, the Ministry of Education and Science is merging plans for a comprehensive new e-School program, giving students the skills and knowledge of the Internet and IT, which is much needed (Barolli et al., 2009). On the other hand since education is one of the main priorities of the Government, priority should also be given to the National Information and Communication Technologies Strategy. One of the goals of Albania's strategy is *Promoting Basic Computer Literature – ICT Education for All*. The Ministry of Education has drafted plans for equipping HEIs with computers and access to the Broadband Internet, as well as for the establishment of the Albanian academic research network (Barolli, Sevrani, 2009). E-

learners in Albania have the proper infrastructure; broadband connectivity, smart phones, PCs, etc.

Montenegro

Montenegro has launched the strategy for Information Society development for 2020. Among others, this strategy focuses on e-education. The main goals are increasing the number of computers in HEIs, training more teachers to use computers, and increasing the number of children using the Internet. This strategy emphasizes the need for new and modern teaching methods. In Montenegro, every year, the Ministry of Education prepares specific plans to improve conditions for using ICT in teaching, such as, for example, signing contracts with telecommunication operators to improve internet connectivity in schools, training teachers in IT security, and enhancing online collaboration between teachers (EACEA, 2019; ISCED, 2016).

Montenegro has used an e-learning concept using Moodle as a platform for course management, which was established in 2007 (Radulovic et al., 2011) at the University of Montenegro. Most of the courses at the University of Montenegro use Moodle for lecture notes, some use it for the administration of exams and tests, and only a few use it for streaming lectures and delivering the complete course in an online form (Popovic et al., 2018).

Serbia

In 2020, Serbia launched the Strategy for Education Development and online learning, in particular. This strategy highlights the ICT role in raising teaching and learning quality at all levels of education. The strategy also focuses on making students literate for life in the modern world. The Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (EQE) of Serbia is developing instruments to evaluate key competences, including digital skills. According to

some statistics, 95% of schools have internet access, yet only 47% have access to Wi-Fi in the classroom (Digital, 2017; MESTD, 2017). About 56% of teachers report that they require professional development in ICT related fields, whereas about 34% of teachers participated in training on new technologies, including ICT. Although the Government and some EU organizations have invested in Broadband networks, two thirds of the schools with internet connections have internet speed up to 16 Mbps, which is not enough.

Challenges for transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning in Kosovo

According to MEST (2016), Kosovo is a country with a high degree of use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). According to STIKK (2013), it is estimated that 76.6% of Kosovo's population are Internet users, mainly for entertainment purposes. This rate is consistent with that of developed countries. But ICT is not properly integrated in the curriculum, teaching or education management. The integration of ICT into online learning is mentioned in the 2017-2020 strategic education plan and remains an important priority. Specifically, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed a draft e-learning strategy and has equipped schools with various teaching aids.

In Kosovo, universities and colleges are using technology a lot for learning. Some private colleges are more advanced in using technology for learning purposes compared to public institutions. This has also been proven during the time of COVID-19, where private colleges have managed to switch completely to online learning more efficiently as compared to Public Universities. In addition to conducting lectures and online

exercises, they have managed to successfully complete the online testing as well.

Presently there is no Government strategy for online learning in Kosovo and there is not enough support for HEIs ready to switch to online learning. Therefore, we can say that there is a lack of organized and institutional support for online learning.



Figure 2. Transitional phases from traditional classroom teaching to online teaching

Since the coronavirus outbreak, online classes in Kosovo have become the cornerstone of modern higher education. All of the universities and colleges have made a complete transition to online teaching. Before the obligatory transition from traditional classroom learning to online learning, the online courses came in many forms, from teaching with technology to hybrid approach classroom and online (Figure 2). Now, the only option that HEIs are using is online classes. This situation is changing education irreversibly but it is still too early to observe the outcomes.

Online classes, whether fully or partially online, do have stumbling blocks. The obligatory transition to online classes may cause lower enrollment rates in universities and colleges. Earlier studies show lower completion rate for online classes compared to traditional classroom learning.

The main barriers for online learning in Kosovo are technical difficulties. Both students and teachers are somehow frustrated with complications, and these difficulties can lead to students engaging less with the courses. Teachers may also face such problems, often devoting time to fix technical issues

(Amber et al., 2013) as well as uploading and editing content can become a very complex task.

Online learning asks that students take more responsibility for their learning and can transform them from passive to active learners. But this can be very challenging for some students. They need more motivation, discipline and organization in order to be successful. A major problem with online learning in Kosovo is accessibility of online courses. Also, the availability of internet connection, electronic devices such as laptops or mobile phones, electricity supply stability or suitable learning environment change from student to student and are identified as challenges that need to be addressed

Conclusions and recommendations

The evolution of online learning has been discussed in the context of COVID-19. Kosovo is no exception. Online learning, in fact, has been proposed for years, but it has not been taken very seriously by HEIs. It was not until the outbreak of COVID-19 that the HEIs worldwide had to design online plans. The challenges are greater in developing countries. Until now, almost all colleges and universities have included online learning in their strategic plans, but not all acted with determination to implement these plans. Now, after COVID, they will for sure. They will also realize how essential it is to have a robust online learning technology implemented on their premises. Also, they will realize how important it is to invest in training the teachers for successful implementation of online learning. The obligatory transition to online learning, especially in developing countries, has brought to light the fact that not all can access high quality broadband from home. During COVID-19, it was proved that a larger number of students do not have access to end devices (laptops, desktops, video and audio systems, smart phones)

needed to be effective online learners. Many students in developing countries, such as Kosovo, lack Internet at home and more students than originally envisioned may be relying on computers with limited capacity. Some students do not have a computer. We have learned a lot during this period of physical distancing and lockdown. The period of online learning has just begun. What will happen next is unclear, but what is known is that HEIs need to be prepared for a future called “*full online learning*”.

However, there are challenges to overcome, such as: reliable internet access, access to end devices, stable power supply, etc. This gap exists even in developed countries but is much more pronounced in developing countries. Also, moving from classroom learning to online learning raises issues related to access and equity.

Recommendations

Whatever strategies governments of developing countries choose to adopt, one should know that the effective use of e-learning for education purposes is dependent on a low-cost usage of telecommunication services and wide accessibility to such services. There are a lot of strategies that can be used by governments to encourage the growth of online learning. The choice of strategies for online learning depends to some extent on political ideologies, but also on the need for education and training. However, there is a wide range of potential risks, as well as benefits to each of these strategies. Online learning strategies should be included within a framework of government policies for economic and social development. These strategies are lacking in developing countries and some developed countries.

The following are some of the recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Innovation and Science and Government of Kosovo: Implications for government planning and support for broadband infrastructure, developing a national strategy for e-learning, careful regulation to ensure access by all participants, tax breaks to infrastructure suppliers to promote investment, tax breaks on computers and Internet services to end users, thus encouraging greater use and supporting private-sector investments.

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The discourse of motherhood and mother-daughter relationships in the novel *Sula* by Toni Morrison

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Abstract

Being an ideology, institution and experience, *motherhood* is an object of study of many authors. Many feminists recognize the significance of mother-daughter relationships and consider it the most powerful influence a woman can get in her life. By looking back into the past of their mothers, some of the female authors try to identify themselves and “pave the way” for their own daughters. The main question that emerges in this research is concerned with the way women are shaped as mothers under the influence of the family and the society.

The aim of this paper is to present the discourse of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationships in the novel *Sula* by using the theories of discourse by Foucault, (1982) Bakhtin, (1981) Macdonell (1986), Lazar (2005), van Dijk (2008), the sociological theories of Chodorow (1978) and Donath (2015) and the feminist theories on motherhood as proposed by Ruddick (1989, 1986), Hays (1998), DiQuinzio, (1999) and Ross (2016) among others.

Keywords: motherhood, mother-daughter relationships, family, society.

Introduction

Motherhood is defined as a cultural concept in which women put their identity in the capacity to raise children. This means, it is shaped by the culture the woman lives in. Aspects of motherhood vary significantly from the society and the family in which women are brought up and spend their lives. Thus, motherhood is influenced both by the society and the mutual relations with other women in the family.

The “mother” concept is very frequent in the work of feminist authors. Many feminists recognize the fact that the analysis of motherhood and mother-daughter relationships is very significant and consider it the most important point of their interest. White feminists, for example, demonstrate a sense of loss and betrayal by their mothers, whom they view as complicit in their own oppression. In contrast, women of color were more likely to respect their mothers’ struggles while they were keenly aware of the price their mothers had paid to survive. The traditional oral rhetoric, as well the strong influence of women in their own families significantly inspired Toni Morrison to present the way the African-American women form their identity as mothers going through excruciating and painful circumstances.

Sula, Morrison's second novel, focuses on a young black girl named Sula, who matures into a strong and determined woman in the face of adversity and the distrust, even hatred, of her by the African-American community in which she lives. Morrison explores the strong female relationships between the novel's women and how these bonds both nurture and threaten individual female identity. Also, she questions to what extent mothers will go to protect their children from a harsh world, and whether or not these maternal instincts ultimately are productive or harmful.

Published in 1973 the novel *Sula* provides a perfect image for the position of the African-American women in the last century. Among other issues, it examines the dynamics of family life and friendship and the expectations for conformity within the community. It also represents the complex images of mothers and turbulent mother-daughter relationships. In this sense, the main focus of interest of our research are the female characters in the novel, built upon their intertwined mutual relations and the way they are shaped by the imposed influence of the patriarchal discourse.

Freidan (1998) thinks that we can never be certain what women can achieve if they are free to express themselves, and “what women can become when they are finally free to become themselves. Who knows what women's intelligence will contribute when it can be nourished without denying love? The time is at hand when the voices of the feminine mystique can no longer drown out the inner voice that is driving women to become complete.” (p. xviii)

This quote by Betty Friedan defines the main aim of this research, which is to present the discourse of motherhood and the way it is defined and shaped under the influence of the social surrounding. The object of this paper is the novel *Sula* and its main female characters presented by Toni Morrison.

Theoretical background

Before moving to the main discussion on motherhood we will swiftly introduce the analytical framework to support the main argument of this research. The term “discourse” as used in this paper can closely be observed through the discourse theory of Macdonnel (1986) who provides social definition of discourse. She bases her research on the work of several theorists among which the most predominant are Bakhtin (1981) and Foucault

(1982) and comes to a conclusion that the discourse is formed during our everyday activities. The way we talk and write is shaped by the structures of power in the society being defined as a constant battle and conflict among different discourses. The words, the expressions and the forms of knowledge applied in the institutions (educational, religious and media) gain political dimension under the pressure of the forces in the society. Macdonell (1986) shows how the central understanding of the discourse, as a political and social instrument can easily disperse into several different critical theories and ideologies. According to her, the predominant discourse in the society is formed under the influence of power. Discourses and the ways they reproduce power are the different in different cultures. Van Dijk (2008) thinks that the members of different culture may understand and use these discourses in different ways in accordance with their culturally shared knowledge and attitudes. In this sense he advances his theory by defining the relationship between discourse and power and presents a definition of social power according to which "it is a property of the relationship between groups, classes or other social constructs or even between persons as members of the society". (p.29). According to Lazar (2005) the power relations between men and women are similar to those between dominated and subordinate classes and ethnic groups. What is different is the everyday context in which these power relationships are exercised. This puts the nature of gender as an oppressive factor in most social practices.

Motherhood as an ideology, institution and experience is a subject of research of many feminist authors. The mother-daughter relationship becomes even more interesting topic for discussion for the second generation of feminists who identify themselves with their mothers on many levels and investigate into their mothers' lives in order to discover the significance of their own. For the purpose of this paper we will refer to the

sociological theories of Chodorow (1978), Klein (1983) and Donath (2015) and the feminist theories of Ruddick (1989, 1986) Hays (1998) DiQuinzio, (1999) and Ross (2016). They base their work on the premise that the mother-daughter relationship is extremely significant in establishing female identity. It encourages important historical and psychological issues about the position and role of women in the past, and it embarks on the relations among the family members and their influence on the female identity. Encouraged by the position of mothers and mother-daughter relationship in the traditional discourse, these authors try to “remove off” the burden imposed to women by the patriarchal inheritance. In this sense it is significant, that for the purpose of our research we should remove the motherhood from the patriarchal framework and closely observe it aside from pre-supposed male control and domination.

Motherhood and mother-daughter relationships in *Sula*

The novel *Sula* is a novel of duality. Central to it are the female characters that represent the extreme opposites of the female nature. The main characters of the novel are two friends Sula and Nel. Later the author introduces the characters of their mothers Hannah and Helen and Sula’s grandmother Eva. Each woman has her own story to share. It seems that they strongly want to be their own creators of their destiny, but at the end they realize that they did the same as their mothers.

The theory of Chodorow (1978) which is in large extent applied in the representation of the discourse of motherhood in this paper is based on the psychoanalytic representations of the motherhood and the theory of the mother as an object. In the traditional psychoanalytic theory, the mother-daughter relationship is represented from the daughter’s perspective. In this way, the daughter is always subject to analysis and the story

is told from her point of view while the mother is an object of analysis and is always represented by the relationship with her daughter. Her own perspective is used only when she represents herself as a daughter of her mother. Even then, the mother is an object of analysis and not the subject.

This theory simplifies the description of motherhood and first discusses the mother-child relationship in order to move on to describing the more specific mother-daughter relationship. The main concern here (Chodorow, 1978) is why the mothers “perform” the motherhood instead of the fathers. Then, we continue to the question of the impact the mother-daughter relationship has on the formation of the identity of girls. The answer to this question is found in the fact that there is a systematic biological difference between males and females. Chodorow (1978) bases this theory on the object-relations theory (Klein, 1983) which starts off with the premise that the psychological life of a single individual is formed under the influence of the personal relations with other individuals. She begins with the description of the process of having a mother, which is quite different experience for the male and female children. Even though they all establish an emotional relation with their mother, their relationship is gradually changing. When reaching the school age, the boys start to identify themselves with their father (or opposed to their mother), while the girls continue their identification with the mother.

The novel *Sula* is no exception to the above statement. The female characters are built within the interpersonal relations, but it is almost always that the mother’s influence is the strongest. For example, in the case of Sula, she is always compared to her mother Hannah and her grandmother Eva. It is the same with the character of Nel. Her character is also built under the strong influence of her mother Helen.

Chodorow (1978) says that society plays a great role in defining the role of women and that "women's mothering does not exist in isolation. It is a fundamental constituting feature of the sexual division of labor. As part of the sexual division of labor, it is structurally and causally related to other institutional arrangements and to ideological formulations which justify the sexual division of labor." (p.32)

The girls do not only acquire the process of becoming mothers by acting out the appropriate gender roles, but they learn it under the influence of their mothers, which in large amount is determined by the social context. (Chodorow, 1978)

The setting of Morrison's novel has a great role over the identity formation of Sula and Nel. For Nel's mother, the opinion of other people extremely matters. In order to cover up her true origin, she decides to live her life in the new community to the utmost moral standards.

Morrison (2005) describes Helen Wright as an impressive woman and as "a woman who won all social battles with presence and a conviction of the legitimacy of her authority. Since there was no Catholic church in Medallion then, she joined the most conservative black church. And held sway." (p. 18)

Contrary to her, Hannah does not pay much attention to other people's comments. Even though she is known for her low morale, she never thinks of changing her personality in order to confirm her belonging to the community.

Morrison (2005) gives completely opposite description of Hannah since "she exasperated the women in the town-the "good" women, who said, "One thing I can't stand is a nasty woman"; the whores, who were hard put to find trade among black men anyway and who resented Hannah's generosity; the middling women, who had both husbands and affairs, because Hannah seemed to unlike them, having no passion attached to her relationships and being wholly incapable of jealousy." (p.44)

Even though completely opposite, the influence of Helen on the one hand, and the influence of Hannah on the other are extremely important in identity formation of their daughters Sula and Nel. Life led by strict moral rules turns Nel into a perfect young woman always prepared to meet the needs of others. Contrary to her, Sula, under the influence of her mother, turns into a selfish woman, seemingly incapable of loving anyone but herself.

Motherhood is one of the rare universal and permanent elements of the gender division of labor. This shows that even when we consider different cultures in which the gender division of labor and mother-daughter relationships are defined differently, motherhood is still the only thing performed solely by women. At the same time, motherhood is not fixed, but fluctuant and to a large degree dependent on the social and cultural context in which it occurs. The mothers are expected to establish constant emotional relationship with their children, which will prepare them for life outside the family. According to this study (Chodorow, 1978) motherhood doesn't only consist of raising children, feeding and dressing them, but also of their psychological preparation for the world around them.

DiQuinzio (1997) goes beyond this statement. She coins the phrase "essential motherhood" which is closely related to the femininity and is thus natural and unavoidable to women. It has the need for female exclusiveness and undivided attention and care for children which is based on the female psychological and emotional capacity for empathy, awareness for the needs of others and self-sacrifice. The subjectivity of personality requires unified, selfish and rational agent. But the motherhood which begins with the limitations of the pregnant body neither remains a unity, nor provides an opportunity for such interpretation. As a result, motherhood and subjectivity in modern culture are at odds with each other. Hence, motherhood is significant for the

feminist theorists since it emphasizes the dilemma “difference as opposed to equality” for many feminist issues.

The ideology of “intense motherhood” wraps around as a foil to the competitive search for an identity in the public and the professional sphere. This raises the social standards for the motherhood on an unrealistic level. Thus, mothers become responsible for raising children which is painstaking, emotional and financially expensive work. The great social ambivalence leads to the greater idealization of motherhood. Intensive mothering has its belittlers which become evident as the woman progresses into her role as a mother. The demands on her time and engagement are extreme and very often stressful and overwhelming. Mothers who attempt to engage in intensive mothering also feel intense guilt when they leave their children in the care of others or, as is sometimes the case, alone. Their sense of accomplishment in other spheres of life, such as work outside the home, is often undermined by chronic ambivalence about the morality of their choices and the adequacy of their mothering. (Hays, 1998).

Ruddick (1989,1996) goes even beyond this theory of maternal thinking that presumes motherhood is a “practice grounded in thought”. According to her, although pregnancy and mothering include acts and feelings that are unique to women, specific activities associated with the work (practice) of mothering can be shared by men. Doing so, only requires us to be willing to demystify and degender mothering ideology long enough to consider the possibilities. At the end, Ruddick points out that maternal thinking is a way in which men and women can act to undermine and change the patriarchal constructs that are responsible for women’s oppression with respect to motherhood.

Ross (2016) thinks that the modern society has the ability to understand motherhood and mothering in different light. The

larger context and the cultural backgrounds have always influenced the way how these concepts were understood. She furthers her statement by pointing out that there are still social and cultural pressures that promote idealized roles of motherhood for women.

The women in Peace family do not fit into the motherly roles as defined by the public opinion. Eva Peace tries hard to be a good mother and provide for her family. Even though she physically sacrifices herself in order to provide financial support for her children, emotionally she doesn't relate to them, which leaves them deprived of motherly love. This failure as a mother results in her daughter's failure to become a good mother. Hannah is only interested in herself and her own adventures, which strongly influences Sula. In this sense we can mention the notion of regretting over motherhood. Donath (2015) thinks that since motherhood is neither a universal experience for each woman, nor it can be experienced identically, the mothers can regret motherhood. This regret may be seen as a result of the personal failure to adapt to the overall concept of motherhood and to the parading of a good mother implying that the mother should try harder and do better.

Considering the double failure of her grandmother and her mother, Sula decides never to become a mother herself. She gradually becomes aware that the process of motherhood would be a complete disaster, so she ends up her life completely alone. This leads us to what Chodorow (1978) explains as a continuation of motherhood. She thinks that in the relationship with her daughter, the mother unconsciously repeats the same uncertainties and identifications she had experienced with her own mother. Thus, the mother is trying to connect to her daughter more as a continuation of herself rather than as a separate person. It additionally aggravates the process of identity formation for the daughter.

For the two friends Sula and Nel identity formation is a painful process. Even though they strongly fight with their own past, still they never manage to separate from their mothers. As absurd as it seems, they both end up the same as their mothers.

Besides being a novel of the mother-daughter relationships, *Sula* is also a novel of female psychological development opposing the traditional male interpretation of the role of women and it offers a new approach in defining the female paradigm. The ethnicity and the social status of women in *Sula* also matters a lot. In this way Morrison implicitly directs her work towards presenting characters that are double marginalized. On the one hand, they are female, and on the other, they are African-American women living in a patriarchal setting. With this, Morrison emphasizes the negative influence of the external factors such as racism and poverty on the definition of mother-daughter relationship. These factors also influence the process of motherhood and the identity formation process of each individual. The influences of the racial and social status are intertwined and cannot be separately discussed. They, to a great extent, determine the mother-daughter relationship. In *Sula*, Morrison depicts the influence of the social belonging by using the different social status of the Wright and Peace families –the first presented as a middle-rank, whereas the second presented as a family of lower social rank. In both families, the mother-daughter relationships are constantly under pressure due to the social influence. For example, Eva Peace cannot offer motherly love to Hannah. In cruel social conditions for a single African-American woman, only survival is the question of importance. Because of the racial and social influence, Eva is not able to commit fully to motherhood, which strongly influences her relationship with Hannah and the way she understands motherhood. As a result of this, Hannah never learns how to be a mother and this process is only repeated by her daughter.

The situation with the Wright family can also be considered as a reflection of the racial and social influence of the mother-daughter relationship. Helen is also unable to establish a relationship with her daughter because of her moral expectations. She imposes her expectations to Nel, constantly forcing her to change. But Nel never lives up to her mother's standards. She spends her life without a full recognition of her mother. Despite all her efforts to live her life in a completely different way from her mother, she sadly ends up the same. The life of Sula and Nel is under the great influence of their mothers' past. The life paths of mothers and daughters in *Sula* are deeply intertwined. Even though all daughters, at some point in their lives wanted to become different from their mothers, at the end they come to realize that they failed. Only Sula remains outside the circle of motherhood since she doesn't become mother, but by having an extramarital affair she demonstrates that she is not ready for a conventional life. Nel, once prepared to be the creator of her own story ends up trapped in life imposed by the conventions and expectations of the society. Limited by the social and racial influence, she doesn't want to disrupt the process of motherhood. Even though the daughters try to create their own identity, the mother-daughter relationships remain the most significant factor in the development of their identities.

Mother-daughter relationships in *Sula* are also affected by the lack of a father figure. The families of Peace and Wright almost lack father figures. From the beginning of the novel we understand that the man in Peace family had long left the town because he was incapable of accepting the commitment to raise children. Later, Hannah's husband died while very young, which left Sula fatherless, raised only by her mother and her grandmother. Nel's father is also absent from the family picture. For most of the time he is away working and misses almost all of the family events. It is expected that there is always an

understanding if a man's career commitments compete with his paternal identity. The idea by Lazar (2005) of "the absent father" becomes understandable only in the case of men. (p.156) This absence of male influence leads to emerging powerful females who strongly affect the concept of family life. The lack of father figure, according to Chodorow (1978) leads to breaking up the relationship with the patriarchy. Since there is only insignificant male presence in their life, the female characters are mostly formed under the female influence. As stated before, they are shaped by the influence of the other family members and the invisible power of patriarchy presented by the influence of the small community in Medallion.

Conclusion

The novel *Sula* is a typical feminist novel. It represents exceptional female characters; characters of mothers, some of who sacrifice for their children, and characters of rebellious daughters not always agreeing with their mothers' points of view. For the most part, the novel is narrated from the daughters' perspective. Hence, we can easily see how they feel about their mothers, but the opposite point of view is scarcely present. This is even obvious in the structure of the novel which is mostly circular and pointed towards identity formation of the two friends Sula and Nel (both daughters) and their own perception of the mother-daughter relationship. There are only few segments within the story when we see the mothers' standpoint of view.

The aim of this paper was to discuss the discourse of motherhood and the mother-daughter relationships.

The discourse of motherhood presented in this novel has been analyzed and discussed with reference to the theories of discourse with respect to the social, psychoanalytical and

feminist theories. The research into mother-daughter relationships and its influence on the identity development of the daughters led us to the conclusion that *Sula* is packed with formal moves against social structures. On the surface, Nel and Sula may appear as polar opposites, dissimilar characters with divergent world views, though Morrison's nuanced character portrayals and overall narrative construction resists any attempt at settling into static binary oppositions, including those that might hold varying expressions of motherhood. On the much deeper level, we see the complexity of the women we encounter in the novel. They are multi-dimensional beings with equally complex familial relationships which strongly affects their identity.

The beauty of Morrison's narrative is its complexity and its ability to illustrate the fluidity and valences of the black female subject as captured in the every day life. McDowell (1989) underscores this point, arguing against regarding black women's lives as homogenous, "they have not developed in a vacuum, but, rather in a complex social framework that includes interaction with black men, white men, and white women, among diverse social groups and subgroups". (p.54)

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*The discourse of motherhood and mother-daughter relationships in the novel
Sula by Toni Morrison*

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Alternative Opportunities for Conducting Physical, Sports and Recreational Activities in the Conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The situation created as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic has paralyzed the normal life of human society almost all over the globe. In addition to disruption of health, education, economic systems, etc., this situation has seriously damaged physical sports and recreational activities. The necessity to keep fit makes athletes to constantly try and find ways to organize training, while minimizing the risk of infection. Some of these ways are: a) medical measures or continuous testing of athletes; b) 'team quarantine' for the longest period of time that minimizes contact with other additional people of the club members where he/she trains; c) maximum care for maintaining the minimum allowed distance and contact between athletes. Meanwhile, outdoor recreational activities can be more easily controlled. However, these ways are not sufficient, so the consequences will be irreparable for a long time.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, physical activity, sports, recreation.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic caused an emergency situation which resulted in the inability to develop normal activities, including

physical activity, almost in all areas of life. This condition has truly disoriented all mankind, it can even freely be said that it looks like a plague, but with the specifics of beginning of this century and hopefully with less consequences in loss of life. The spread of the virus from China to other parts of the world was rapid. In just a few weeks the epidemic spread to all four corners of the globe. At first there was speculation from the leaders of some countries which hinted at a mass spread.

In two months of the spread of the virus identified as SARS-CoV2, the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Predictions were various, but far more pessimistic than optimistic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the increase of cases affected by this virus has been rapid. This situation and the panic related therewith forced the governments of different countries to take radical protective measures, for example, the measures imposed by the Government of the United Kingdom on March 23, 2020, which, among other things, ordered that: individuals can leave their homes only for essential needs such as: buying food, for medical needs, travel to work and similar for the most basic needs (Sorbie et al., 2020). With regard to physical activity, in the context of these measures it was ordered that the exercises be limited to groups of family members. These quarantine restrictions created unprecedented disruptions in the social, family, and work lives of individuals (Sorbie et al., 2020). In addition to the mobilization of health institutions to provide medical assistance to the infected persons and give advice to all human strata, educational, sports, social, economic, etc. institutions were also mobilized. While medicine treated cases and increased activities, the others restricted movement and interrupted activities. For example, on March 23, 2020, the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA, 2020) decided to postpone the highest level matches of the Champions League, until further announcement.

This decision was made after some professional footballers were tested and resulted positive. The International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2020), together with the Japanese Government, decided on March 30, 2020 that the 2020 Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo had to be rescheduled for July 2021, but retain the name Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. The same occurred with other high-level international events. Cancellation actions included the competitive activities in almost all countries of the world, at all levels. Apart from seriousness of the situation, many vital activities for society have from the beginning of the pandemic, adapted ways and forms in order to not paralyze their work. This is necessary for certain branches of economy, transport, security, etc., without which, survival cannot be imagined. Although physical and sports activities are considered as less necessary forms compared to the former ones, experts in this field, coaches, doctors, athletes, etc., have since the beginning been trying to look at finding ways how to continue with their work. To conduct training activities in restricted conditions is not easy; however, holding competitions is even more difficult. But some other physical and recreational activities are possible, of course, with the adaptation to these pandemic conditions. In this context, each specific activity should be respected, such as: elite sports, organized sports, recreational exercises, post-traumatic and rehabilitation exercises, leisure recreational exercises, physical and sports activities at school, physical outdoor activities, etc. The places where these activities can be organized are: indoor environment, outdoor environment and online training. Within this period of time, from the beginning of the pandemic onwards, many studies, source articles, reports, guidelines, etc., have been published and are being published constantly, which addresses various aspects of the following topics (Frahsa et al., 2020; Sorbie et al., 2020): consequences of lockdown for federations and sports clubs, perspectives of coach and athlete and risk of infection,

consequences of lockdown for the fitness and fitness industry, use of internet training during Covid-19, physical activity for different groups of the population during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as: clients of mental health services, children, adolescents, the elderly etc., physical activities based on the school curriculum but implemented at home, the consequences of lockdown of rehabilitation centres that use physical activity and behavioural change strategies such as treatment, socio-economic factors and sport-related activities during lockdown, use of outdoor activities during Covid-19, sports events and mega-events related to Covid-19, economic and commercial aspects of Covid-19 for sports, governance and management of sports related to Covid-19, sports media and Covid-19, the role of the individual versus the team in training and sports advancement during the lockdown by Covid-19 ([frontiersin.org/research-topics](https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics), 2020). In this situation, the society in all countries has no choice but to do their maximum mobilization to face this evil.

Fortunately, all relevant factors have taken this expanding pandemic situation seriously and are constantly preparing to do whatever is possible in order to mitigate the consequences in every sphere of life. This is also the case with mitigating the consequences in sports by being mobilized with concrete work in the field and in information. Suffice it to mention the systematic media analysis that conveys the message to individuals about how they should behave at this time. For example, analysis of detailed online media reports in the UK on sport and Covid-19 during the main lockdown period during March-May 2020 is one case in point. The research is based on the Sport-Covid reports, which has been presented in the top five online media in the UK. The analysis defines four basic statuses or dimensions of sport: existential, normative, socio-cultural and political (Giulianotti and Collison, 2020).

Physical activities during the Covid-19 pandemic

As the Covid-19 pandemic crisis continues, various problems accumulate in parallel. The problem of health care is more sensitive, therefore, special care should be taken. In this period of time, with the restrictions on movement and physical activity, experts of relevant fields have compiled strategies and alternative forms of exercise. According to the analysis of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan in the USA (2020) in this pandemic period, of particular importance to human health are these strategies of physical activity and exercise classified into three key points: physical activity and exercise can be effective treatment strategies for the symptoms of depression and anxiety; physical activity and exercise can bring short-term and long-term benefits to mood, sleep and physical health; sustained motivation and determination to exercise can be enhanced by peer support, family support, or electronic platforms that offer exercise programs. Concrete steps can be taken from these three orientations in order to design physical activity with different levels of people. Restriction of movement and in more severe cases complete isolation of the individual often results in the beginning of depressive symptoms (University of Michigan, Department of Psychiatry, 2020). Several studies (Lynette and Perna, 2004; Saravanan, Mahmoud, Elshami and Taha, 2020) suggest that high level of aerobic activity (exercises that significantly increase heart rate) may be associated with greater reductions of depressive symptoms. Also, high-intensity of physical activity can be executed, once or twice a day for short periods (30-90 seconds). This can be achieved through exercises at home including various jumps, exercises with force sequences (i.e. standing up, pushing, etc.). Meanwhile, the use of equipment, such as exercise bicycle, treadmill, etc., provide greater opportunities for home exercises. Physical activities at home for an improvement of general health

and to increase motor skills, are possible in more improvised forms. Strength training has proven to be helpful in reducing anxiety symptoms for individuals with and without an anxiety disorder. Weight training, using exercise equipment or household items (school books, canned products, water-filled cans, paint cans) can help reduce the negative effects of stress and anxiety. The benefits of weight training (low weight with a high number of repetitions) can be even higher with adults to maintaining quality of life and normal functioning (Michigan Psychiatry Resources for COVID-19, 2020; Chen et al., 2020). In these conditions, exercise programs and guides are being designed by many companies.

They offer free use of their on-line platforms that can help you choose from a variety of indoor activities (cycling, running, dancing, yoga, strength training, etc.) to make exercise more enjoyable during this critical period. Experts recommend choosing physical activities that the individual likes, and using the experience of others. At the same time, there is evidence which suggests that exercise may be beneficial for mood even if the act of doing the exercise is not as satisfying (Michigan Psychiatry Resources for COVID-19, 2020). Implementing physical exercises at home can activate other family members, by always maintaining the individual's opportunity to choose his activities, which provides a constant interest in exercising. In this difficult time it can be even considered as a turning point on learning new ways to build emotional stability and physical health. According to many guides which prefer home environment activities, people can take regular breaks after a short time in front of the computer, tablet or smartphone, 20 to 30 minutes altogether. You can take few minutes break, to walk around the house, get some fresh air on the balcony, in the garden or yard, or play in your home with the dog for a few moments. Using stairs is an extremely effective way. Fast stairs

climbing can improve fitness for few weeks. But, if you live in an apartment, avoid unpleasant encounters with other neighbours (The Conversation, Academic rigour, Journalistic flair, 2020). Global recommendations are for all adults to accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of high-intensity of physical activity per week, as well as muscle-strengthening activities in two or more days a week. If this volume of exercises cannot be achieved, then as much activity as possible should be done, according to the saying 'every activity is better than none'. As the situation changes with the spread of the infection, so should the contents of the exercise program. The situation is unsure, many places can again go to lockdown and it is not known how long we cannot go out for a walk, or to run. So the matter is constantly open on how can people fulfil these guidelines when restricted at home? (Mohammed, 2020; COVID-19 Sports Guidance for Youth and Adults, 2020).

Sports activities during the Covid-19 pandemic

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in almost every country in the world has forced the governments of all affected countries to take protective measures such as social and physical distancing, disrupting regular living and communication behaviours including sports and physical activity. This challenge posed by COVID-19 from the beginning has alerted those responsible for sports' activities at the United Nations to compile and provide recommendations to governments to support the safe reopening of sporting events, as well as to support physical activity during and after pandemic. The analysis and recommendations set forth by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations, which deals with the impact of COVID-19 on sports activity, include the following: recommendations to sports federations and organizations as

well as recommendations on the so-called professional sports system (Department of Economic and Social Affairs - UN, 2020). This Department recommends to governments and intergovernmental organizations to provide sports federations, clubs, and sports organizations worldwide with guidance on safety, health, performance, and standards, as well as other international protocols to be implemented in future sporting events. This would enable all parties to work together in order to organize all sports activities more easily and safely. The so-called professional sports system includes actors related to sports, such as: producers, broadcasters, fans, businesses, owners and players, etc. The mentioned institution recommends finding new and innovative solutions to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 in the world of sports, and the guide describes strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 during sports activities. The complete blocking of the athletes could not have been imagined, so immediately after the alarm of the pandemic, appropriate programs were initiated in order to continue sports activities in the new extraordinary conditions. These guidelines include content for outdoor exercises, recreational activities, while returning to competitive sports is carefully approved depending on the type of sport. Despite the specific conditions of social distancing and personal protective measures, the continuation of the active life of athletes is done in order to maintain physical fitness and at the same time to fight the health consequences (Jiménez-Pavón, Carbonell-Baeza, Lavie, 2020). Moderate exercises are associated with immune system improvement and reduced disease risk. On the other hand, excessive exercise and high-intensity exercise can cause transient immune dysfunction and be associated with an increased risk of disease, including upper respiratory tract infections, but this may not apply to elite athletes (Schwellnus et al., 2016; Alack, Pilat, Krüger, 2019). High intensity sports, such as: football,

athletics running disciplines, etc., in conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic may conduct certain exercises in nature, but due to increased levels of ventilation during training, possible mass gatherings in sports venues, stadiums, jogging trails, parks or any recreation area, are associated with the risk of the infections in question. Currently there are no consistent guidelines regarding the use of face masks for outdoor exercise during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experts advise people to wear face masks during low-to-moderate intensity exercises, such as brisk walking and jogging, while maintaining a safe physical distance (2 m away) and personal hygiene in public. However, the use of face masks can jeopardize high-intensity breathing and oxygen uptake in high-dynamic exercises (Lim, Pranata, 2020). Each sport and activity in the new pandemic conditions is categorized according to its risk, but the general classification is: (1) low risk: exercise at home, alone or together with family members, with equipment and clean facilities; (2) medium risk: exercising in public, alone or together with one's family of not more than 5 persons, with own and cleaned equipment; and (3) group exercises with non-family members in private or public space, physically not far from each other, with shared equipment (Aspen Institute, 2020). Since the time of physical development and sports activities under conditions of multiple restrictions is long, returning to normal exercise and sports activities will be challenging. Many athletes will strive to achieve their previous physical performance. Prolonged rest and reduced exercise lead to decreased functional capabilities of many systems (e.g., musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, respiratory, and cardiovascular systems) as well as reduced physical abilities (e.g., strength, flexibility, speed, and endurance) (Jukic et al., 2020). A study conducted by Kramer et al. (2017) confirmed that a group of healthy adults who don't do any physical activity have significantly lower aerobic and other motor skills compared

to their counterparts who performed three minutes of jumping exercises, six days a week, for 60 days. In addition, the density of bone minerals in the group of those of the sedentary category decreased significantly, while the experimental group that developed jumping exercises maintained these parameters.

Recreational activities during the Covid-19 pandemic

Physical activity is not only necessary for athletes and young people, but it is also of great importance for the strata of people with lower physical disability, for the older people, and for the category of people with disabilities. Therefore, maintaining and improving health with various forms of physical activity is necessary for all people even during this stressful period. Organizing physical activities in the created situation is complicated because it is necessary to be constantly vigilant regarding physical distancing and restrictions on personal contacts, recommended by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. During the period of self-isolation, most people became accustomed to a lifestyle of sitting for long periods of time with less physical activity, less walking, and less movement. Exceptions are athletes who train individually to keep themselves healthy and maintain shape as much as possible (Pinto et al., 2020). In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, staying at home is still encouraged by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, but in addition daily physical activity is recommended for children (60 min/day), and for adults (30 min/day) (Lim, Pranata, 2020). This helps to manage the stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential to threaten the health of ourselves, our families and our communities. For those who have the opportunity, regular outdoor walks are recommended. These can be moderate-intensity physical activities but according to the individual's ability also with

higher intensity and strain (such as brisk walk or jogging). This form of exercise and recreation has proven to be successful and helps in the reduction of bad habits, use of alcohol and other harmful substances. Moreover, regular participation in physical activity is proven to increase their immunity and thus utilize the body's ability to fight infection (Lim, Pranata, 2020). Walking in nature is simple and easy for all other categories with different physical abilities. Older people regulate a lower walking pace and walking time, although it can be combined with jogging. Middle-aged people also have different physical abilities, and depending on this factor they walk or run at a pace that suits their age and ability. Therefore, all categories of people find the optimum of physical engagement in recreational conditions. Outdoor terrains for picnics, parks, recreation centres, etc. are the most suitable places for this purpose. Those forms of exercise can be combined with the use of tools and equipment outdoors or in the gym. Walking or jogging with the dog, yard or park landscaping and many other forms that are not monotonous can be used by all ages. Guidelines for supporting the return to recreation and fitness are numerous. They aim to provide users with basic knowledge about recreational support facilities as well as the safest ways to protect themselves from COVID-19 (Sports, Recreation and Being Active during COVID-19, 2020). Staying seated at work for a long time or staying at home should be avoided when possible, while a healthy diet and active daily lifestyle should be encouraged (Schwellnus et al., 2016). A sedentary lifestyle negatively affects: neuromuscular system (rapid muscle loss, degeneration of nerve fibres etc.), muscle protein metabolism, glucose homeostasis (reduces insulin sensitivity), cardio-respiratory system, as well as balance of energy (excess fat deposition etc.) (Alack, Pilat, Krüger, 2019). In addition, for people of active working age, except performing the necessary duties, their goal should be avoidance of excessive

body mass and follow a healthy lifestyle. Currently, there are numerous virtual fitness and personal training opportunities that are widely available online, as well as opportunities for meetings with medical consultants. With a more flexible schedule, healthy individuals can adjust their modality, frequency, volume, and intensity of exercises that can be performed at home (Jiménez-Pavón, Carbonell-Baeza, Lavie, 2020). But they need to know limits of their abilities and abstain from any form of exhaustion, or high-intensity exercise that could compromise the immune system. Meanwhile, moderate-intensity endurance training and endurance training are recommended in order to boost immunity and fitness.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions should no longer be an excuse for not maintaining a physically active lifestyle, as there are numerous alternatives to maintaining mental and physical health.

Conclusion

Social distance measures mean that people have far fewer opportunities to be physically active, especially if walking, cycling, or participating in a leisure activity are restricted (e.g. running, dog walking, going to the gym). These drastic measures in a way force people to stay sitting at home for a longer time (Conversation, 2020). The impact of this physical inactivity is likely to have consequences in many areas such as: health and social care, mental well-being of people, education, etc. During the COVID-19 pandemic, being physically active will be a challenge for all of us, but it is important to find and plan ways to reduce our sitting time. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of guidelines is a good opportunity to continue with physical activity, although not as in normal conditions. It includes a variety of exercise programs for all categories of people: by age,

gender, physical fitness, ambitions and goals of the individual, etc. Some of these guidelines have the character of a document developed by local government institutions or international institutions. All of that content has been developed to support sports, physical activity and recreational organizations, participants and in parallel by providing advice on reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission among attendees (Physiopedia, 2020; COVID-19 Guidance for Sports, Physical Activity and Recreation, 2020). This is an unusual situation, but we must face this challenge, since the efforts always lead people to victory. Let's hope this time too.

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Book Review on *Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow: Illustrated 200th Anniversary Edition*

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Abstract

This short essay reviewed *Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow: Illustrated 200th Anniversary Edition*, which was just published in April of this year by SeaWolf Press. After clarifying the context in which it ought to be received and read, I explained that the new publication, containing a large number of exquisite illustrations drawn by Newell Convers Wyeth and Arthur Rackham, should be considered highly valuable in that it would help present-day people to read the two famous tales in the original by enabling them to vividly visualize a bygone world that has completely lost in material terms.

Keywords: American Literature, Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book*, “Rip Van Winkle”, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

Reviewed Work: Irving, W. (2020). *Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow: Illustrated 200th Anniversary Edition*. Orinda, CA: SeaWolf Press.

Few will gainsay that Washington Irving occupies a distinguished position in the pantheon of world literature. The penman stood high in public esteem already in his lifetime, as evidenced by the following accolades that an anonymous critic contemporary with him expressed: “Mr. Irving is unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries as a writer of English undefiled” (“The Monthly Periodicals”, 1838, p. 296). Over a century has elapsed since his passing, and he is now sometimes called “the Father of American Literature” (Rozakis, 1999, p.39), though some may suppose that James Fenimore Cooper or Mark Twain should assume the title. With only a cursory search on the internet, one can realize that academic studies and journalistic essays on him are produced in liberal quantities every year.

Although many of his literary pieces are still widely read, one can safely presume that his magnum opus is *The Sketch Book*. Composed of thirty-four vignettes that are heterogeneous in style, setting, and subject, it has fascinated people of various generations and backgrounds and made a profound impact on succeeding writers. For example, it is well-known that Dickens, arguably the most significant novelist England has ever produced, drew much inspiration from it, as Davis (1999) confirmed: “The most immediate models for Dickens’s sketches were those of Washington Irving, whose *Sketch Book* influenced Dickens’s early work in particular” (p. 354).

Among the tales included therein, “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” are undoubtedly the most esteemed pieces. Set in old America that had hardly modernized, they sharply signalize themselves by their incredible degree of narrative perfection and have generated countless adaptations;

Book Review on *Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow:*
Illustrated 200th Anniversary Edition

Rip Van Winkle has become part of everyday vocabulary. Notwithstanding the recognition that they have obtained, however, it is questionable whether those who know their names have read them in the original, for they are written in antiquated English and laden with things and manners which have become unfamiliar to the current world where artificial materials, elaborate machinery, and electricity abound. In reality, to those who are unacquainted with the practices of nineteenth-century America, they are likely to come across as remote.

Allowing for the circumstances, we should deem *Rip Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow: Illustrated 200th Anniversary Edition*, which has been put on sale since April of this year by SeaWolf Press, to be a highly timely publication in diverse respects. Certainly, the volume is by no means a genuinely original work because its content is the titular two tales which, as I have just explained above, originally constituted *The Sketch Book* with other thirty-two episodes; in addition, bibliographically speaking, it is a compound of two booklets that were published decades ago. It, though, is different from many other slackly made reprints of out-of-copyright classics that currently inundate the market and has a variety of noteworthy merits. For example, both of the two narratives are neither abridged nor modified, and, besides, well-nigh free from misprints and omissions that are quite common in a reprint of a centuries-old text.

Yet, as the title so strongly suggests, the most remarkable excellence of this book consists in, of course, the dainty illustrations adorning the stories elegantly. Only by casually leafing through it, one will realize that most pages display one or two pictures that are so exquisitely rendered that they can greatly help the readers to vividly conjure up the daily customs and the spiritual mores of the far distant past. Although the majority of the readers would readily concur that the slightly

caricatural cuts in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” are of sound and solid quality, they will obtain a deeper and indelible impression from the picturesque drawings in “Rip Van Winkle”. They are the artworks of Newell Convers Wyeth and Arthur Rackham, who are, albeit relatively marginal if compared with such renowned figures as William Hogarth and George Cruikshank, eligible to be counted as two of the greatest illustrators in modern art history. Evoking effectively a bygone world which is now completely lost in material terms, they make the stories familiar even to those who were born about two centuries after their first publication.

Naturally, it is not the case that the book has no blemishes at all. It would have been better if Rackham’s impressionistic paintings were printed in full color, and the publisher should have provided notice that the illustrations in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” are not the works of Wyeth or Rackham. That said, these are never fatal defects, and the merits amply compensate for them. To sum up, we ought to cordially welcome the volume which will entice a new set of tenderfoots into Irving’s fabulous world.

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Instruction for authors

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Thesis is an international research journal with double-blind peer review, which is published by AAB College in Prishtina. The journal presents an international forum for Balkan region, for empirical, qualitative, critical and interpretative studies, on different issues, and mainly in social and human sciences.

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Online ISSN: 2623-8381

Print ISSN: 1848-4298

Thesis is published twice a year, the Spring and Fall edition. Materials of the journal are also available online with open access. The deadline for submitting papers to the Spring edition is March 15, while for the Fall edition is October 15, in the editorial email: thesis@aab-edu.net.

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Abstract (100-150 words); Keywords: 5

Introduction

Heading...

Bibliography and sources.

Appendix

Style guidelines

The editorial board uses APA Style, 6th edition (www.apastyle.org). Please, do not use footnote, or avoid endnote as much as possible.

APA Style

In text citation/reference of a scientific source, is as follows:

Last name of the author, year of publishing and page – if needed, e.g: (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 7).

Author in a sentence

Another study for this issue (Smith, 2016) emphasizes that...

Author at the beginning of the sentence:

Smith (2016) emphasizes that...

Wolton (2009, p. 53) says that internet offers an ocean of information, but every day we choose to be on diet by choosing only the information that is beneficial to us, not time-consuming.

Wolton (2009) says that internet offers an ocean of information, but every day we ask “how to interconnect communication ghettos who communicate only vertically and not horizontally through other communication tools” (p. 53).

In 1974 Zukowski invented the term Literacy information to describe...

Two authors in a book

Smith and Jonnes (2016) emphasize that...

Citation within a part of the sentence:

Another study for this issue (Smith, 2016) puts the main emphasis on the previous behavior in the environment where the child lives, because “the environment presents the nest where the child gathers information which later, he/she will imitate or apply in everyday behavior” (p. 6).

Different conflicts, terrorist attacks, insecurities etc., made citizens or even political actors, ask: “Why do they hate us” (Arndt, 2006, p. xviii). This is very important, because “today’s hate brings tomorrow’s urge of insecurity and instability not only within the country, but also for the global security” (p. 34).

Some authors for the same issue:

As the public diplomacy researchers point out (Nye, 2004; Gilboa, 2008; Anholt, 2004; Melissen, 2007)), having a positive image...

If two authors have the same last name, the first letter of the name is also written:

Authors Smith J. and Smith F. (2016) highlight some key features
...

Three to five authors in one book:

If a work has three (3), four (4) or five (5) authors, cite all authors the first time and from then on include only the last name of the first author followed by the words et al. ('et al.' is Latin for 'and others')

Eg. (Nye, Melissen, Szondi, Leonard, 2015).

Eg. (Nye et al., 2015)

Over 6 authors in one work:

If a work has six (6) or more authors, cite only the last name of the first author followed by et al. each time you refer to this work. In the bibliography all are written.

For example:

As noted in the recent study of corruption and political nepotism in Kosovo (Plepi et al., 2015), in this case neither exist...

More work by one author in a year:

As Plepi (2015a) points out, economic growth and welfare also increase family harmony, but such a phenomenon has been impossible to measure so far in Kosovo, or studies of this phenomenon are "regretful" (Plepi, 2015b).

Entities and institutions as authors

The full name of the institution should be indicated in the first citation, while the following citations may be used if the name is particularly long.

The international network of humanitarian aid associations has increased considerably in recent years in Kosovo (the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action [ALNAP], 2010).

Subsequent citations:

(ALNAP, 2010)

Bibliography

General rules

When a source has up to seven (7) authors, include all names in the reference list by dividing authors by commas.

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Date of book publication:

The date comes after the author, separated by a full stop and is inserted between the round brackets. In case of documents without a date, use the abbreviation "n.d." in brackets (no date).

Translated books:

In case of foreign translated books, indicate the name of the translator.

Examples:

Wolton, D. (2009). *Informer n'est pas communiquer*. Paris: CNRS Editions.

Tuch, H. N. (1990). *Communicating with the world: U.S. public diplomacy overseas*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University.

Chapter or article within an edited book or summary:

Melissen, J. (2011). Concluding reflections on soft power and public diplomacy in East Asia. Nö: S.J. Lee & J. Melissen (ed). *Public diplomacy and soft power in East Asia* (247–262). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Journal

Gilboa, E., (2008). Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Los Angeles: Sage, n.2. Vol3, (55-77).

Journal from website

Last name of author, first letter of the name. (2013). Online title. *Title of the online journal*. Place: Publishing house. The link or doi, eg.:

Gilboa, E., (2008). Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Los Angeles: Sage. doi: xyuu222ioooooee./e45

Piaget, J. (1969). *The psychology of the child*. New York, NY: Sage. (translated in Albanian by Filan Fisteku, *Child's psychology*).

In text: (Piaget, 1969)