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**EDUCAȚIA-PLUS**  
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**CULEGERE SEMESTRIALĂ DE STUDII**

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## **SCHOOL FACILITIES ACHIEVED IN THE FIELD OF NATURE AND SOCIETY WITH PERSONS WITH EASY INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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**Abstract:** *The main objective of this research refers to the correlation of perceptual skills and attention to the adoption of materials as well as contributions surveyed variables on school achievement in the program area of “The seasons, changes caused by their replacement in nature and society”. The sample consisted of 93 interviewees with mild intellectual disability, aged 8 to 12 years and 3 months, both sexes, no neurological, sensory and combined disturbances. To assess the ability of respondents we used the first and third subtests of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (auditory and visual discrimination), C3 scale of the Luria-Nebraska Battery for Children (tactile perception), and the Criterion test knowledge test. The results show a significant correlation between estimated cognitive ability and achievement in the program area of “The seasons, changes caused by their replacement in nature and society”, which is taught in the subject of Natural and Social Sciences. Of all the estimated abilities visual discrimination occupies the most significant place, with the standard coefficient Beta 0.288, while behind it there is a listening discrimination with 0.071, tactile 0.200 and attention with 0.56 percent.*

**Key words:** *perception; attention; Natural and Social Sciences; mild mental disability.*

## **Introduction**

Intellectual disability (ID) is defined as a limitation in present functioning, characterized by below-average intellectual functioning and limitations in adaptive behavior, as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills (AAMR, 2002). In order to adequately diagnose ID, it is necessary to assess a child's intellectual abilities and adaptive behavior, which means fitting in with the demands of the social environment in a way that is appropriate to a person's age (Tomić, Mihajlović, 2008)

Adaptive behavior is the collection of conceptual, social and practical skills that enable a person to function appropriately in daily life. Limitations in adaptive behavior are not assessed in relation to the best behavior in daily life. It must be viewed within the context of the individual's cultural background, because it influences skill acquisition and determines the motivation to acquire and use what has been learned. Conceptual, social, and practical skills are components of adaptive behavior, and significant discrepancies can be detected in one or all three areas of adaptive behavior. (Not, 2008)

There is limited literature concerning practical skills in children with ID, and given that they provide the ability to cope with activities of daily living, our primary goal was to point out, based on theoretical and empirical knowledge, the conceptual definition and specificities of practical skills in children with ID in the field of nature and society.

However, when it comes to achieving positive social outcomes for inclusive education, parents and teachers sometimes overestimate the social position of students with ID, viewed through the sociometric status of students. Koster and associates (Koster, Pijl, van Houten, & Nakken, 2007) report that 65% of parents have a more positive view of the social position of students with ID than their peers. On the other hand, only 10% of parents underestimate the social position of children with ID. Also, more than 50% of teachers overestimate the social position of students with ID in a regular educational setting (Koster et al., 2007; Monchy et al., 2004). These results indicate that parents' and teachers' perceptions of the positive effects of inclusion may not correspond to the real situations in the classroom, and it is therefore important to examine the achievement of positive social outcomes through the prism of peer perceptions.

Although, according to proponents of inclusion, education of children with ID in regular classes should, among other things, lead to an increase in peer acceptance and a decline in rejection by typically developing children (Gresham and MacMillan, 1997), research does not always support these predictions. Simply placing children with ID in a regular school setting does not guarantee that contact with typically developing students will actually

take place, and many of them may not be high quality contacts and may not be viewed as equal status contacts between groups (Gottlieb and Leyser, 1981). Even though children with ID can benefit from education and schooling in an inclusive environment, such as having more opportunities to interact and play with more competent social partners, there is also an increased risk of rejection and neglect in these conditions (Brojčin, 2007; Brojčin, Glumbić, 2007). Some parents of children with ID have concerns about possible social isolation and negative effects on the emotional development of these children in an inclusive environment (Leyser, Kirk, 2004). Studies conducted in a population of typically developing students suggest that rejected children are at greater risk of certain negative factors, such as a more frequent victimization and open and relational aggression (e.g., Crick, Bigbee, 1998; Putallaz, et al., 2007).

#### Inclusion of students with ID in the teaching activity of Natural and Social Sciences

In Natural and Social Sciences (Science and Social Studies) school subject, by processing the material in concentric circles, students acquire elementary and practical knowledge about the natural and social environment. Seven program areas of this school subject are taught at younger school age by upgrading knowledge from previous grades, ie. in the form of a spiral. Results of previous research indicate that students with intellectual disabilities (ID) do not master the curriculum at the initial levels of education, which suggests that it is impossible to expect an "upgrade / improvement" at the next school age. Particularly poor achievements were noted when assessing the adoption of teaching materials in the program area "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society" / "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society" (Japundza, 2002), which includes abstract terms such as the concept of air, appearance of soil, highlands and lowlands, barren and fertile lands, and this area is the base for the study of Natural and Social Sciences at an older school age. Therefore, our interest is based on identifying certain factors that influence better learning of this program area.

One of the primary motives that parents have to include children with ID in regular schools is to provide more opportunities for social relations with typically developing students (Monchy, Pijl, & Zandberg, 2004; Scheepstra, Pijl, & Nakken, 1996). Most parents of children with disabilities agree that inclusion provides opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in various, not necessarily academic, activities. These parents perceive potential positive social and emotional outcomes as main benefits of inclusive education for children with disabilities, which are positively expressed through teaching Natural and Social Sciences, where students with ID gain

experience about nature and society through practical skills. (Leyser, Kirk, 2004).

During the entire development, while discovering space, the child also discovers his or her bodily integrity. Information on the position of the body and its parts, is a necessary condition for planning and performing any motor activity. Children with mild ID exhibit motor awkwardness / clumsiness, which is often directly related to issues with the visuospatial ability, which is instrumental in the teaching of Natural and Social Sciences.

Perception, as a basic cognitive component, is the recognition and discrimination of stimuli. It develops gradually, with maturity and enrichment of outdoor experiences. From the earliest stage of development, the child, receiving stimuli through senses, becomes aware of his or her surroundings, and later, through speech, acquired experiences connected by words become concepts. Therefore, many authors state that perception is crucial for success in adopting academic skills and abilities (Dykens, 2000; Jacobsen et al., 2001).

Attention, as a basic cognitive ability of the individual, enables directing mental abilities towards a particular activity, phenomenon or object. Children with mild ID have a short attention span. Their attention is fluctuating, volatile, making it difficult to resist distractors and unable to separate essential from non-essential information. Studies conducted on a sample of children with intellectual disabilities indicate that concentration and selective attention issues appear to be high in this population, especially in young school-age children, which greatly impedes acquisition of academic knowledge and skills (Hastings et al., 2005), while other studies point to perception as a significant condition for success at school (Dykens, 2000; Jacobsen et al., 2001).

Conceptual definition and relevant activities

Practical skills and abilities in children in the general population are described as a subjective experience of remembering that is acquired without conscious effort and control (Metcalf, Michel, 1999). They are a collection of hands-on activities whose primary objective is to allow proper functioning in life circumstances, which includes personal, instrumental activities, activities of daily living, occupational skills, as well as maintenance of a safe environment.

Personal activities of daily living include adoption of hygiene habits, feeding habits, safe movement in the social environment, as well as skills related to getting dressed and undressed. Instrumental activities of daily living include preparing meals, maintaining a household, traveling, taking medication, managing money, using the telephone, etc. (Not, 2008).

Children need to learn practical skills before they start school, as they are the basis for overcoming obstacles posed by the social environment. When a child learns to dress and eat prepared food, he or she feels safe, because he or she learns to perform elementary tasks on his or her own. Typically developing children master practical activities in childhood and know how to take care of themselves and their environment. During late adolescence and early adulthood, adults exhibit complete independence in the pursuit of activities of daily living at home and in the community.

In our study, the research paper is based on the premise that the formation of concepts about the natural and social environment around students with mild ID is determined by a number of cognitive factors. Our interest is based on the assessment of attention and perception as important cognitive elements that determine academic success of this school subject. Perception, as an active mental activity, is the original source of knowledge, followed by activation of attention that allows selection of relevant stimuli from irrelevant ones as well as ignoring of distractors. Therefore, this study is based on research problems that have been considered in these questions: Is there a correlation between these two predictors and the success in the teaching field "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society" / "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society" in Natural and Social Sciences - and if there is, which factor is more significant?

Research objectives

- Examine the correlation between perceptual abilities and attention, and school success
- Determine which of the factors examined has the most important influence on better school achievement in the program area "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society" / "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society".

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The survey included 31 second, third and fourth graders with mild ID, who were included in the inclusive education process, assessed by the inter-ministerial committee, whose data are contained in the school's pedagogical documentation, accounting for 93 students in the total sample. Subjects were of calendar age from 8 to 12 years and 3 months, both sexes, without neurological, sensory and combined disorders. The survey was conducted in all elementary schools in Belgrade attended by students with mild ID. It is important to emphasize that the sample included students with ID who can read.

## Data collection instruments

### Instruments for assessing visual, auditory and tactile perception

#### Acadia test

Visual and auditory perception abilities were assessed by means of Acadia test of developmental abilities. Authors of this scale are Atkinson, Johnston, and Lindsay. This scale has been translated and adapted in its entirety by Prof. Dr. Marija Novosel, whose instructions we have followed (Novosel, 1989). Since the scale was in Croatian and we could not use it in our research, we used the Serbian version of this scale (Povše-Ivkić, Govedarica, 2001).

Acadia test, taken as a whole, consists of 13 independent subtests and serves to evaluate abilities that are required for success in school. We used two subtests in our research. Examination was performed individually.

#### Subtest 3

Visual perception is assessed by Subtest 3 - Visual discrimination. We examined visual perception with tasks that require respondents to find the same image or word from a group of objects, solely through visual means. The test consists of 20 items. Tasks in the test are hierarchically conceptualized. Respondents are expected to circle, from four shapes or four words, two that are the same. The first three items refer to images, while other items refer to words that are quite similar, which excludes the possibility of reading and requires visual perception of those words. A correct answer scores one point; two answers given for one item are considered an error and that answer earns zero points. The highest score on this subtest is 20.

#### Subtest 1

Subtest 1 is used to assess auditory perceptual abilities - Auditory discrimination, consisting of 20 items. Each item implies a pair of words that are similar in sound, and the respondent is expected to answer which pair of words is different and which pair is the same. Items 5, 10, 12, 17 and 18 refer to the same pair of words, all other items include two different words. The test is used to assess verbal auditory perception. Each correct answer gets one point. Maximum score for this subtest is 20.

Gross scores are then converted to standard scores according to the table that comes with the Acadia test. To determine standard scores, it is necessary to determine each respondent's calendar age, year and month included. Standard scores have an arithmetic mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. If standard scores of a respondent are below two standard deviations, then it is considered necessary to include defectological treatment (Novosel, 1989; Povše-Ivkić, Govedarica, 2001).

#### Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery scale

Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery Scale for children (LNNB-C) was used for assessing tactile perception. C3 Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery Scale evaluates tactile functions and aims to evaluate perceptual rather than sensory abilities, which is why it is necessary to determine the presence of sensory deficits before applying the scale. The applied scale (C3) is most sensitive to deficits of the parietal lobe of both hemispheres (Goldstone and Barsalou, 1998).

The tactile perception scale is the most difficult scale to apply, because it is necessary to administer uniform stimuli. It is believed that healthy respondents should do this scale without error (Pavlovic, 1999). Hierarchically conceptualized, the C3 scale consists of 16 items grouped in pairs, so that the same tasks assess the quality of tactile development on both sides of the body. During the application of the scale, the respondent is blindfolded, thus excluding the influence of other stimuli. The hands are placed flat on the table, palms facing down. No tasks should be repeated during the test.

The first two items (43-44) assess the localization of touch, the next two tasks (45-46) test the ability to discriminate touch (blunt, sharp), while items 47 and 48 assess the ability to differentiate the strength of touch. The following set of items (49 and 50) assesses the ability to discriminate between two points. Tasks 51 and 52 measure the ability to differentiate forearm tactile sensitivity. Discrimination of different shapes is assessed by items 53 and 54, while the ability to recognize numbers "written" on the hand (graphesthesia) is assessed by the next pair of items (55-56). The final set of items (57 and 58) assesses stereognosis (Pavlovic, 1999).

The Luria-Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery predicts two types of scoring: quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative scoring implies a number of appropriate errors for each category, and qualitative observations should be described as comprehensively as possible. Within the implementation of the C3 scale, we used quantitative scoring, which implies a score at three levels: 0 (normal achievement),

1 (borderline achievement) and

2 (pathological achievement).

The respondent receives a certain number of points depending on the number of errors. The scale is negative because, if the respondent has a smaller number of points, it practically means that he or she is more successful on the applied test. Pathological scores indicate the existence of a stronger cognitive lesion, whereas a borderline score indicates the presence of a weaker cognitive deficit. The final processing of obtained results was performed according to the instruction given with the battery, in accordance with the set goals (Golden, 1987).

### Attention assessment instruments

Selective attention was assessed by the Stroop Test. This test evaluates the selective processing of one visual feature with continuous blocking of the processing of others (Milovanovic, 2001). The test is an assessment of the dysfunction of the prefrontal cerebral regions, which is responsible for distractibility (Krstic, 1997).

In our study, we used all three sections of this test, comprising three 5x10 stimulus cards. The first part refers to words that indicate the names of 4 primary colors (red, blue, green and yellow). Respondents are expected to read written words in sequence. The second part of the test consists of squares drawn in the colors red, blue, green and yellow. Respondent should name the colors. And the third part comprises the words that are written in color that is always different from that indicated by the word. The task in this part also involves naming the color. The rating records the time in seconds and the number of errors, both for the test as a whole and for the first and second five rows. Spontaneously corrected error is scored as the correct answer.

The results in our study were evaluated in terms of time expressed in seconds and the number of errors in all three parts of the test. The score is negative because if the respondent needs more time to take the test, it practically means that he or she is less successful, and the same applies to the number of errors (more errors indicate that the respondent is less successful).

Assessment instrument for mastering Natural and Social Sciences program content.

Success in mastering the field "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society"/ "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society", which is studied as part of Natural and Social Sciences, was assessed by the Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test / Criterion-Referenced Test (?)

The Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test/ Criterion-Referenced Test (?) measures mastery of a specific content area. Prior to the development of the Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test/ Criterion-Referenced Test (?), it is necessary to accurately establish educational goals and objectives, as well as success criteria (Miladinović, 1994). This practically means that it is necessary to determine what students need to master after processing a specific subject content, as well as to set separate criteria for each task.

The Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test/ Criterion-Referenced Test (?) in our research / study was based on the Natural and Social Sciences curriculum for the second, third and fourth grades. For each curriculum area, a number of questions have been formulated.

Three levels of qualitative assessment were used:



- + (program contents completely mastered)
- + - (program contents partially mastered)
- (program contents not mastered)

Application of the Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test / Criterion-Referenced Test (?) implies that students have mastered 75% of the educational / teaching / subject material. In accordance with that request, our research was conducted at the end of April. Testing was conducted individually and continuously.

In the final stage of data processing, each task rated with +, + - and -, got 2, 1, 0 points. Considering research goals that were set, the percentage of success in relation to the maximum number of points for each grade had to be calculated separately. That is how we obtained results of the sample Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test/ Criterion-Referenced Test (?) as a whole.

Other data required for our research, relating to the level of intellectual functioning (IQ), respondent's family socio-economic status, as well as academic/ school achievement in Natural and Social Sciences, were obtained by standard analysis of pedagogical documentation.

#### Statistical data processing

The results obtained are presented in tabular form. The analysis of collected data was conducted by different models of parametric and non-parametric statistics. SPSS software was used for data analysis and a file was created for collected data. By using the Acadia test, Subtest 1 and Subtest 3, we were in direct contact with students through surveys, interviews and systematic observation protocols, thus directly collecting data on teaching practice and inclusion of students with ID in the (education) process, while using open and closed-ended question surveys as instruments. Data were processed by statistical methods and techniques: frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, testing for the significance of linear correlation coefficients, which were then interpreted below and presented in tables.

### Results

The total score of this research processed data was interpreted in table no. 1. The 15% score speaks of the fact that the auditory, visual, tactile discrimination and attention assessment are implicit in the "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society" / "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society" program field. Selection of mainstream elementary schools included in research was made on the basis of available information by reviewing pedagogical documentation on the number of students with ID attending elementary schools in Belgrade. A tentative list of schools was then established, which during the research underwent slight changes due to changes in the structure

of the sample, such as the transition from class teaching to subject teaching (like in the case of fourth graders).

Table 1. MODEL SUMMARY

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.43	0.185	0.15	1.90

Table no. 2 shows the results of the significance of linear correlation coefficient testing that indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between examined variables. The correlation coefficient indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the set of predictors together and the program field "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society" / "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society". 15% indicates that assessment of auditory, visual, tactile discrimination and attention is implicit in this program field.

Table 2. TEST FOR SIGNIFICANCE OF LINEAR CORRELATION COEFFICIENT

	збир	df	M	F	P
Regression					
Residual					
Total	71.889				
	316.692				
	388.581	4			
	88				
	92	17.971			
	3.599	4.994	.001		

Table no. 3 shows standardized beta coefficients for auditory, visual, tactile discrimination, and attention. The table indicates that visual discrimination is the most significant variable.

Table 3. COEFFICIENTS

	Standardized Coefficients	t	p
Beta			
auditory disc.	0.071	.661	.510
visual disk.	0.288	2.712	.008
tactile	0.200	-1.828	.071

attention      0.056   .506   .614

Beta coefficient indicates that visual discrimination is of the highest value for success in the program field "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society"/ "Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society".

#### Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of the research project defined in this way was to evaluate the relationship between basic cognitive functions and success in the program field "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society"/"Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society". The results obtained suggest that there is a statistically significant correlation between perceptual abilities (auditory, visual and tactile perception) and selective attention with respect to success in the tested program units. Our research confirms that these examined abilities are the basis for acquiring the curriculum and that, without quality development of perceptual abilities, as well as the ability to be attentive, adoption of school curriculum cannot be expected.

Adoption of school curriculum is conditional upon a number of significant factors hence the statistically significant low correlation can be only understood conditionally. Our research indicates that of all the variables assessed, visual perception is the most significant when it comes to adopting the curriculum material "The changes brought about by the changing seasons in nature and in society"/"Seasons, and how change of seasons affects nature and society". This information confirms the fact that it is of utmost importance in the teaching process that the teaching material be presented in the form of visual maps in order to make data more easily accessible, easier to remember and much more concise. The information that students receive must be presented in pictures as well as in words, and teacher's primary task is to teach students how to use visual tests. In this way, students will learn the curriculum much better than in the conventional way, which involves solely verbal testing. Visual tests involve much more than word communication, so context maps, process maps, tables, charts and diagrams are used for this purpose (Molin, 2009). Full adoption and understanding of abstract teaching content in children with mild ID can be expected if the information is drawn, not just written or presented. Observations about changes in nature students can record using simple symbols in pre-made schemes. Such short activities can be performed on a daily basis.

Practical guidelines of this research would relate to the use of games in the teaching process. If we consider the fact that play is a child's basic activity, it

is possible to influence the process of cognitive development through play. The use of games can influence the formation of abstract teaching content as well as the process of cognitive development acceleration (Kamenov, 1974). In that regard, the classroom in which the content of Natural and Social Sciences subject is realized should have a collection of various manipulative objects/manipulative play materials/manipulative toys, which will be gradually collected. Such toys accelerate development of visual, auditory, tactile perception as well as attention and facilitate adoption of subject content.

By using games and toys, some of the content of the aforementioned curriculum can be learned outside, on the playground, in the park or in the schoolyard. In this way, the emphasis would be on a more independent direct comparison of natural phenomena in the environment, without theoretical explanations and details, while activating children's perception and attention at the same time. Results interpreted in this scientific study contribute to the study of inclusive practice and a possible impetus for future studies which will broadly analyze the organization of teaching in primary schools that students with ID attend. Some of the subsequent research could be based on students with ID who cannot read, so that a parallel can be drawn with this research in which all the students interviewed knew how to read, and then data obtained can be analyzed.

Implications arising from theoretical findings regarding the research tasks are not universal, but rather indicate the need to organize teaching individually according to a particular student's needs, in this case, a student with ID. When it comes to this type of teaching, there are guidelines that should be followed when adjusting the conditions in which teaching is conducted.

If we present teachers with tasks that are also challenges, then it is necessary to offer them a support system as well, some of which they can find on their own. A student with ID is the teacher's best aide. If both sides' initial views are based on good communication and information sharing, a solid foundation can be created for future cooperation. The system can offer teachers support in order to enhance the competencies that are otherwise built by developing communication skills. Members of the student's family can also be a great source of information, so parents, as teacher's aides, can share valuable information about their child. We should not neglect to cooperate with experts who, if not from birth, then from the child's early age, have known about the child's issues, work with him or her and have specialized / expert knowledge about the nature of the disorder. It is possible to receive recommendations for work in school settings from the experts who know the student well. The system could offer teachers specialized training

or seminars, organized according to the type of disability. When it comes to different types of support, peers, who can be an invaluable source of information, should not be neglected.

In theory, focus is on individual capabilities, potentials, needs, and not on disabilities, as this would allow for optimal development of each student. Individualization of teaching should be the goal of adapting the teaching process, not because the law requires it, but because the well-being and the development of students are of primary concern. The importance of education in the school system is indisputable, but it is necessary to fulfill certain prerequisites in order to implement it adequately. The need to belong is one of the most important needs of every person, which is why close attention must be paid to peer socialization.

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### **Statement**

The authors have equally contributed to the paper.

### **Conflict of interest**

We declare there is not conflict of interest between authors.

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## **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE PEOPLE OF DELTA STATE IN THE PERIOD OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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**Abstract:** *The paper x-rayed on impact of social media on the people of Asaba in Delta State in the period of COVID-19. The outbreak of corona virus, known as COVID -19 by the world health organisation has thrown the global community into fear and anxiety. In course of COVID-19, the use of social media contributed in the dissemination of information and information overload among individuals. Social media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves. The following sub-headings were discussed; concept of Coronavirus and COVID- 19, challenges of Asaba people in the period of COVID -19 pandemic, concept of social media, importance of social media and impact of social media during COVID 19 to Asaba people. The work emphasized the role social media platforms which really contributed a lot to the people of Asaba to gain information about COVID-19. The following recommendation were made among others; a way to encourage Asaba people productivity and students' academic efficacy during this COVID-19 pandemic. It is equally important that government and school authorities checkmate and regulate the use of social media among people of Asaba. This would enhance in building on the positive use of social networking sites such as joining students in group and helping them meet other student groups online. By this, they can bring to limelight the risks and benefits associated with the use of the social sites and help students to overcome the*



*vices behaviour associated with these sites as well as educating students on the best and most efficient ways of using these sites to support learning.*

**Keywords:** *Impact; Social Media; Covid-19*

## **Introduction**

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created a global health crisis that has had a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our everyday lives. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes COVID-19. COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

The COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria is part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first confirmed case in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, caused by SARS-CoV-2 (Maclean & Dahir, 2020). On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen (Nigeria records second case of Coronavirus, 2020). Nigeria is currently battling the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. So far, Asaba of Delta State has some confirmed cases, according to information released by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Nationally, the federal and state governments initiated various policy frameworks and actions to stem the spread of the virus. Some of the actions, including strict social distancing, has had a deleterious effect on the livelihoods. In Asaba and elsewhere, state security agents enforcing government-imposed social distancing restrictions have violated the human rights of citizens, resulting in avoidable deaths. It has become clear that the harsh government policies and

pronouncements are inflicting more pain on the citizens, as there are no adequate measures in place to cushion the effects on the populace.

Asaba is a city located at the western bank of the Niger River. It is the capital of Delta State, Nigeria. A fast developing urban area, Asaba had a population of 149,603 as at the 2006 census (Federal Republic of Nigeria (2016), and a metropolitan population of over half a million people. Asaba is well known for social activities due to the presence of large people and social amenities such as hotels, clubs, cinemas, malls, event centre, etc. It holds a yearly program named Delta Yaddah which always host series of gospel singers among others. Due to its large population, crime rate is high. Crimes such as pick pocketing, sideways robbery, etc, is rampant in Asaba. Because of the existence of foreigners in the state, cost of living is high in Asaba(Okenwa, 2016).

The governor of Delta State (IfeanyiOkowa) confirmed an index case of the novel coronavirus in Delta State, adding that the patient had been quarantined in a centre at Warri.This comes on the heels of announcement by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) of a confirmed case in the state. The Covid-19 pandemic affect the people of Asaba and Delta State as whole. The study disclosed that it was a tough challenge making the people of Asaba who relied on daily income to comply with the sit-at-home order of the state government. Okowa, said that the state provided palliatives to cushion the effect of the lockdown on those in the informal sector, especially the vulnerable. Another challenge in Asabawas the issue of stigmatisation, but assured that the state was tackling it head-on. “People of Asaba challenge in managing the COVID-19 is two-pronged; one is the problem of dealing with the issues of the economy of the people, particularly the informal sector, because in the process of trying to stop the chain of transmission, we have had to undertake a lockdown. “And, in dealing with that, it is actually very challenging for the fact that most of our people are in the informal sector and they have to live on a daily basis (Busari& Adebayo, 2020).

The demolition illegal erected structures by the state government’s plan to keep Asaba clean led to the bulling down of many shops believed to have been built on the state’s right of way.With the demolition, Abrakar traders have joined the list of thousands of displaced traders in the state capital territory even in this Coronavirus (COVID–19) pandemic period when most businesses in Nigeria and globally are negatively impacted as a result of lockdown.Governor Okowa said in the government’s plan, to secure Asaba, it was agreed that there was the need for the whole of that place to be

bulldozed and people there relocated to another part of Asaba. He said that relocation has already been done and the place has been brought down. Social media had played an important role to the people of Asaba in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social media comprises of activities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures and videos. Kaplan and Haenlein (2015) defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. In line with this, Overholser (2014), stated that social media introduced substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of techno-self-studies.

Today, social media such as, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and Twitter, have become primary sources of information. They are also vehicles for fake news and disinformation. During COVID-19, the use of social media contributed to spread information and information overload among individuals. To boost individuals' motivation to adopt preventive measures such as self-isolation, actions should focus on lowering individuals' perceived response costs in addition to informing them about the severity of the situation. In Asaba during this covid-19 pandemic, companies use social media for commercial purposes or for communal purposes.

In other words, Asaba companies use social media to brand, sell, market their business (which is close to traditional marketing efforts using mass-media) versus using social media to connect with and co-create with customers and more importantly to provide a platform to customers to bond together. You can see this as the distinction between using social media to talk to your customers versus using social media to talk with your customers and have them talk to each other through your brand (Agbanu&Nwabueze, 2020). With companies of all sizes under threat due to the impact of coronavirus, social platforms are introducing new features specifically to help small businesses survive through the pandemic. Therefore, this paper seeks to discuss the impact of social media on the people of Asaba in the period of covid-19.

## **Concept of Coronavirus and COVID-19**

The coronavirus belongs to a family of viruses that may cause various symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, breathing difficulty, and lung infection (Wuhan Municipal Health and Health Commission (WMHC), 2020). These viruses are common in animals worldwide, but very few cases have been known to affect humans. The World Health Organization (WHO) used the term 2019 novel coronavirus to refer to a coronavirus that affected the lower respiratory tract of patients with pneumonia in Wuhan, China on 29 December 2019 (Guan-X, Wang-X & Zhou, 2020). The WHO announced that the official name of the 2019 novel coronavirus is coronavirus disease (COVID-19). And the current reference name for the virus is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was reported that a cluster of patients with pneumonia of unknown cause was linked to a local Huanan South China Seafood Market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019.

In response to the outbreak, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) dispatched a rapid response team to accompany health authorities of Hubei province and Wuhan city to conduct epidemiological and etiological investigations. The WHO confirmed that the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic was associated with the Huanan South China Seafood Marketplace, but no specific animal association was identified (WHO, 2020). Scientists immediately started to research the source of the new coronavirus, and the first genome of COVID-19 was published by the research team led by Prof. Yong-Zhen Zhang, on 10 January 2020. Within 1 month, this virus spread quickly throughout China during the Chinese New Year – a period when there is a high level of human mobility among Chinese people. Although it is still too early to predict susceptible populations, early patterns have shown a trend similar to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) coronaviruses. Susceptibility seems to be associated with age, biological sex, and other health conditions. COVID-19 has now been declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO.

Given the spread of the new coronavirus and its impacts on human health, the research community has responded rapidly to the new virus and many preliminary research articles have already been published about this epidemic. They conducted a scoping review to summarize and critically analyze all the published scientific articles regarding the new coronavirus in

January 2020. This review aims to provide the evidence of early findings on the epidemiology, causes, clinical diagnosis, as well as prevention and control of COVID-19 in relation to time, location, and source of publication. This review can provide meaningful information for future research related to this topic and may support government decision-making on strategies to handle this public health emergency at the community, national, and international levels (WHO, 2020).

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants can kill it. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms. According to Xu, Chen, Wang, Feng, Zhou, and Li (2020). There is currently available vaccine for COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and getting early care from a healthcare provider can make the disease less dangerous. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics for COVID-19.

The coronavirus entered Nigeria through an infected Italian citizen who came in contact with a Nigerian citizen who was subsequently infected with the coronavirus. The coronavirus then spread to the citizens in Lagos and to the parts of the country. Some reported cases are shown in table;

**Confirmed COVID-19 cases in  
Nigeria as at the period of research**

Timeline	Confirmed cases	Affected states
17/03/2020	3	Lagos
21/03/2020	22	Lagos, Abuja and Ogun
30/03/2020	131	Lagos, Abuja, Bauchi, Enugu

**Source:** Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

In Nigeria, after the confirmation of the first case on the 27th February 2020, and for the first time, researchers from the Centre for Human and Zoonotic Virology in Lagos University Teaching Hospital/College of Medicine of the University of Lagos, African Centre for Genomics of Infectious Diseases in Reedemers University and the Nigeria Institute of Medical Research Lagos successfully perform the genome sequencing of COVID-19. According to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, a second confirmed case was detected in the country on the 9th March 2020. This case was a contact of the index case. Out of a total of number of people screened for COVID-19 so far in Nigeria, there are 51 confirmed cases from 9 States of Bauchi, Edo, Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Rivers and the Federal Capital Territory. Lagos State with a current population of over 20 million is leading with over 30 confirmed cases. One death has been recorded in the country while two cases including the index and first contact have been discharged to go home on the 13th March 2020 after testing negative to the virus twice consecutively (NCDC, 2020). Normally, COVID-19 patient is expected to have cleared the virus and can be discharged after two to four negative qRT-PCR tests on nasopharyngeal and throat swabs sampled at 24 h interval (ECDC, 2020).

### **Challenges of Asaba People in the Period of Covid-19 Pandemic.**

The governor, in the Skype programme, monitored in Asaba, said that though the state provided palliatives to cushion the effect of the lockdown on those in the informal sector, especially the vulnerable, another challenge in the state was the issue of stigmatisation, but assured that the state was tackling it head-on. According to Agbanu and Nwabueze (2020), the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Asaba is the high cost of commodities and food items prices as a result of business stoppages and lockdown which critically affect daily income-earners. The rate at which the

virus was spreading, and the heightened uncertainty about how bad the situation could get, led to flight to safety in consumption and investment among consumers and investors (Ozili and Arun, 2020). There was a general consensus among top economists that the coronavirus pandemic would plunge the world into a global recession and Covid-19 pandemic would trigger a recession in Asaba.

Nigeria is currently battling the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. So far, Delta State has some confirmed cases, according to information released by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Nationally, the federal and state governments initiated various policy frameworks and actions to stem the spread of the virus. Some of the actions, including strict social distancing, has had a deleterious effect on the livelihoods. In Delta State and elsewhere, state security agents enforcing government-imposed social distancing restrictions have violated the human rights of citizens, resulting in avoidable deaths. It has become clear that the harsh government policies and pronouncements are inflicting more pain on the citizens, as there are no adequate measures in place to cushion the effects on the populace.

This pandemic had caused some people in Asaba unemployment and poverty, especially those working in private enterprises or companies are sacked. The covid-19 pandemic lead Delta State Government, established food bank to alleviate the suffering of the people resulting from the lockdown to contain the spread of Coronavirus to the state upon that majority of people (80%) in Asaba did not received all these food items because of the people are not aware of the food items and other items shared by the government in Asaba. Also, the issue of brutality and intimidation of citizens by security agents because of coffin and other nonsense things, criminal cases as a result of the quarantine, cases of Fulani herdsmen and house people conflict against the people of Asaba people because of demolition of Abraka Market which put fear in people, humiliation of people by government arm forces because of face mask and so on affect the people of Asaba during the covid-19 pandemic.

In the first few months of 2020, information and news reports about the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were rapidly published and shared on social media and social networking sites. While the field of infodemiology has studied information patterns on the Web and in social media for at least 18 years, the COVID-19 pandemic has been referred to as the first social media infodemic. However, there is limited evidence about whether and how the social media infodemic has spread panic and affected the mental health

of social media users. It is understandable that people living in quarantine, isolation, or at risk of infectious disease outbreak are likely to experience psychosocial stress and adverse health outcomes, which may evoke interests in learning more about the disease. However, such situations require assurance complemented by flow of correct information.

### **Concept of Social Media**

Kaplan, and Haelein (2014), defined social media as a group of internetbased application that allows the creation and exchange of user generated content. Gross (2016), emphasized that social media is that means that employs mobile and web based technology to create highly integrative platforms via which individuals and community share, create, discuss and modify users' generated content. Sometimes called social networking, social media is a collaboratively produced and shared media content to network communities. Enang. (2014), further explained that social networking sites are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles, and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other. It is a web site that provides a venue for people to share ideas, information, knowledge and the like together which can come in form of videos, audio, audio-visual, charts, text messages and so on (Okekeokosisi & Obi, 2019). Giving examples of social media, (Gupta, 2017) enumerated social network sites like *Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Internet forums, chatrooms and message boards* where people meet and discuss topics of interest, *Flickr and vimeo, blogs, wikis, and social bookmarking*. Since the year 2000, the world has been witnessing exponential presence of social networking sites which continues to drive interaction of individuals and organizations that have common interest, not only in music, movies, friendship, but in education and business relations.

Kaplan, and Haelein (2014), categorized social media into seven types indicating the purpose for which it could be utilized: collaborative projects (*Wikipedia*); Blogs and micro blogs (*Twitter*); social news networking sites (*Digg and Leaker.net*); content communities (*YouTube and Daily motion*); social networking sites (*Facebook, Instagram and whatsapp*); virtual game worlds (*World of Warcraft*); and virtual social worlds (*Second Life*). Meanwhile, it does seem that very thin line exists regarding what uses these sites could be put as many of the sites are amenable to multiple applications.



## **Importance of Social Media**

The issue of whether social networking sites are helpful or not is often couched in larger issues identified with the overall use of social media – psychological effects, privacy and safety concerns, individual self-discipline and self-regulation concerns, human adaptability concerns. Generally, the benefits of using social network according to Zwart, Lindsay, Henderson & Phillips, 2013; Rosen, 2015; Conolly, 2018), include: encouraging greater social interaction through electronic media; providing greater access to information and information sources; encouraging creativity among individuals and groups; creating a sense of belonging among users of common social media tools; providing more choices to promote engagement among different individuals and groups; reducing barriers to group interaction and communication such as distance and socio-economic status; and increasing the technological competency level of users of social media. These benefits are expanded as follows:

1. **Connectivity to friends and relations:** Social networking sites started as a place to connect with your friends in an easy and convenient way. Many found their old pals from school or college who were out of touch due to one reason or the other and reconnected to them. Social networking sites provide the opportunity to connect with people and build better relationships with friends and keep them abreast with happenings around them.
2. **Reducing communication barriers:** With social networking sites, thoughts and perceptions over different issues and topics are shared with large audience. The sharing feature available on the social networking sites makes opinions about issues reach a large number of people at a time, including those who are not on the sharers friend list. Social networking sites provide opportunities to make group with people of like minds and share opinions and inputs about issues with them.
3. **Business opportunities:** Social networking sites have become a crucial part of many people. This is more obvious when laptops and desktops are opened, and the web accessed, as social sites are sub-consciously, there is a unconscious business updates received. This shows that businesses have notices the value of social networking sites to human life and therefore, are using various techniques to promote their products. Also, a number of customized applications are made on the social platform with the aim of promoting products and services. Social marketing is also seen as cost-effective, so businesses are shifting towards that.

Potential drawbacks identified with the use of social networking sites include risks of psychological disorders and health problems such as anxiety, depression, poor eating habits, and lack of physical exercise; increasingly short attention spans and subverted higher-order reasoning skills like concentration, persistence, and analytical reasoning among frequent users of social sites, a tendency to over-estimate one's ability to multitask and manage projects; seeing technology as a substitute for the analytical reasoning process (Zwart, Lindsay, Henderson & Phillips, 2013; Rosen, 2015; Conolly, 2018).

### **Impact of Social Media During COVID-19 to Asaba People**

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created a global health crisis that has had a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our everyday lives. Not only the rate of contagion and patterns of transmission threatens our sense of agency, but the safety measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus also require social distancing by refraining from doing what is inherently human, which is to find solace in the company of others. Within this context of physical threat, social and physical distancing, as well as public alarm, what has been (and can be) the role of the different social media in the lives of Asaba people during covid-19 pandemic?

According to Allcott, Gentzkow and Yu (2020), social media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves. This recognition is accompanied by a growing volume of research, that closely follows the footsteps of technological transformations (e.g. radio, movies, television, the internet, mobiles) and the zeitgeist (e.g. cold war, 9/11, climate change) in an attempt to map social media major impacts on how we perceive ourselves, both as individuals and citizens. Within this ample framework of complexity, the researcher welcome research addressing media impact and its role to Asaba people during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the following ways:

- ❖ Fundraisers organized and distributed on social help raise money for those in need: COVID-19 has put many people in Asaba, especially the elderly, those with disabilities, working parents who are losing childcare, and those who are losing their jobs, in challenging situations. Communities are rallying together to support organizations and individuals by sharing fundraisers with large audiences on social media.

- ❖ People are also taking to social media to offer support in any way they can, such as picking up groceries for individuals who are unable to leave home or sharing information on how to support local businesses who are struggling to pay their employees (Ahmed, Alhassan and Alshammari, 2020).
- ❖ People are posting pictures and videos to share their experiences through social media: Posts from people quarantined at home have ranged from videos of living room yoga to pictures of snuggly pets who are thrilled their owners are with them 24/7. There have also been posts acknowledging how difficult and frightening this time is. Posts have ranged from commiseration to overwhelming support — neighborhood rainbow hunt to this “mental health check-in” on a Facebook neighbors group.
- ❖ A source of information: Never have we had more realtime information available at our fingertips in the face of a worldwide event. Social media information help us keep safe, providing us with a better understanding of what is occurring and how it might impact us and those we love (Jackson, 2020).
- ❖ Social distancing and home quarantine are trending: Until a few weeks ago, many of us hadn’t even heard of “social distancing,” which refers to staying at least 6 feet away from others to help prevent the spread of infection. Now, social media users, from friends and family to celebrities and governments, are regularly calling for social distancing.
- ❖ An influence on public response to the outbreak: Billions of people are free to publicly share their opinions on COVID-19 across various social platforms. In the past few weeks, we’ve seen individuals, organizations, and businesses use social media to spread awareness of COVID-19, as well as the public actions that can be taken.

The combination of quick and targeted interventions oriented to delegitimize the sources of fake information is key to reducing their impact. Those users voicing their views against the conspiracy theory, link baiting, or sharing humorous tweets inadvertently raised the profile of the topic, suggesting that policymakers should insist in the efforts of isolating opinions that are based on fake news. Many social media platforms provide users with the ability to report inappropriate content, which should be used. social media can also spread falsehoods, including miracle preventative measures, false claims about the implementation of martial law, conspiracy theories, and more.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the situation survey, Asaba and Delta State as whole is yet to grow technologically, especially in social media information awareness and use. Sharp growth on new cases based on daily update indicate that there is lack of authentic information that will aid in tracking victim contacts. Irregular statement by government based on prevailing information has created doubt in the mind of citizen regarding the authenticity of the news on COVID-19 in Nigeria. Furthermore, social media really contribute to spread information aimed to curtailing the spread of the virus, such as social distancing, latest confirm cases, online businesses and so on to people of Asaba which have been ignored by the peasants and religious sycophants who see the pandemic as farce.

Social media has it positive vibes which it may offer to other sectors for productivity, but the persuasive interactive nature of various social media platforms and the multiple content and varieties it offers can lure people of Asaba rather than been helped or improved radio or television channels. The paper conclude that social media platforms really contribute a lot to the people of Asaba to gain information about COVID-19. The nature of the impact of social media panic among people varies depending on an individual's gender, age, and level of education. Social media has played a key role in spreading various information about the COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria and Asaba in particular.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the conclusion, the paper recommend that;

1. As a way to encourage Asaba people productivity and students' academic efficacy during this covid-19 pandemic, it is important that government and school authorities checkmate and regulate the use of social media among people of Asaba. Countries like china have strict restrictions for social media use, especially among people, which has helped the country's productivity and output.
2. Students should be able to rightly place their priorities in their academic work social networking rather than misuse their times in non-profitable things.
3. School administrators on their own should be able to build on the positive use of social networking sites such as joining students in group and helping them meet other student groups online. By this, they can bring to limelight the risks and benefits associated with the

use of the social sites and help students to overcome the negative behavior associated with these sites as well as educating students on the best and most efficient ways of using these sites to support learning.

4. The study recommends that parents should keep their eyes on the children to ensure that their use of the social media does not interfere with their studies and help the teenagers to achieve effective time allocation to tasks and management. This will help achieve efficiency and high productivity during this covid-19 pandemic.

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## SCHADENFREUDE AS A MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPATHY AND DIFFICULTIES IN FOLLOWING THE RULES

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**Abstract:** *Researchers have lately been interested in the scientific literature on the dark triad and antisocial conduct in order to better comprehend the complexity of human aggression. Furthermore, studies revealed that breaking rules, physical violence, and social hostility were three aspects of antisocial behavior, underlying the Machiavellian correlation of specific deviant and antisocial behaviors, such as workplace difficulties, disruptive and counterproductive job action, and deception. To better understand the evaluation of the sub-facet cynical view of human life, we look at the concept of schadenfreude, which is defined as one person's enjoyment from another's suffering. The convenience sample approach was used in our study, which targeted a group of 390 adult Romanians. For measuring schadenfreude, and difficulties in following the rules, this research has used a single item research question, and for measuring empathy, we have used the 6 items empathy scale (IPIP), in an online survey shared on social media platforms. Our research investigated if Schadenfreude mediates the relationship between empathy and difficulties in following the rules (Process Model 4 V3.5). Results confirm our hypothesis, showing that there is a significant relationship between empathy and difficulties in*



*following the rules, but when adding schadenfreude into the equation, former relationship becomes statistically insignificant, and all the effect flows through the mediator, schadenfreude. Thus, the more individuals score on schadenfreude, the more difficulties show in following the rules. Conclusions and implications are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *Schadenfreude; difficulties in following the rules; empathy; mediation.*

## **1. Introduction**

Emotion control issues, such as aggressiveness, might be a non-specific component in breaking communication standards both online and offline. Hostility as a personality trait and rage as a characteristic of emotional experience and aggressive manifestation may play different roles (Buss & Perry, 1992).

Empathy and tolerance are important in communication because they are linked to a considerate, proactive attitude towards other, the ability to percept reality from another person's point of view, and the ability to empathize, even if the other person is from a different cultural background, ethnicity, or social class. Empathy and tolerance are known to be linked to aggressiveness, especially online aggression (Machackova&Pfetsch, 2016). For example, an intervention to minimize stereotyping and group distortion among Christian and Islamic students was successful in part due to changes in emotion management, particularly because students began to use fewer words to convey anger and grief (White, Abu-Rayya, Bliuc, & Faulkner, 2015). Empathy is linked to a stronger desire to follow rules when it comes to developing a responsible attitude toward the other person (BalasTimar, 2018; Soldatova and Rasskazova, 2019); Rad et al., 2019; Rad et al., 2020).

Antisocial conduct is defined as any behaviour that causes harm to others, undermines social standards, and/or violates the rights of persons or the property of others. Ordinary instances encompass criminal actions like vandalism, burglary, and ambush, as well as interpersonally damaging behaviors like racist insults and the propagation of harmful rumors. Indeed, the specific manifestation of introverted behavior varies from person to person. (Lahey and Waldman, 2003; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; Offord and Bennett, 1994; White et al., 2001). According to this view, the explanatory figure believes that there are at least two marginally linked reserved variables: an overt or physically aggressive/oppositional calculation and a covert or non-aggressive/rule-breaking calculation (Frick et al., 1993; Loeber and Schmalting, 1985). Physical harassment (physically assaulting

and threatening others) and non-aggressive rule-breaking (lying, cheating without contact, and vandalism) frequently follow separate formative trajectories. Physical enmity is most common in early children (Tremblay, 2003), after which the mean levels of these actions progressively decrease (Stranger et al., 1997; Tremblay, 2003). By contrast, rule-breaking is very uncommon in the middle of childhood, develops substantially throughout puberty, and then declines in the midst of the transition to adulthood (Stranger et al., 1997). Physical hostility, on the other hand, exhibits higher rates of rank-and-order aggressiveness over time, implying that some little children with the highest levels of such behaviors likely to stay extraordinarily violent as adults (Tremblay, 2003), notwithstanding rule-breaking dissent.

According to research, there are two refinements between physical strength and rule-breaking antisocial behavior, with the lack of affective control being particularly characteristic of physical aggression (Burt and Donnellan, 2008; Burt and Larson, 2007; Cohen and Strayer, 1996; Pardini et al., 2003), although impulsivity appears to be more closely related to rule-breaking (Burt and Donnellan, 2008). Physical aggressiveness and rule-breaking are used to demonstrate etiological abilities. Physical hostility, in particular, appears to be more heritable than rule-breaking (hereditary impacts account for 65 and 48% of change, on an individual basis), despite the fact that rule-breaking is more affected by the shared environment than hostility (shared environmental effects compensate for 5 to 18% of variability, on an individual basis) (Burt, 2009). Later research has also suggested that associations with specific candidate characteristics change between physical aggression and rule-breaking (Burt and Mikolajewski, 2008), such that these genes are separately connected to rule-breaking. In summary, there is growing evidence that physical aggression and non-aggressive rule-breaking are two distinct phenomena.

Social hostility (also known as backhanded or social enmity) is a form of introverted behavior in which one perceives social interactions as a means of hurting others. This includes tattooing, seclusion, and partner stealing, all of which can be communicated either openly (threatening the termination of a fellowship) or secretly (spreading rumors). Analysts advised that social enmity be distinguished from other kinds of antisocial or aggressive conduct in proportion to the gender differences indicated in the base rates (Vaillancourt et al., 2003). It has been proposed that adolescent women are less prone to engage in physical aggressiveness but are also more likely to hold in social enmity (Crick et al., 1998). In any case, social violence appears to be antisocial to the extent that the targets of social violence report psychological effects (depression and depressive symptoms) that are quite

comparable to those experienced by physical assault victims (Crick and Bigbee, 1998; Crick et al., 2002).

Social violence has been seen beyond childhood for a long time (Kink et al., 1997; McNeilly-Choque et al., 1996), but it is more frequent throughout puberty (Cairns et al., 1989; Osterman et al., 1998). It lasts considerably until early adulthood, when it begins to decrease (Xie et al., 2005). Finally, physical and social hostility has been linked to the functioning of comorbid psychology. While physical violence is strongly linked to external disorders, social antagonism is more frequently linked to internalizing illness (Kink, 1997). In reality, physical violence was linked to greater rates of peer rejection, but social aggression was linked to higher rates of peer acceptance, at least among men (Kink et al., 1997). We also noted that there hasn't been much attention paid to a dynamic sensation that is frequently disguised. Schadenfreude (German for "harm-joy") is the sense of happiness, fulfillment, or self-satisfaction that arises from understanding or experiencing others' wrath, annoyance, or mortification (Wayne, Spears and Manstead, 2015). Schadenfreude is a complex affect because, instead of feeling empathetic to someone else's suffering, it elicits pleasant feelings that take delight in seeing others fail (Ceconi, Poggi, and D'Errico, 2020). This feeling occurs more frequently in youngsters than in adults. In any event, adults are experiencing a loss of pleasure, despite the fact that the majority of them are disguised (van Dijk et al., 2011).

Analysts have also discovered three driving variables for schadenfreude: hostility, competitiveness, and financial prosperity. A few investigations have shown that self-esteem is defined by a negative connection with recurrence and an increase in schadenfreude. As a result, the lower a person's self-esteem, the more frequently or frequently they experience the pleasure of injury. Individuals with greater self-esteem, on the other hand, may exhibit less typical or severe self-esteem activities less frequently than those with lower self-esteem (van Dijk et al., 2011). This reciprocal connection is said to be hampered by people's social proclivity to establish and retain their self-identity / self-conception, both in-group and out-group. Watching another person struggle can provide a little (but ultimately insignificant) boost of confidence, even if the spectator's enhanced self-esteem substantially decreases the risk they perceive to their position or identity as a result of plainly failing human behaviors. Because this person understands that the other person's successes and failures have no bearing on their own position or well-being in any sort of circumstances, they have a very limited interest in whether the other person does well or poorly (Hendricks, 2018).

Aggression-induced Schadenfreude frequently incorporates social identities. The pleasure derived from seeing someone suffer stems from the observer's belief that the other person's dissatisfaction is for the advancement or acceptance of their own community's (in-group) position in comparison to other (out-group) groups. Basically, depending on the position of a group against a group, this might do harm. Individualistic and interpersonal competition characterizes Schadenfreude's rivalry. This arises from their innate desire to stay ahead of and separate from their classmates. Some people's suffering promotes happiness because the spectator is more concerned with his own identity and self-esteem than with his communal identity.

Anguish at another's success is also implied by the idea of schadenfreude (Sivanandam, 2006; Demeter, et al., 2021; Rad et al., 2021). Sadism provides delight via the punishment of suffering, but schadenfreude is the enjoyment of seeing difficulty and, in particular, the realization that the other, in some way, deserved the occurrence (Ben-Ze'ev, 2014).

Cikara et al. (2011) examined schadenfreude in sports fans utilizing helpful desired reverberation imaging and discovered that viewers tended to have higher activation in brain areas associated to self-reported delight (ventral striatum) when seeing a match party incur unfavorable repercussions (a strikeout) (Cikara, Botvinick and Fiske, 2011). Fans differentiate by displaying lengthy action in the front cingulate and insulate after witnessing their own side suffer a loss.

Brain-scanning considers people's appearance to be related with envy. Indeed, the consistency of prior envy reactions seems to anticipate the amount of the brain's weak response (Takahashi et al., 2009; Angier, 2009). The 2009 study demonstrates people's propensity to have schadenfreude in reaction to bad political possibilities (Combs et al., 2009). The study has been proven to assess whether or not occurrences resulting in objective injuries are likely to cause harm. According to the research, the likelihood of injury relies on whether the plaintiff group or the opposing party was harmed.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Objective and hypothesis**

There is evidence of a link between a lack of empathy and rule-breaking in a variety of research contexts. Such traits emerge as key subgroups of antisocial behavior, each with different formative orientations, statistical designs, relationships, and etiological bases (Murray et al., 2008). Hence, this research's centre is to examine if there's a critical prediction coefficient of empathy to difficulties in following the rules, and how does

this relationship behave when we introduce the mediator schadenfreude. We presume that schadenfreude totally mediates the relationship between empathy and difficulties in following the rules.

## 2.2.Participants

Our study focused on a group of 390 Romanians with an average age of 31 years, male respondents (21.3%) and female respondents (78.7%), with 29.5 percent originating from rural areas and 70.5 percent from metropolitan areas. 34.1 percent of respondents have completed high school, 39 percent have completed a bachelor's degree, 21.8 percent have completed a master's degree, and 5.1 percent have completed a doctoral degree.

Because the objective of this inquiry is exploratory, we used convenience sampling. According to the convenient concept of accessibility, the total number of participants was picked on a sequential basis, according to the order of appearance, while completing an online questionnaire disseminated on social media platforms. Responses were gathered in the context of COVID-19 social isolation between April and May 2020.

## 2.3.Instruments

We have included the following instruments in our online inquiry for the purposes of this research.

For assessing empathy ( $m=1.51$ ;  $SD=0.77$ ), we have used Empathy - International Personality Item Pool -IPIP (Goldberg, L.R., et al., 2006; Iliescu, D., et al., 2015). Empathy is a summative 6 items scale. Items marked with R (4,5,6) are reversed, the scores thus obtained for items are then summed.

The single research items listed below were used:

- To assess problems in following the regulations ( $m=0.71$ ,  $SD=0.96$ ), this study employed a single item measure – Item 25. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement on a scale of one to five, where 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 represents neither agree nor disagree, 4 represents agree, and 5 represents strongly agree: I have a difficult time adhering to regulations.

- This study employed a single item measure – Item 93 – to assess schadenfreude ( $m=0.31$ ,  $SD=0.79$ ). Please indicate your agreement with the following statement on a scale of one to five, where 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 represents neither agree nor disagree, 4 represents agree, and 5 represents strongly agree: *I feel good when something bad happens to other people.*

### 2.4. Research design

Our team has computed a mediation analysis in Model 4 of SPSS' Process V3.5, in which the dependant variable is the difficulties in following the rules, the independent variable is empathy and the mediator in schadenfreude.

### 3. Results

Descriptive statistics for the variables used in the present research are depicted in Table 1 and Table 2. Regarding means and standard deviations, the following results are obtained schadenfreude( $m=0.31$ ;  $SD=0.79$ ), difficulties in following the rules( $m=0.71$ ;  $SD=0.96$ ), and empathy ( $m=3.89$ ;  $SD=0.78$ ).

**Table 1** – Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Empathy	3.8974	.78213	390
Schadenfreude	.31	.796	390
Difficulties in following the rules	.71	.962	390

**Table 2** – Correlation coefficients

	Empathy	Schadenfreude	Difficulties in following the rules
Empathy	-		
Schadenfreude	-.159**	-	
	.002		
	390	390	
Difficulties in following the rules	-.120*	.267**	-
	.017	.000	
	390	390	390

Regarding the correlation coefficients, results present a negative correlation between schadenfreude and empathy  $r=-0.15$  at a  $p$  value  $<0.01$ , a negative correlation between empathy and difficulties in following the rules  $r=-0.12$  at a  $p$  value  $<0.05$ , and a positive correlation between difficulties in

following the rules and schadenfreude  $r=0.26$  at a  $p$  value  $<0.01$ , consistent with literature conclusions presented in the first section of this paper.

**Table 3** – Model 4 Process V3.5 Macro Output

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 3.5  
\*\*\*\*\*

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. [www.afhayes.com](http://www.afhayes.com)  
Documentation available in Hayes (2018). [www.guilford.com/p/hayes3](http://www.guilford.com/p/hayes3)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4  
Y : Empathy  
X : Difficulties in following the rules  
M : Schadenfreude

Sample  
Size: 390

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:  
schadenf

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.27	.07	.59	29.69	1.00	388.00	.00

Model						
coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	.15	.05	3.07	.00	.05	.24
Dificult	.22	.04	5.45	.00	.14	.30

Standardized coefficients  
coeff  
Dificult .27

Covariance matrix of regression parameter estimates:

	constant	Dificult
constant	.00	.00
Dificult	.00	.00

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Empatie

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.18	.03	.60	6.33	2.00	387.00	.00

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	3.99	.05	81.08	.00	3.89	4.08
Dificult-	.0704	-1.62	.11	-.15	.01	
schadenf-	.13	.05	-2.62	.01	-.23	-.03

Standardized coefficients

coeff	
Dificult	-.08
schadenf	-.14

Covariance matrix of regression parameter estimates:

	constant	Dificult	schadenf
constant	.00	.00	.00
Dificult	.00	.00	.00
schadenf	.00	.00	.00

\*\*\*\*\* TOTAL EFFECT MODEL  
\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

Empatie

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.12	.01	.60	5.69	1.00	388.00	.02



Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI		
constant	3.97	.05	81.04	.00	3.87	4.06	
Dificult	-.10	.04	-2.39	.02	-.18	-.02	

Standardized coefficients

coeff	
Dificult	-.12

Covariance matrix of regression parameter estimates:

	constant	Dificult
constant	.00	.00
Dificult	.00	.00

\*\*\*\*\* CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MODEL RESIDUALS \*\*\*\*\*

schadenfEmpatie

	schadenf	Empatie
schadenf	1.00	.00
Empatie	.00	1.00

\*\*\*\*\* TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_psc_cs	
-.10	.04	-2.39	.02	-.18	-.02	-.12	-.12

Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_psc'_cs	
-.07	.04	-1.62	.11	-.15	.01	-.09	-.08

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
schadenf	-.03	.02	-.07	-.01

Partially standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
schadenf	-.04	.02	-.09	-.01

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
schadenf	-.04	.02	-.09	-.01

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:  
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:  
5000

----- END MATRIX -----

The PROCESS model 4 output (Table 3), which evaluates a model in which schadenfreude mediates the effect of path a, was used to test the hypothesized mediation model (Hayes, 2013). Schadenfreude was found to mediate the effect of empathy and difficulties in following the rules.

In Step 1 of the mediation model, the regression of empathy on difficulties in following the rules, ignoring the mediator, was significant,  $b = -.10$ ,  $t(388) = -2.39$ ,  $p = <.001$ . Step 2 showed that the regression of the empathy on the mediator, schadenfreude, was also significant,  $b = 0.22$ ,  $t(388) = 5.45$ ,  $p = <.001$ . Step 3 of the mediation process showed that the mediator (schadenfreude), controlling for empathy, was significant,  $b = -.13$ ,  $t(387) = -2.62$ ,  $p = .01$ . Step 4 of the analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediator (schadenfreude), empathy scores was not a significant predictor of difficulties in following the rules,  $b = -.07$ ,  $t(387) = -1.62$ ,  $p = .11$ . It was found that schadenfreude fully mediated the relationship between empathy and difficulties in following the rules.

Results of this research show that empathy was negatively correlated with both schadenfreude and difficulties in following the rules, while schadenfreude was positively correlated with difficulties in following the rules.

The mediation model was used in this study to investigate the psychological aspects behind the association between empathy and difficulties in following the rules. In summary, the findings revealed that low levels of empathy predicted high levels of difficulties in following the rules, with the effects of empathy on difficulties in following the rules being buffered by schadenfreude.

#### 4. Conclusions and discussion

According to the literature which states that the presence or absence of individual, social and emotional responsiveness, which is associated with compassion, concern and understanding the other person's position, represent the protective or risk factors for the development of antisocial and aggressive behavior, this research was based on the assumption that individuals with low levels of empathy are more prone to disobey the rules, and if they also score high on schadenfreude, the effect is buffered.

There were a few drawbacks to this study. For example, the data is mostly concerned with self-reporting. While our data on a number of factors has not been demonstrated to be significantly skewed in a negative way, respondents may have purposefully or unintentionally overestimated their own attitudes and behaviors, particularly in relation to "sensitive" aspects like aggression and rule-breaking. Second, the results are based on cross-sectional data. Despite the fact that we created a hypothetically directed homological network among our research variables, we cannot make any real conclusions about causality. Future study might build on our results to undertake longitudinal studies that give a more in-depth look at the complex variables that drive Schadenfreude. Third, our sample was not representative of Romania's entire population. As a result, the results of the show experiments may be repeated on certain demographic groups, which may be connected to distinct social situations.

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**SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND THE CULTURE OF  
SILENCE IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF FEMALE  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF DELTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY, ABRACA**

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the impact of social studies education on addressing the culture of silence in Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted and data was collected via a survey of 275 female undergraduate students of Delta State University, Abraka using non-probabilistic sampling techniques. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Linear regression analysis with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23. The results of the study showed that social studies education have a positive and strong relationship with the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. The result of the study also revealed that social studies education has a significant influence on breaking through the culture of silence in Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended among others that government and policy-makers should intensify effort to review social studies education curriculum in Nigeria universities with emphasis on the place of social studies education on addressing the culture of silence and the inculcation of moral values.*

**Keywords:** *Social Studies; Education; Culture of Silence; Sexual Violence*

## **Introduction**

Social studies education is subject designed to foster in learners better understanding of the cultural values that guide the interactions of man with his social and physical environment. Social studies is the most integrated of all subjects at the various levels of education and the most appropriate course of study in the university curriculum to meet the moral and cultural goals and foster national integration of the country. According to Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p. 249), social studies is “primarily concerned with human relationship. That is, how man in turn alters his environment to satisfy individual and group needs. It is about how man attempt to deal with certain pertinent problems, issues and questions arising from his use and misuse of his environment as well as how man draws upon his experiences to plan for the future”. In the views of Poatob (2015, p.1), social studies “provide students with the knowledge, skills and ability they need in both their personal and public lives. Thus, social studies as a problem-solving discipline can partly achieve when students are equipped with the relevant information about the society in which they live and what happens in the world around them”.

Obama, 2009 cited in Opoh, Edinyand and Ogbaji (2014, p 125) affirms that “we need the insights and critical thinking skills gained in history and social studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and to make out nation fairer and free. A nation that is tending towards growth and development must lay emphasis on a re-orientation and re-organization of institutions and a transformation of the people’s welfare. Thus, the role of social studies education in engineering national development cannot be overemphasized.

However, Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2013, p 210) noted that “social studies education in Nigerian schools, colleges and universities has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria” indeed, an enormous gap continues to exist between intended changes and actual practices in social studies education in Nigeria. This position was re-echoed by Osakwe (2012, p4) and Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p 254) that “social studies in Nigeria should begin to focus on restructuring and conceptualizing to make the subject more relevant to current challenges, events and developments in the country”.

Awosusi and Ogundana (2015, p 35) averred that “the culture of silence contributed to the prevalence of sexual violence in Nigeria and factors such as fear of stigmatization, government policy, rape myths and poor response from law enforcement agents played prominent roles in preventing the sexually violated victims from reporting”. In responding to the foregoing, Umaira (2017 p91) posits that “without proper guided or social studies education, girls and women are probably to face high levels of sexual abuse



and rape. At this point, one many ask, does social studies education has the capacity to break through the culture of silence in Nigeria? The answer to this question is the mainstream of this study using female undergraduate students of Delta State University, Abraka as case study.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Social Studies Education**

A good understanding of the concept of education will take us back in history to the origin of the world. The world 'education' originated from two latin words, 'Educere and Educare'. means to draw out or lead out, while 'educare means to nourish, bring up or raise" (Njoku&Nwokah, 2018, p 250). Education according to Osakoya, 2005 cited in Omieibi-Davids (2011, p 21), is "the leading out of the in-born powers and potentialities of the individuals in the society and acquisition of skills, attitudes and competencies necessary for self-realization and coping with life's problems. This definition connotes two things; the first is that individuals are born with certain innate qualities so that no one could be aid to be completely without any human or creative qualified. These individuals could be or not be aware of these innate qualities and thus, have to be helped to their utmost realization in order to be effective within the society and be useful to themselves. The second is that there are skills and qualities which the individuals need but does have them at the proper level, these they have to learn. The process of acquiring education to cope with life's challenges means that it equips us with knowledge and competencies to face the issues of everyday living".

Social studies as "a unique area of discipline is committed to transmitting and forming the values of citizens in Nigeria. Social studies has come to be accepted as a discipline that assists students to acquire the basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of the society" (Alberta, 2000 cited in Opoh et al; 2014, p44). There is no acceptable definition of social studies as scholars hold different conceptions about the subject matter. However, a point on which most social studies authors agree is that the discipline is a study of the society having man as its central theme. According to Uche (1980, p17), "social studies is the field of study in which contents and purpose focus on relationship". Okobiah (1984, p3) conceptualize social studies as "an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of human beings in group interrelations with their physical and social environments. Similarly, Dubey, Onyabe and Prokupek, 1980 cited in Awopetu (2001, p 128) sees social studies as "a process of education which utilizes the study of human life for the purpose of

giving students the opportunity to practice solving problems of crucial importance both for the individuals and the society. It deals with the reciprocal relationship existing between man with the tools, to solve the many problem facing him”.

Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p 255) aver that “the introduction of social studies in Nigerian schools is as a result of the reflection of rapidly altering circumstances of social, economic and political situations within the country. The goals of social studies are concerned with rapid social change, changing values, general pluralism and other factors which today’s students will eventually have to deal with”. In the views of Opoh et al (2014, p 144), in the Nigerian context, the goals of social studies curriculum is the building of sound and balanced mind as a foundation for functional social education directed towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizens. Integrating and dispensing social knowledge through the instrumentality of social studies curriculum is directed towards the following objectives: (i) self-confidence and initiatives, (ii) power of imagination and resourcefulness, (iii) desire for knowledge and continued learning (iv) sense of compassion for the less fortunate (v) sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others and (vi) social values and attitudes such as cooperation, participation, interdependence, open-mindedness, honesty, integrity, obedience, diligence and trustworthiness”. In the context of this study, social studies is a discipline design to help the young citizens solve social problems.

Therefore, social studies education according to Njoku and Nwokah (2018, p 254), “teaches as well as enlightens students on how to use knowledge and experiences to solve problems. It is culturally relevant and real; it is functional by inculcating specific social and practical skills; it is continuous and lifelong and it is comprehensive and wholesome”. Social studies education is presently taught in all colleges of education and universities in Nigeria,. Virtually all universities that offering social studies education award degree in social studies up to the Ph.D level. “The Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) has been a very strong and formidable pressure group in the promotion of social studies education in Nigeria. The association has organized many seminars, conferences and workshops with the aim of promoting social studies and helping to mobilize the Nigerian citizenry to take active part in civic responsibilities and to show more patriotism to the course of the country. Other social studies organizations that have promoting the teaching of social studies in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria include the Social Studies Teacher association of Nigeria (SOSTAN) and the National Association of Social Studies Educators (NASSE).

### Culture of Silence

Silence according to Basso (1970, p 213) is “a social construct. In some cultures, silence is seen as an accepted behavior while in others it is interpreted as a symbol of distress” Akoja and Anjorin (2020, p 8 ) posit that “the culture of silence is the behavior of a group of people that by unuttered agreement do not mention, discuss or acknowledge a particular subject. It is the act of keeping an unspoken agreement or make one not to speak about what happened to him or her” Malgorzata (2012, p 555) avers that “silence is link to fear of negative consequences both for the victim and the perpetrator as well as the perception that adults fail to act on reports”. This figure further explains the views of Malgorzata the culture of silence.



**Fig 1:** *Silence is linked to fear and social norms*  
**Sources:** *Author’s construction, 2021*

In supporting the foregoing, Awosusi and Ogundana (2015, p 31) affirm that “in Nigeria, reports from mass media have shown that the rate of sexual violence against children and women is on the increase. Despite the increase in the prevalence of sexual violence, reported incidence from observation is a tip of the iceberg, because many cases of sexual violence go unreported pointing to the fact that the available data on sexual violence may not be enough to estimate the true scale off the problem”. Although not all women and girls keep silence, but most do because they are sad and uncomfortable about the subject if brought up or discussed around them, “Some victims do

not just feel used, they fear not being believed, they fear retaliation and shame. Young women and girls may be afraid that revealing a history of sexual violence will undermine their chances of marriage and victims may consider it futile to speak up if the state lacks appropriate judicial systems and measures to punish offenders adequately” (Eze, 2013, p 66), According to Decker and Sherman, 2016 cited in Akoja and Anjorin (2020, p 9), “women are mistreated and abused by people in power. It is so common for women to stay quite about assault cases and there is an assumption perpetrators have about the women not being given chances to speak which also strengthens their silence”.

### **The Role of the Social Studies Education in Breaking the Culture of Silence**

One of the major factors responsible for the prevalence of sexual violence across the world and Nigeria in particular is the culture of silence and the negative social norms are responsible for the growing culture of silence among women and girls which social studies education can play an active role in shaping. In Nigeria, “many sexually traumatized victims seem to find it difficult to disclose the incidence or the assailant because of the need to protect their identity. Documentation is an important aspect in combating sexual violence, but it is disheartening that many sexual assaulted victims do not report to allow for proper documentation. It is the right of sexually violated victim to choose whether to report or not but one should not be ignorant of the fact that reporting sexual assault will enhance and strengthen prosecution of the perpetrators. Various factors may influence the disclosure of sexual violence such as inadequate and inappropriate sexuality socialization or sexual abuse prevention within the culture and families of a young girl or a child may affect the disclosure of sexual violence in adulthood” (Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015, pp 33-34). Presently, there are vast numbers of social ills among teenagers and youths worldwide, including Nigeria. Teenagers are facing similar social ill such as drug abuse, abortion, bullying, free sex, alcohol problems among others. In Nigeria, some predominant social issues include rape, drug abuse, robbery, cultism, alcohol problems, abortion and other immoral acts. Nigerian society is deteriorating little by little, the high degree of social problems in Nigeria calls for urgent review of our education, particularly social studies education to realize the primary aims and objectives for which education is intended. Therefore a continuous nurturing of moral values through social studies education will make individuals responsible to themselves, their environment and the nation at large” (Kabir, 2014, pp 6-7).

The “culture of silence has aggravated the social problems partly from humiliation and intimidation of the victim by the police as well as embarrassment of the public acknowledgement; the situation including being ostracized by those who consider rape as bringing dishonor to a women’s family and community. This culture of silence reinforces the stigma already attached to the victim rather than to a perpetrator, as the dominant perception is that, girls or women have provoked the abuser to attack, victims in many of the incidence are unwilling to testify about their experiences. The long-term effects of rape depend largely on the individuals ego, strength, social support system and the way she was treated as a victim” (Umaira, 2017, p 90). The “high degree of social problem rampant among the youths and teenager can be reduced through a concerted effort involving different stakeholders through public enlightenment campaigns and social studies education, social, cultural and religious meeting as well as the mass media” (Eze, 2013, p 67).

Liu and Fahmy (2011, p 47) suggest that “social studies education is needed to achieve the goals of breaking the culture of silence. One of the ways in which social studies education can do this is to create awareness and empower women in order to bridge knowledge gaps on sexual violence”. Social studies education plays an active role by creating awareness, improving knowledge and changing attitude of citizenry which most times discharged various anti-social behaviours and encourage the breaking of the culture of silence. Uchechukwu (2011, p 12) submits that “social studies education has the capacity of inculcating cultural values and breaking the culture of silence in Nigeria, Africa and across the globe”. Adediran and Onifade (2013, p 43) posit that “social studies education helps students demonstrate critical thinking and inquiry skills with which they process information to solve a wide variety of social problems”. Similarly, Njoku and Nokah (2018, p 255) concludes that “the goals of social studies education are concerned with rapid social change, changing values, general pluralism and other factors with which today’s students will eventually have to deal with including the culture of silence, in this era of political and social mobilization for a greater happier and more just tomorrow, no school subject can be more relevant than social studies education”. In their study Valls, Puigvert, Melgar and Garcia-Veste (2016, p 1537) exploring “the issues of silence in Spanish Universities found that 62% of the students known or have experienced sexual assault in the school environment while 13% could identify violent situations. They identified two main challenges contributing to the problem as under-reporting of crimes due to fear, stalking, threats and refusing to acknowledge or identify violent situations. They advocate for social studies education as an intervention and support for education as an

intervention and support for victims”. Therefore, one way to break the culture of silence and discourage the rise in rape and assault is through women and girls’ participation in continuous social studies education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In an attempt to place this study in its proper perspective, the need for a theoretical framework of analysis is very fundamental. The theoretical framework of analysis adopted in this study is the spiral of silence theory. The theory formulated by Kenamer (1990) has the central premise that people fear rejection and social isolation, the more they perceive they are in the minority on social issues, the more silence they will be on such issues. The spiral of silence theory “underscores the danger associated with the increasing pressure people feel which makes them hide their views or feelings when they think they are in the minority; this may be worsened by the fear of reprisal or vengeance by those who hurt them” (Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015, p 34). The “risk of stigmatization and rejection of survivors impose a culture of silence, preventing women and girls from reporting crime against them (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003, p 1394). Shoemaker, Breen and Stamper (2000, p 79) study on “the fear of social silence to test the fear of isolation assumption in relation to the spiral of silence theory and opinion formation. The results of their study among others showed that the fear of isolation comes with social anxiety”. In the final analysis, relevance of the spiral of silence theory to this study is based on its ability to justify that the fear whether one would receive desired support or not could be an essential factor in breaking the culture of silence. Victims of sexual violence are often silent due to the fear of stigmatization, fear of who to trust among law enforcement agencies and agents, fear of whether they will have fair hearing and judgment including the fear of fund needed to push their case through at the court.

In line with the literature review, the following objectives and null hypotheses were formulated for the study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Specifically, this study sought to:

- i) examined the relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria
- ii) investigated the extent to which social studies education influence the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria

**Hypotheses of the study**

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria

H<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant social studies education influence the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

This study adopted a survey research design and data was collected via a survey of 275 female undergraduate students of Delta State University, Abraka using non-probabilistic sampling techniques comprising of purposeful and convenience techniques. A questionnaire was used to gather the primary data. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items structured along a 5-points likert type scale which ranks responses on a scale of (i) strongly disagree (SD) and (5) strongly agree (SA). Out of the 275 copies of questionnaire administered, 193 were retrieved and analysed given us a response rate of 70%. The study was validated using content and construct validity tests to ensure that the questionnaire items were appropriate and relevant to the objectives of thee study. A pilot study was also conducted to pre-test the instrument and Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the items and the results showed coefficients of 0.813 and 0.824, which satisfied the general recommended level of 0.70 for the research indicators (Cronbach, 1981). Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and linear regression analysis with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23.

**Results of the Study**

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix**

Variables			Social Education	Studies	Breaking of the culture of silence
Social Education	Studies	Pearson Correlation	1		0.733**
		Sig. (2-tailed) N			0.005 193
Breaking of the culture of silence		Pearson Correlation	0.733**	1	
		Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.005 193		1 193

\*\*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2tailed)

Source: SPSS version 23, 2021

**Linear Regression Analysis**

Table 2: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj-R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of estimate
1	0.583	0.410	0.386	0.172

i) Predictors: (constant), social studies education

ii) Dependent variable: breaking of the culture of silence

Source: SPSS version 23, 2021

**Table 3: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of square	Mean	Df	Coefficient	f-stat	Sig	D.W
1	Regression	28.317	3.291	3	0.138	21.450	0.005 <sup>b</sup>	1.921
	residual	17.593	0.515	187				
	Total	45.910		190				

i) Predictors: (constant), social studies education

ii) Dependent variable: Breaking of the culture of silence

Source: SPSS version 23, 2021

### Discussion of Results

Table 1 shows the correlation between social studies education and breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. There exists a significant positive relationship between the predictor and dependent variables ( $r=0$ ,  $n=193$ , &  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that social studies education has a positive relationship with the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Table 2 shows  $R^2$  value of 0.583 which revealed that social studies education independently account for 58.3% of the variation in breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. The coefficient of 0.138 in table 3 further indicated that a one percent increase in social studies education results in 13.8% increase in breaking of the culture of silence. The F. statistics of 21.450 revealed that the model is statistically significant at 0.05 significant levels. The Durbin-Watson statistics of the model which shows 1.921 implies absence of serial autocorrelation in the regression analysis. Therefore, the results among others showed that there is strong and positive relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. Also, the results revealed that social studies education exert a positive and statistically significant influence on the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. These findings are in agreement with the views of Liu and Fahmy (2011), Adediran and Onifade (2013), and Valls et al (2016).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

While the study focused on how social studies education has been effective in creating awareness changing students' attitude, improving their knowledge and discouraging the culture of silence in Nigeria, it cannot be concluded that social studies education can address completely the culture of silence. The study acknowledged the capacity of social studies education in breaking of the culture of silence among female undergraduates of Delta State University, Abraka. Therefore, it is not surprising that the study



revealed that social studies education has a positive influence on the breaking of the culture of silence in Nigeria. Also, the relationship between social studies education and the breaking of the culture of silence was confirmed. Based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations were made:

1. Government and policy makers should intensify effort to review social studies education curriculum in Nigerian Universities with emphasis on the place of social studies education on addressing the culture of silence and the inculcation of moral values
2. The women and girls population should be educated to dispel many of the rape myths that hinder them from reporting sexual violence
3. For social studies education to realize its ultimate goal in Nigeria, efforts should be made for teachers' training, forums, seminar and workshops across the country.

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## BURNOUT VERSUS WELL-BEING IN ORGANIZATIONS

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**Abstract:** *One can define burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction in job performance that occurs in individuals who work professionally with others. Burnout syndrome is described as either persistent and troublesome complaints of exhaustion after low mental effort or persistent and troublesome complaints of feeling tired and physically limp after low physical effort. These include at least two of the following six symptoms: muscle aches, drowsiness, headaches, sleep disturbances, inability to relax, and irritability. Factors affecting employee health and well-being can have a significant impact on the financial costs associated with employee health and the profitability of the business. Action needs to be taken at an individual and organisational level to reduce the levels of stress and burnout syndrome.*

**Key words:** *burnout; well-being; stress; exhaustion; work place strategies.*

### 1. Conceptual clarifications

During life span, most of us have experienced some bizarre things, such as: forgetting familiar things (e.g., wife's/husband's first name); taking a different route while driving; reacting aggressively to clients and co-workers; acting inappropriately (e.g., putting your wallet in the refrigerator).

These seemingly small situations tell us that a disturbance has occurred in our consciousness that could have dramatic consequences. When such events accumulate, heightened vigilance is called for.

The greatest responsibility for avoiding burnout lies with the person himself.

Stress triggers could be: the person him/herself; his/her private environment; his/her professional contacts; team and network of colleagues; relationships with superiors; the organization and the industry in which he/she works; social conditions

Person affected by burnout (according to Maslach, 2003).

1. Notices a strong sense of exhaustion in himself over the course of several weeks;

2. Shows a marked decline in performance;

3. Experiences alienation from his work, colleagues, and organization.

The World Health Organization declares burnout as a non-clinical condition that is not treated by psychotherapy but by psychological counseling

## 2. The differences between stress and burnout

*Table no.1- Stress vs. burnout*

<b>Stress</b>	<b>Burnout</b>
Over-involvement in task	Lack of interest in engaging in professional activities
Emotionally, it involves intense activity and vigilance	Emotional numbness, blasphemy and apathy
Consequences: physical exhaustion	Consequences: mental and emotional exhaustion, lack of motivation, hope and any purpose
Produces urgency and hyperactivity	Produces helplessness
Associated with anxiety disorders	Depressive disorders
Feelings associated with stress are over-reactive	Feelings associated with Burnout syndrome are rather insensitivity

Maslach & Leiter (2016) define burnout as a syndrome of Emotional Exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduction of Professional Achievement, occurring in individuals who work professionally with others.

Emotional exhaustion includes emotional draining of the person, loss of energy and motivation, occurrence of restlessness and tension, perception of work as a chore.

Depersonalization is accompanied by the appearance of impersonal attitudes, distancing, rejection, or stigmatization toward the people one normally cares about-such actions are intended to help the person cope with the depletion of inner resources.

The reduction of professional performance is accompanied by the loss of the ability to self-assess, a decrease in self-esteem and self-efficacy.

If burnout was considered specific to the relational occupations of assisting and helping in the previous stages, it now seems to occur in any type of occupation.

In a more modern approach, Schaarschmidt & Fischer (2008) describe four response models for workplace behaviors that describe the risk of developing occupational exhaustion.

*Table no.2- Response models for workplace behaviors, Schaarschmidt & Fischer (2008)*

		Increased	<b>Happy W-Lazy Employee</b>	<b>Type Employee</b>	<b>G-Happy Employee</b>
<b>Self-distancing Capacity/Job Control</b>			Relative professional satisfaction It is desirable to clarify the motivation	High professional satisfaction Health Optimism, positive emotions towards work and life	
	<b>Low</b>		<b>Type B: Burnout employee</b>  Strong sense of resignation Low satisfaction with work and life Do not have support in the socio-family context Low level of mental balance and stability Health intervention is needed, in particular with regard to mental health	<b>Type:A Overwhelmed employee</b>  Overuse of one's own person The constant feeling that he/she is overwhelmed Exhaustion, reduced ability to manage stressful situations Negative emotions They're perfectionists, work is everything I put in a lot of effort Physical diseases, anxiety Health intervention is needed, in particular with regard to physical and mental health	

### **Involvement in work**

According to Cherniss (1980), burnout is the culmination of a stressful process that consists of three phases:

1. Perception of the stressful situation: the individual experiences discomfort caused by the difference between personal resources and environmental demands;

2. Negative emotion: the subject suffers from emotional turmoil characterized by tension and anxiety;

3. Coping: The subject, faced with a stressful situation, avoids the problem by withdrawing and distancing himself emotionally.

Burnout syndrome is described as either persistent and troublesome complaints of exhaustion after little mental exertion or persistent and troublesome complaints of feeling tired and physically floppy after little physical exertion. It includes at least two of the following six symptoms: muscle aches, drowsiness, headache, sleep disturbance, inability to relax, and irritability.

The worker is unable to recover from the symptoms by rest, relaxation or fun and the duration of the disorder is at least three months.



*Figure no.1. Processualism of burnout*

In summary, burnout syndrome can be viewed as a process that involves various stages. Typically, stressors lead to physical/emotional exhaustion, followed by depersonalization and a cynical attitude toward work. Often the burnout process ends with a dislike of everything around, feelings of despair and guilt. However, the burnout phases can also develop sequentially and be a consequence of high demands and low resources.

### 3. Well-being in the organizations

Well-being is a comprehensive biopsychosocial construct that encompasses physical, mental and social health. Employees' well-being represents various physical, mental and emotional facets of employee health in complex interaction (Dejoy and Wilson, 2003, op cit Grawitch, Gottschalk and Munz, 2006).

The term health refers to the physical and physiological symptomatology in a medical context (such as the diagnosis of some diseases). Applying this term in an organizational context, the focus is on physiological and psychological indicators used to assess employee health. Well-being is a broader term that refers to the person as a whole.

In addition to health, well-being includes life experiences (life satisfaction, happiness, joy, etc.) and, in an organizational context, general work-related experiences (job satisfaction, retention, etc.) and specific dimensions (satisfaction with colleagues or salary).

Individuals' experiences at work (physical, emotional, mental, social) have a direct impact on them. These experiences also have an impact outside of the individual's work. The state of well-being begins with the satisfaction of certain needs:



Figure no.2. Well-being strategies in organizations (<https://www.knoll.com/document/1353007297468/Moving-from-Wellness-to-Well-Being.pdf>)

Well-being is different from wellness

*Table no.3-Differences between well-being and wellness*

Specific dimensions	Type of needs
Well-being	Needs for self-realisation and personal development: goals, values, support for development Needs for esteem and social recognition: trust, respect, autonomy, transparency Social and belonging needs: social relationship, team dynamic, culture, relationships
Wellness	Needs for security: ergonomics, privacy, safety, work, life balance Physiological needs: water, light, temperature, food, air quality, cleaning, health

Danna and Griffin (1999) propose an insight into well-being and health in organizations and attempt to capture the causes and consequences of wellbeing.

Well-being is composed of various satisfactions:

- in relation to the individual's life (satisfaction with family life, society, leisure, spirituality, etc.);
- in relation to the individual's work (satisfaction with salary, promotion, colleagues, the work itself, fasting, etc.).

Health is considered a component of well-being, which is a combination of mental/psychological indicators (frustration, affection, anxiety, etc.) and physical/physiological indicators (blood pressure, heart function, physical health in general).

#### **4. Determinants of the state of well-being and consequences at the individual level.**

*Individual characteristics* such as personality type, locus of control, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and self-acceptance have been identified as significant predictors of the subjective well-being individuals experience in the organization (Grawitch, Gottschalk, and Munz, 2006).

*The emotional and instrumental support* one receives from family, as well as the support one receives from the boss at work, are able to balance the employee's efforts, the rewards earned, and the losses (time resources, energy, etc.) suffered by the employee.



The "hostile" personality type has a high risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Low self-esteem and anxiety as a character trait can contribute to poor health and well-being.

Locus of control at work (which refers to the belief that the person is in control at work) has been linked to employee well-being. Perceptions of control over events that affect oneself and appraisals of the predictable and stable nature of the people and situations around us are therefore important factors in the experience of well-being.

Over the past decade, a number of authors have theorized that there is a link between well-being (at least the emotional level) and emotional intelligence, suggesting that it has the potential to maintain and enhance well-being. - We therefore assume that people who are able to perceive and understand both their own emotions and those of the people with whom they interact show greater resilience and are better able to maintain their good mood and general satisfaction in the face of environmental pressures and demands.

##### **5. Determinants of well-being and consequences at the interpersonal level.**

*The supervisor's positive behaviour* (e.g., giving the employee greater control over his or her work, providing good communication and organisation, and considering the employee and his or her well-being) contributes statistically significantly to the employee's well-being. Arnold and his associates (2007) discovered a positive relationship between transformational leadership and well-being, a relationship mediated by the meaning the employee finds in the work performed.

Boss abusive behaviour refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors continually engage in hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, with the exception of physical contact (Tupper, 2000). Barling (1996, as cited in Lim and Cortina, 2005) argues that the experience of abusive behaviour in slavery in the workplace causes negative dispositions, cognitive distraction and anxiety.

Another important factor contributing to employees' well-being is the *interpersonal treatment they receive from colleagues and other organisational actors*. Lim and Cortina (2005) have shown how experiences of disrespect and consideration in the workplace are associated with low job satisfaction, lower task engagement, and increased psychological distress. Studies on bullying conclude that bullying has serious consequences and extremely negative effects on employee health and well-being and is considered a strong stressor.

## 6. Determinants of good status and links with organisational level

The meta-analysis conducted by Oertqvist and Wincent (2006) examined the effects that role-related stressors (role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, etc.) have on dimensions relevant to employee well-being. All facets related to role stress are significantly and positively related to emotional exhaustion.

*Role ambiguity* occurs when the employee does not have adequate or sufficient information about their role in the work process and organisation. Lack of goals and purpose of one's responsibilities can also lead to role ambiguity. Role conflict occurs when individuals are asked to behave in ways that contradict their values or when the different roles they play conflict with each other. Ambiguity and role conflict as sources of stress are associated with job dissatisfaction and staff turnover. Responsibility for people is also considered a stressor related to an individual's role in a particular context.

*The conflict between work and family* is considered by some authors as a situation in which one of the roles of the individual consumes and exhausts the resources (time, energy, etc.) that he would need to participate in the successful fulfilment of the requirements of the other role. Grandey, Cordeiro, and Crouter (2005) emphasise that this conflict goes both ways - work can overlap with family and vice versa. There are two ways in which the family can support a worker in their efforts to successfully complete the tasks associated with the role: through emotional support (encouragement and understanding) and instrumental support (taking over the worker's tasks and duties from other family members). Lapierre and Allen (2006) show that family instrumental support is more effective than emotional support in supporting a worker's efforts to avoid interference with family life duties. Emotional support is more important for the physical well-being of workers.

A factor that correlates with well-being and health of the organisation is also the *perception of job insecurity*. Studies have found the negative effects of perceived job insecurity on employee well-being (Ferrie et al., 1995).

Recent research on changes in work schedules - overtime and shift work - have been shown to affect employee well-being (Sparks et al., 2001).

*Sources of stress related to culture and organisational climate*. These sources include lack of participation and effective consultation, poor communication, poor organisational policies and restructuring (e.g. major restructures, unclear working environment etc.).

Factors affecting employee health and wellbeing can have a significant impact on the financial costs associated with employee health and

organisational profitability. There has been an increase in organisational costs associated with employee health care, costs associated with reduced productivity and absenteeism, costs associated with compensation payments related to workplace injury or illness

### **7. Organizational well-being**

As seen in Figure 3, organizational well-being can be truly achieved when the organization deeply embeds its well-being strategies into its core values, norms, and organizational practices. Easily identifiable organizational incentives such as sports vouchers, breaks, team-building sessions, childcare vouchers, etc., cannot have their maximum impact unless they are embedded in effective people-centered organizational-level policies (recruitment procedures, performance management, values and norms, etc.). These organizational policies and procedures must be accompanied by a range of personal support and development measures (mental health first aid, stress and resilience training, etc.). Only when the foundations of organizational policy and individual support have been consolidated can value-added measures take effect.

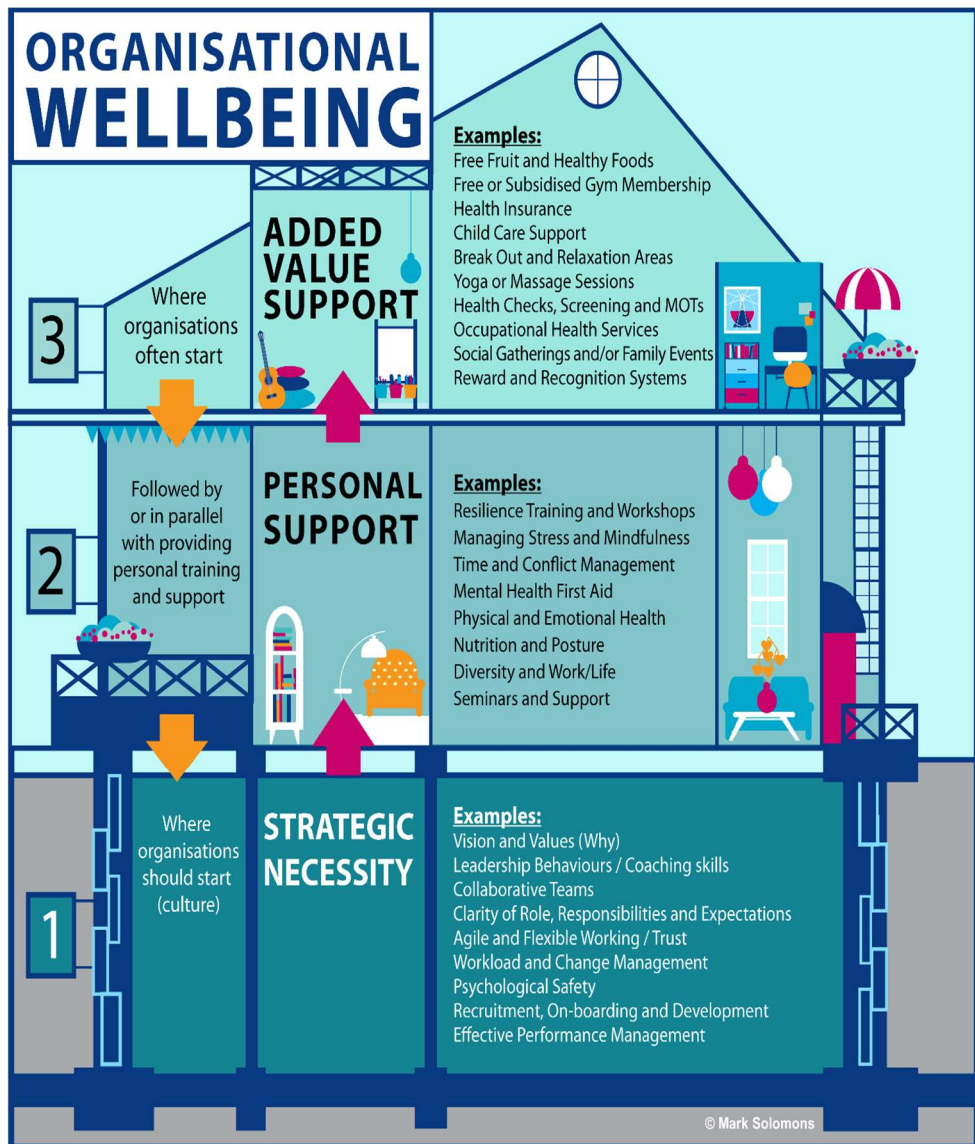


Figure no.3-Levels of well-being intervention strategies in organizations(<https://www.wellbeingaccelerator.com/house-of-organisational-wellbeing/house-of-organisational-wellbeing-white-ms/>)

*Measures to be taken at the individual level and at the team level*

- use of relaxation techniques: morning clarity, calming of breathing, awareness of one's body and its signals, harmony of movement, full awareness of the present moment;
- healthy diet and lifestyle;

- use of time management techniques: Eisenhower's matrix (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJAv5gqaA2E>), time rhythms, mini-breaks, centering on one thing at a time;
- use of assertive communication techniques;
- asking for help from colleagues.

*Measures to be taken at team/organisational level*

- constructive management of relationships, spontaneous impulse control, conflict management;
- support from supervisor;
- support from colleagues;
- clarification of tasks and responsibilities at work, clarification of professional role;
- reduction of workload, overload.

Conclusions

In the modern society more and more employees are affected by stress and burnout. The effects are devastating both at personal, interpersonal and organizational level. The active promotion of well-being strategies at organizational level creates the premises of long term employees' resilience, happiness and productivity at work place.

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## STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the strategies for promoting effective guidance and counselling programmes in schools as perceived by counsellors in Kwara State. The study design used was a descriptive survey. Seventy counsellors were purposively selected from government owned schools in each of the three districts. A total of 210 counsellors participated in the study. The questionnaire titled Strategies for promoting Guidance Programme Questionnaire (SPGPQ) was administered on the respondents. The study revealed that when counsellors are giving opportunities to train and retrain, this can promote effective G & C programmes in schools. It was thus recommended that professional guidance counsellors should be allowed to go for retraining at least once in a year. This will enhance the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme in schools.*

**Keywords:** *Guidance and Counselling programme; Professional Counsellors and Strategies.*

## INTRODUCTION

The guidance and counselling programme is an indispensable part of the school administration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Irrespective of the quality of educational policies; this programme must be given priority in schools especially, because of the developmental problems secondary school students regularly encounter which hinder their educational, emotional and moral development. Through this programme, vocational and educational goals are easily achieved. Owamanam (2005) and Idowu (2016) explained that guidance is assistance offered to an individual to help the client to understand themselves. In other words, exposure to guidance and counselling programmes can help an individual to reach enviable heights in all aspects of human endeavour (Umoh, 2016). However, conducting guidance and counselling programmes within diverse cultures could be a challenge (Matshepo, 2016). Therefore, this study will be of relevance to scholars and researchers from other cultural diversities. They will understand how Nigerian school counsellors implement some of their strategies in promoting effective guidance and counselling programmes in schools. This study will provide a good template for comparison among institutions of higher learning across the continent of Africa and beyond.

It is imperative to note that the Nigerian government has invested substantial resources as a commitment to improving the standard of education (Yusuf, 2004). As a way of boosting her educational policies, the government emphasized the need for the establishment of guidance and counselling in schools. Currently, the Nigerian government is experiencing an economic downturn and struggling to create alternative pathways to mitigate this problem (Omotosho, 2016). An effective guidance and counselling program as a compulsory aspect of the secondary school curriculum is a necessary tool for creating a platform on which the economy can thrive. The interaction between sound guidance and counselling background, and actionable economic policies, have been reported to generate a high level of productivity among the citizens (UNESCO, 2018). Therefore, a good guidance and counselling programme will ensure efficient allocation of resources, especially in emerging economies such as Nigeria and South Africa. In achieving the national developmental goals of guidance and counselling, novel and effective strategies must be put in place in the delivery of these services.

Sambo (2008) defined guidance as a process in which practitioners assist the clients to improve their wellbeing, alleviate stress and resolve the crisis. Guidance includes an array of specialized activities that assist an individual in achieving self-understanding and self-direction necessary for maximum adjustment to the school programmes and the community at large



(.Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013).The introduction of modern guidance emphasizes a more effective and inclusive approach to the client's problems (Mpho, 2016).Guidance and counselling are two phenomena that are used interchangeably. Guidance seeks to develop the self-esteem of an individual (Hue 2007) While counselling is the process of assisting the client in a face to face interaction.

Counselling is an interactive process between the client and the counsellors (Nwoye, 2008). It involves listening, expression of nonverbal communication by which meaning is transmitted from one person to another (Kobiah&Okorodudu 2004). Makinde (1983) and Idowu (2016) indicated that counselling is based on the fact that every individual in any society has had, is having and will have a problem that he alone cannot solve. This is a helping process in which the counsellor and the client value the relationship because it is self-revealing (Umoh, 2016).In every society, there is always a need for a helper, especially in time of trouble or when a person experiences personal problems. Most times, people often turn to adults or significant people in the community for instruction(Idowu,2016). These significant adults are not trained; hence there is a need to employ the services of a professional counsellor to conduct guidance and counselling programmes in schools(Muribwathoho&Shumba, 2014).It is, therefore, evident that counselling is an integral part of the guidance programme.

[Lwazi](#) (2016) affirmed that guidance and counselling programmes have helped in handling behavioural problems among secondary school students. It has also aided in reducing academic and emotional stress. Sambo (2008) explained that without guidance and counselling programme in school, the whole purpose of education might not be achieved. In 1959 the guidance and counselling programme was established Nigeria to cater for career and moral development of secondary school students. In achieving this objective, the program began to feature in teacher's education programmes and in 1981, the National Policy on Education emphasized on the need for the introduction of guidance and counselling programmes in schools (Durosaro, 2016). The importance of guidance and counselling in schools cannot be overemphasized yet there are lots of challenges experienced by counsellors in carrying out their duties.

Yusuf (2004) opined that inefficiency of this program in some schools could stem from the negative attitude of the school holders towards the program. The dual roles of the school counsellor have brought a lot of confusion and retrogression to the counselling profession (Ubana, 2008). In most schools, professional counsellors are made to teach and equally carry out their duties as counsellors (Obilade&Laipe, 2000). Policies on education underlined the essential need for the setting up of guidance programmes in

post-primary schools. According to Omotosho (2016), the school guidance program was established to cater for career guidance, adolescent's developmental needs, constant expansion in the enrolment rate of students in schools, recurrent changes in the educational sector and deviances in societal core values. The school guidance programmes consist of some major services, which include:

- A) *Orientation services*: This process assists the learner to adjust to the school environment and experiences without difficulty.
- B) *Information service*: This includes occupational, educational and personal-social information.
- C) *Appraisal services*: This practice involves the assessment of an individual and value judgment arrived at based on various relevant characteristics of a client.
- D) *Counselling service*: This is assistance rendered by the professional counsellor to the client to resolve the clients' problem.
- E) *Placement and follow up services*. This is the process of fixing a client in the right occupation or class.

The establishment of the guidance and counselling programme in schools was meant for the total growth of a child and the development of education, as indicated above. This programme aimed at assisting the students in identifying skills that match with their personality traits. Guidance and counselling help to improve the study habits of students and also motivate them to take the right decision concerning their career pursuit. This programme is necessary for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as this will ensure students' ease of transit from junior to senior secondary school. Lwazi (2016) stated that without academic and career guidance, the whole purpose of education cannot be achieved yet, a lot of challenges are confronting the effective functioning of guidance programme in schools. For example, nothing has been done to boost the standard of the profession. Educational Stakeholders still refers to school counsellor as teachers as such; they are made to carry out duties that are not related to their profession (Owanmanam, 2005). There are many schools without counsellors because some principals still prefer to use career masters (Alabi, 2006). Also, the guidance and counselling programme in the school is not functioning well because of lack of adequate facilities such as office accommodation, cabinets, computer, psychological test e.t.c. The lackadaisical attitude of some counsellor towards the profession is a major challenge confronting the profession (Kobiah&Okorodudu 2004). It is expected that a comprehensive understanding of these strategies will offer the basis for informed decisions on policies regarding guidance and counselling practice in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the implementation of the guidance program in schools, different approaches can be used. In this context, several researchers advocated for the adoption of client Centre theory in the process of promoting guidance and counselling programmes (Gerald, 2013). This is because this theory uses the same approach in dealing with pupil's problems when offering guidance and counselling programmes to students in the school set up (Kensit, 2000). Client Centre therapy is a non-directive approach that requires the client to take an active role in the course of counselling while the therapist being non-directive and supportive. The client-centred approach emphasized on the need to facilitate self-awareness and at the same time influence self-worth and openness (Thomas, 2013). This is closely related to the purpose of establishing guidance and counselling programmes in schools. Carl Rogers propounded the theory of Client-Centre Approach in 1951. Rogers believed that human beings could be motivated to the extent that they become positive in their approach about self (Wickman, & Campbell, 2003). The client Centre theory is based on the principles which are equally practiced in guidance and counselling process. For example, in the client Centre theory and the guidance and counselling programmes, the psychological contact is always between the therapist and the client. Also, the client is assumed to be in a state of incongruence, while the counsellor/ therapist is expected to provide an atmosphere of unconditional positive regard for the client in the process of their interaction. It is also essential for the therapist/ counsellors to show empathic feelings towards the client. According to Rogers (1951), if these conditions are well expressed during the therapeutic process, a positive personality will emerge. These conditions are the major foundations of guidance and counselling profession.

Rogers believed that when human beings are given favourable environmental conditions to express themselves, they develop self-understanding, which can result in the development of their ability. The theory believes that man can be self-directed, forward-moving and be constructive. The theory also emphasized the need for the therapist to understand and create proper condition and atmosphere where clients can learn to rely on themselves (Thomas, 2013). A client can be at the state of incongruence at the beginning of the guidance and counselling session, but the counsellor must reverse the situation. The therapist operates using the following principles congruence/genuineness, unconditional positive regard/respect for the client and empathic understanding of the client. The major aim of this theory is for the client to achieve self-independence to maintain a high-quality lifestyle. In the process, the therapist is expected to be genuine, understanding and warm in dealing with the client (McLeod, 2019). A

mastery of the basic concept of this theory and development of requisites skills can help the counsellor to strategized on improving guidance and counselling programmes in schools (Sambo, 2008).

The practice of guidance and counselling profession depends on the client-centred theory principles. The use of congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy are necessary skills that must be displayed by a counsellor during guidance and counselling sessions (Campell, 2017). Guidance and counselling programme and client Centre emphasized on the need to develop personal potentials through self-realization. The two principles clearly highlighted those unhealthy behaviours and that negative attitudes are the major factors that can hinder self-actualization. At the same time, the development of self-confidence is vital in achieving an individual's goals. Both programmes are interested in the quality of the relationship between the client and therapist (Clark, 2004).

## **Strategies for Promoting Guidance and Counselling Programme**

### **(A). Developing professional capacity**

According to Ojo (2009), the major strategy for improving guidance programme in schools involves the development of professional capability in the use of counselling techniques. These techniques include

#### *Facilitation*

This an action that encourages the client to express themselves during counselling programs. This strategy does not specify what type of response is expected, but the technique can facilitate the client to open up in a face to face interaction the counsellor.

#### *Paraphrasing*

According to client centre theory of Roger 1951, paraphrasing is an attempt to understand the client point of view by repeating what the client has said in a precise and accurate form. This process helps the counsellor to understand the client in the delivery of guidance and counselling services.

#### *Confrontation*

This technique is used in challenging the client to take an honest look at himself. This is usually achieved with a description of the client's appearance and behaviour during the counselling process. At this point, the client is made to take responsibility for their action.

#### *Questioning*

The counsellor has to be tactical in the use of the questioning technique because it can be overused. Open-ended questions are used to seek further clarification in the counselling process. The use of this skill would promote guidance program.

#### *Reassurance and encouragement*

This technique motivates the client to take action on the information received in the counselling process. For example, the counsellor can encourage the client by the following words *I am here for you; you can make it, I want you to succeed* etc. Others techniques include the reflection of feelings, summarization of all what the client has said at the end of the counselling session. These skills are all embedded in the client-centred theory.

#### **(B). Integrated approach**

National Report Summary (2013) emphasized on the use of an integrated approach as a way of promoting a guidance programme in schools. According to this report, the recognition of guidance and counselling practice in schools, training and re-training of counsellors, certification of the profession could be a major strategy for improving the actives of guidance services in schools. The report also recommended a need for constant professional development and reappraisal of policies on guidance and counselling practice.

#### **(C). Online Guidance and Counselling approach**

The traditional method of face to face approach can no longer carter for the currents trends of diverse nature of guidance and counselling needs. A more significant percent of secondary school students has an identity on the internet social media and other online platforms, and these platforms are not without their attendant behavioural deficiencies (Strauss, 2014). A face to face method can no longer capture these population of students effectively. COVID 19 pandemic, has introduced a game-changer in different human endeavours (Yurchisin, Watchravesringkan& McCabe 2005). For guidance and counselling, face to face contact may be impossible during a pandemic. It is now evident that during the pandemic, online contacts rather than face to face approach may be a more effective guidance and counselling method. Other platforms for effective communications include conference call, messaging, voice over internet protocol (VIP), Zoom, and other appropriate technologies that are available can be used for guidance and counselling sessions. With the current trend in the use of social media, it is imperative that computer, social media and online skills become vital tool kits in guidance and counselling strategies. On the overall, for guidance and counselling to become more productive, it must consider the diversities of

the paradigm shift in human endeavours. Mghweno&Mghweno (2014) emphasized that counsellors need to introduce dynamic strategies in carrying out guidance and counselling programme in schools.

The researchers observed that majority of the counsellors use the same sect of approach in dealing with student's problems; this seem boring to the students and teachers. Mbabazi and Bagaya (2013) noted that the constant repetition of a particular sect of therapeutic methods could mar efficiency of guidance and counselling process. These set of procedures have also been reported to lack elements of privacy and confidentiality, considered to be the hallmark of guidance and counselling (Boitt, 2016). The trend in the pattern of negative behaviours among secondary school students is alarming. The operators of the guidance and counselling programmes need to map out contemporary strategies to combat these current problems. Various literature such as Low (2009), Eyo, Joshua &Esuong (2010) &Umezulike (2013) has identified problems associated with the delivery of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. These problems are, combining guidance and counselling duties with other school routine duties, the delegation of career duties to unqualified staff and paucity of requisites facilities for service delivery. Despite the importance of G&C, the program has been accorded appropriate recognition in schools. Oye, Obi, Mohd and Bernice (2012) noted that despite the establishment of guidance and counselling in Nigerian schools the services are still fragmented and the researchers suggested a need for a comprehensive overhaul of the program. Mghweno&Mghweno (2014) carry out a study on access to guidance and counselling services and its influence on students' school life and career choice. The researcher emphasized the need to improve the delivery of guidance and counselling for effectiveness.

A lot of studies has been done on guidance and counselling programme in schools and this include, Alabi (2006) who worked on secondary school student's attitude towards guidance and counselling program, Boitt (2016) conducted a study on the evaluation of the Challenges in the Implementation of the Guidance and Counselling Programme in Baringo County Secondary Schools Kenya. Most of these studies did not focus on strategies for promoting effective guidance and counselling programme in school, hence, the need for this study. The main purpose is of this study is to(a) discover counsellors perception on thestrategies used for promoting effective guidance and counselling programmes in schools, (b) to identify the counsellors perception on the strategies for promoting effective guidance and counselling programme in schools on the basis of gender, years in service, educational qualification and religious affiliation.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The study design used was a descriptive survey. Descriptive research design is a type of technique that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon that is being studied (Cabot, 2020).

### **Participants**

Seventy counsellors were purposively selected from government-owned schools in each of the three senatorial districts in Kwara State Nigeria. A total of 210 counsellors participated in the study. The qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study to gather information from the respondents. The participants were professional counsellors in various schools. The researchers were interested in gathering information from the counsellors who were on the field; as such, an interview section was organized. Two counsellors from the three senatorial districts were purposively selected, thus making a total of six counsellors that participated in the interview. The researchers encouraged each contributor to respond to each question freely.

### **Instrument**

The questionnaire titled Strategies for Promoting Effective Guidance Programme Questionnaire (PEGPQ) was developed by the researchers. Items on the questionnaire were derived from the appraisal of current literature. The respondents' information is contained in sections A, while Section B was made up of 15 items on the strategies for promoting effective guidance programme in school. The instrument validity was ascertained by giving a draft of the questionnaire to four experts in the related field of study for vetting. Sequel to their suggestions, inappropriate items were removed while some items were modified. Finally, the items on the questionnaire were adjudged suitable for the study. Using the t-test method, a reliability index of 0.70 was gotten. Hence, the instrument was statistically reliable.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The ethical issues were taken care of by obtaining permission from the schools and the respondents. Those that were not willing to be part of the study opted out, so they were not served with the questionnaire. Also, the participants were assured of confidentiality before, and those willing were served with the questionnaire. Four major questions were raised during the interview sessions which lasted for about one hour.

In view of the nature of this research work, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data collected. The hypotheses generated were analyzed using t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). All hypotheses were tested at 0.5 alpha level of significance.

**RESULT****Table 1:Percentage distribution of respondents by gender, number of years in service, educational status and religion**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	101	48.1
Female	109	51.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Years in Service</b>		
1-5 years	112	53.3
6-11 years	84	40.0
12 years and above	14	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Bachelor's Degree	105	50.0
Post Graduate	105	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>		
ATR	14	6.7
Christianity	95	45.2
Islam	101	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results from table 1 above show that 101 (48.1%) male and 109 (51.9%) were females. The results also reveal that 112 (53.3%) that participated in the study had 1-5 years of working experience as counsellors, 84 (40.0%) had 6-11 years' experience while only 14 (6.7%) has 12 years and above experience. However, it is imperative to note that respondents with a Bachelor's Degree and those with Post Graduate Degree have responses of 105 (50.0%). Also, 14 (6.7%) of the participants are adherents of African Traditional Religion, 95 (45.2%) are Christians, while 101 (48.1%) is Islam.

***What are the strategies for promoting effective guidance programme?***

**Table 2 Mean and Ranking on strategies for promoting effective guidance programme**

<b>No</b>	<b>Effective G &amp; C programme can be promoted in any school if:</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
4	there is an opportunity for training and retraining counsellors	3.65	1 <sup>st</sup>
1	recognition is given to counsellors as full-time professionals	3.64	2 <sup>nd</sup>



11	Guidance and counselling programmes are included on the school time table	3.57	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8	counsellors are allowed to practice their core professions	3.55	4 <sup>th</sup>
2	counselling is certified and licensed by the government	3.53	5 <sup>th</sup>
15	there is enough awareness on the importance of G&C in schools	3.45	6 <sup>th</sup>
5	counsellors are computer literate	3.44	7 <sup>th</sup>
7	the duties of counsellors are well outlined by the ministry of education	3.43	8 <sup>th</sup>
3	the government provides relevant support for the counsellors	3.42	9 <sup>th</sup>
9	stakeholders are well enlightened on the importance of guidance services	3.37	10 <sup>th</sup>
6	guidance services are provided for students in the classroom	3.34	11 <sup>th</sup>
10	there is a periodic evaluation of guidance programmes in schools	3.33	12 <sup>th</sup>
13	career masters are not allowed to carry out the duties of school counsellors	3.29	13 <sup>th</sup>
14	counsellors are placed on a better salary scale	3.2	14 <sup>th</sup>
12	G & C programmes are included in the school time table	3.07	15 <sup>th</sup>

*Note.* \*Standard Reference Mean = 2.50

Table 2 shows the mean and ranking of strategies for promoting effective guidance programme. Items 4, 1 and 11 ranked as the top 3. Item 4 (there is an opportunity for training and retraining counsellors) ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with a mean score of 3.65; followed by item one which ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with the mean score of 3.64. From the above table, the mean scores are more than the mid-mean score of 2.50; it can thus be inferred that the items were seen as the perceived strategies for promoting effective guidance programme.

*There is no significant difference in the strategies for promoting effective guidance and counselling programme in schools as perceived by school counsellor on the basis of gender and Educational Status.*

**Table 3 Mean, SD and t-value of Strategies for Promoting Effective Guidance Programmes Based on Gender and Educational Status**

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	t-cal.	t-crit.	<i>p</i> -value
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	101	47.87	6.971	208	0.13	1.96	0.90
Female	109	48.02	9.293				
<b>Educational Status</b>							

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	t-cal.	t-crit.	<i>p</i> -value
Bachelor's Degree	105	47.03	8.881	208	1.62	1.96	.106
Post Graduate	105	48.87	7.472				

The p-value of 0.90 (gender) and .106 (Educational status) is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, as such the hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that counsellors, irrespective of their gender and educational status, they all agreed to the strategies for promoting effective guidance programmes in schools.

*There is no significant difference in strategies for promoting effective guidance and counselling programmes in schools as perceived by counsellors based on years of service and religion.*

**Table 4 ANOVA Table on Strategies for Promoting Effective Guidance Programmes in Schools Based on Years in Service and Religion**

Source of variance	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	F-cal.	F-Crit.	<i>p</i> -value
<b>Years in Service</b>						
Between Group	277.1	2	138.6	2.06	3.00	.130
Within Group	13909.3	207	67.19			
Total	14186.4	209				
<b>Religion</b>						
Between-Group	130.1	2	65.03	.96	3.00	.39
Within Group	14056.4	207	67.19			
Total	14186.4	209				

Table 4 shows that the p-value of .130 (Years in service,  $F_{2, 207} = 2.06$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). and .39 (religion,  $F_{2, 207} = 0.96$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .) is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, as such, the hypothesis is not rejected. Results in table 4 indicate that that irrespective of the counsellors' years in service and different religious belief, they all have the same perception on strategies for promoting guidance programmes in school.

### **Interview Session**

**Respondents views on the following questions:**

**1. As a counsellor, do you see the need for improvement in the delivery of guidance and counselling programmes in schools?**

**Respondents 1--** Yes. This is because there are emerging problems every day in schools brought about by technological advancement. There are new trends in criminal activities among students at all levels.

**Respondents 2**—Yes. G and C have the capacity to facilitate the attainment of educational policies, so there is a need to continually improve the delivery content to enhance the programme in schools.

**Respondent 3**---Yes. Stakeholders seem not to understand what G and C is all about as such counsellors are giving dual roles; they carry so much responsibility which does not permit for effective delivery of guidance and counselling services.

**Respondent 4**--- There is a need for improvement in performance. It can be inferred that counsellors have not been able to record expected achievements in term of performance in the course of their service delivery.

**Respondent 5**--- A close look at the current trend in societal values; there is a need to improve in the delivery of guidance and counselling services in schools. Some school counsellors are not performing their duties as expected, and many students are not educated on the importance of G&C services in schools.

**Respondent 6**--- I feel the delivery channel is okay; however, there is a need for sensitization among stakeholders on the importance of providing facilities for practical guidance and counselling services in schools.

**2. In your view, as a counsellor, do you think there is a need to devise new strategies in improving G and C programmes in schools?**

**Respondent 1**----The world is advancing, so counselling activities must step up with the contemporary trend. Therefore, counselling strategies should be reviewed to stay abreast with the current trend of behaviour, occupation and socialization.

**Respondents 2&3**-----Yes, there is a need to devise new strategies in carrying out our activities in schools.

**Respondent 4**—There is a necessity for the school counsellors to create awareness on the need for G&C in contemporary times. In doing this, the professional counsellor has to do things in a different way to attract clients.

**Respondent 5**--- The strategies used by counsellors are okay, but there is a need to adjust to the demand of contemporary times constantly.

**Respondents 6**--- It is essential to develop more robust guidance and counselling programmes in schools, counsellors should be smart in their delivery methods. The strategies should focus more on how to attract these students for G&C programmes as we all know that the amount of investment deposited in these students depends on how they handle life challenges in the nearest future.

**3. Do you think G and C needs a comprehensive overhaul in Nigeria?**

**Respondents 1**--- No. what is needed is new strategies in addition to the old ones.

**Respondents 2**---- No. we only need to improve on our strategies.

**Respondents 3---** Yes. Guidance and counselling process will allow for an integrated approach in dealing with student's current problems.

**Respondents 4---** There is a need for comprehensive repair to actually achieve the aims and objectives of guidance and counselling in Nigeria. Guidance and counselling is supposed to be part of educational programmes, yet so many schools do not see the need for this programme.

**Respondents 5---**No. It is the operators of guidance and counselling services that need to be innovative in the process of delivery.

**Respondents---**6. As a counsellor, we ought to be futurist in our approach to issues. The core objectives of setting up G&C in schools has not changed; however, the pattern of behavioural problems among secondary school students keep changing over time.

#### **4. What are the various strategies that can be used to improve the G and C programmes in schools?**

**Respondent 1---**G and C should be included in the school time table. Also, the respondents recommended in-service training for counsellors and that the government should enforce the establishment of G and C in all schools.

**Respondent 2---** There is need to organized refreshers seminars and workshop for the counsellor. The counsellors affirmed that they have not gone for any training in the last ten years. Also, counsellors should be exposed to online counselling to keep pace with the present level of globalization

**Respondent 3---**The counsellor emphasized on the need to develop appropriate appraisal plan. Schools counsellors should link up with agencies that could assist in enhancing G and C programmes.

**Respondent 4---**Guidance and counselling programmes should be included in the school time; this will create awareness on what the programme is all about and its importance. Many students do not actually understand the use of these services.

**Respondent 5---**The G&C programme in schools should be broad enough to accommodate other intervention services that can be of help to the secondary school students. For example, the counsellor can introduce parent-child counsellor interaction, recreational intervention programmes, peer cluster programme etc.

**Respondents 6---**The use of online counselling should be encouraged. This will assist in reaching out to large numbers of clients who need guidance and counselling services within the shortest time.

#### **Discussion**

The study revealed that training and retraining of counsellors and recognition of counsellors as full-time professionals are important in enhancing the

guidance and counselling programme in schools. Yusuf (2004) affirmed that there is a need to train and retrain counsellor to be efficient in carrying out their duties in schools. In the same vein, Yahaya (2016) noted that professional counsellors should continuously update their level of proficiency through constant training and retraining to enhance their knowledge on basic concepts and contemporary strategies of guidance and counselling. Bulus (2001) explained that counsellors' roles are often misconceived within the school system, and as such most counsellors are not allowed to practice on a full-time basis. Alabi (2006) opined that if the counsellor is allowed to display their professional wealth of experience, guidance and counselling programmes will help to improve the entire educational programme sector. As earlier advised, Umoh (2016) emphasized on the need for counsellors to practice on a full time basis

Results that emanated from this study showed that majority of the respondents agreed in their perception of the strategies to deplore so as to enhance the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programmes in schools based on gender. As such, irrespective of the respondents gender they did not differ in their perception. In a study carried out by Ojo (2009) the researcher also discovered that male and female counsellors also had a similar perception on the need to develop friendly strategies that can enhance guidance and counselling services in schools. The similarity in opinion could be a result of what they have observed in the field. In the same vein, Durosaro (2016) emphasized the need for professional counsellors to be innovative when delivering guidance and counselling services in schools. Ubana (2008) recommended that stakeholders should do everything to promote guidance and counselling programmes to achieve their aims.

The counsellor's number of years in service did not influence their opinion either. This perception tends to suggest that the counsellor have similar experiences on the field particularly, on the need to re-strategized the counselling approach in secondary schools. According to Yahaya(2016), regardless of the counsellors' years in service and educational qualification, there is the need to constantly uphold the standard of counselling practice. However, this can be achieved through the exposure of counsellor to current counselling strategies.

The respondent's educational status also had no influence on their perception. The respondent's perception is likely to be related because they are all exposed to similar educational training. This finding is in agreement with the study of Ojo (2009) who revealed that the differences in the educational level of the counsellors notwithstanding, they all agreed on the need to develop strategies that can improve guidance and counselling programmes in schools.

The result revealed that both Christians and Muslim counsellors showed a similar perception of the strategies for promoting effective guidance program in schools. Most religious tenets are grounded on some of the philosophies of guidance and counselling programmes, and this could be the primary reason why their perception is the same. Yusuf (2004) observed that most times the attitude of both Christians and Muslims faithful's are the same on the issue that relates to guidance and counselling services.

The interview process confirmed that there is a need for improvement in the delivery of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. This affirmation was also confirmed Boitt (2016) who advocated on the need to improve guidance and counselling services in Kenya. Majority of the respondent believe that most of the strategies that have been used for guidance and counselling practice are potent to resolve problems; however, they observed that there is need to introduce new strategies to enhance guidance and counselling programmes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Wambu & Fisher (2015) reechoed this by explaining that there is a need to improve on counselling styles as a result of the societal changes. The respondents agreed on the need to introduced some new strategies that can enhance guidance and counselling services in Schools. Lwazi (2016) revealed that for guidance and counselling programmes to be effective in schools, especially in contemporary times, the counsellor must introduce new attract clients.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It was concluded that gender, years in service, educational status and religion of the respondents did not significantly influence the views of counsellors. It is therefore suggested that counsellors should go for constant training on strategies for improving guidance and counselling programmes in schools. The duties of the school counsellor should be spelt out and be given due recognition as professional counsellors. Stakeholders should make it compulsory for schools to employ professional counsellors on full time. This will enhance the effectiveness of the guidance programme in schools. Counsellors should be innovative and develop strategies that could enhance guidance and counselling programmes in schools.

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## ONLINE TRANSFORMATIVE COACHING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR STUDENT TEACHERS

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**Abstract:** *This paper presents the concept of an operational model of virtual training and personal development for students - future teachers-graduating from the University of Pitești, who, under the current circumstances of academic education and pandemic crisis, need more than ever individual and group support to cope with change in order to generate their own solutions to personal problems, to know themselves better, to learn how to get well, to better understand how their own thoughts affect feelings, emotions and behaviour, to develop their assertive communication and active listening skills, to learn behavioural self-regulation strategies, increase self-esteem, identify priorities, cope with academic exams, etc. The aim of the research is to analyse the partial results of a pilot-project that began by surveying the perceptions of student teachers in preschool and primary education at the University of Pitești on the needs, fears/ concerns they have during the coronavirus pandemic, but also on the need to implement a possible online coaching and personal development program to support them during this period. The research methodology brought together a questionnaire-based survey, interviews with experts, content analysis and statistical processing of the partial results. The research findings highlight methodological and praxiological aspects of implementing a possible virtual program of transformative coaching and personal development that can cause generative changes in students' cognitive and behavioural plan and can bring balance, satisfaction, even joy on a personal level, but also practical training as future teachers.*

**Key words:** *online transformative coaching; personal development; change; personal evolution.*

## 1. Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic still has a dramatic impact on the world. Due to the global pandemic situation, schools and universities have had to conduct distance learning activities and teachers around the world have to rethink their teaching methodologies by adapting to this crisis situation and often learning to use electronic platforms and applications on their own in order to facilitate online teaching

The European Commission's Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025 emphasizes that teachers "have remained on the frontlines of the response to ensure that learning continued, innovating distance learning for their students in confinement. Without teachers and trainers, no innovation, no inclusion and no transformational education experiences for learners can take place."(p.12)

The digital boom imposed by the new online teaching conditions was also visible in the case of academic education, and the health crisis deepened even more the challenges related to digitalization, innovative pedagogies, inclusion and well-being, students, researchers and support staff, mobility and funding. Verde A., Valero, J., M. (2021) believe that if the pandemic had not had this impact on education, the use of technological developments in educational settings could not have evolved so rapidly in recent months.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (2020) captures the fact that "universities are currently facing the need to change pedagogy, which should value the more active and autonomous involvement of students in their own training, the use of technology and of open access resources, so as to develop a new relationship with society, beyond their traditional role in the generation, dissemination and transfer of knowledge, emphasizing the two-way link with society, in the logic of open science." (pp.1226-1227)

At the end of July 2020, the Romanian Academy issued a point of view entitled "Romania in and after the pandemic" by which it proposed a series of measures to mitigate or even eliminate the effects of the pandemic crisis on the short, medium and long term. In addition to equipping all schools with the technical means to ensure the necessary conditions for online education, it is also necessary to train all teachers to use efficiently the infrastructure in the digital education process. Today, these constitute priority action axes of the Strategy for the digitization of education in Romania 2021-2027 (SMART-Edu), launched in public consultation in

December 2020, and of the Educated Romania presidential project (V.9 Digitalization).

An important study on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people conducted by Copăceanu M. (2020) in April-May, on a sample of 1201 young people in Romania with an average age of 21.93 years, of which 40% were students, highlights the fact that young people have suffered during the pandemic, both in terms of their emotional state and in terms of excessive consumption of food, internet, tobacco, alcohol. The students participating in the study mentioned that they feel stressed by the online university courses invoking adaptation problems, the large volume of projects and homework to be completed in a short time, fear of exams, lack of free time and lack of motivation, etc. (pp.116-117). At the same time, the author draws the researchers' attention towards intensifying in-depth studies focused on young people during the pandemic, while developing useful applications for young people to get in touch with psychologists and/or applications to reduce their risk behaviors. An example of a useful application for people during the coronavirus pandemic is the *Covid Coach* application, developed by the mobile mental health team National Center for PTSD, Dissemination & Training Division (US). The application is free and includes personalized tools for self-care and for improving emotional state, a tracker for checking mood and graphics for viewing progress over time. It is a tool for self-education and personal development that helps to create one's own personal assistance network.

Other studies (Alghamdi, 2021) highlight the much greater impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the social aspects of students' lives than on their educational aspects.

## 2. E-Coaching/Coaching in education

In the current context of our social life, we wonder how we can support students to cope with the current situation both in terms of their resilience to the health crisis and in their initial remote training, in atypical conditions of academic education. One solution may be the virtual coaching programs in education and personal development. Today, the digitalization of coaching proves to be successful in several fields, including in the field of education. Ribbers and Waringa (2015) emphasize the value of online coaching as "a non-hierarchical development partnership between two parties separated by a geographical distance, in which the learning and reflection process takes place through both analogue and virtual means" (p. 7). In the digital age, e-coaching is gaining more and more popularity being considered "a set of computerized components that constitute an artificial entity that can observe, motivate, learn and predict the behaviours of a user, in context and

over time, and which is proactively engaging in an ongoing collaborative conversation with the user, in order to help plan and promote the effective goal by striving to use persuasive techniques. ” (Kamphorst, B.A. , 2017, p.5).

Since the 1980s, the area of coaching has grown significantly, not only in sports, but in almost any field, with several situations in which it has been defined: as sports training, as an occupation, as a branch of consulting, as a training method, as development strategy. There is a rich literature on coaching and many definitions of this concept have been launched over time. It is often taken for mentoring, counselling, consultancy or even psychotherapy, but there are many specialists (Zeus &Skiffington, 2008, Hattie, 2014, Rosinski 2019, van Nieuwerburgh, 2020 et all et alii) which draw attention to the differences not only at the conceptual level, but especially at the practical-action level. According to Zeus, P., Skiffington, S. (2008) coaching involves “a voluntary partnership, which bears its full potential only if it takes place in an environment of trust and responsibility” (p.371). The same authors share the conviction that through coaching, “essential qualities for survival” are formed and perfected both at individual level and at the level of groups and organizations, such as self-knowledge, the ability to reflect and learn, confidence in one’s own competence. According to Hattie (2014), “coaching involves people’s ability to facilitate self-learning, personal growth and performance improvement”. (p.137)

Some specialists (O’Conner, Lages, 2019 et al.) understand by coaching “a partnership in which the coach helps the client reach his maximum potential and produce the results he wants in life and at the workplace”(p.44). The authors point out that “the goal of coaching can be similar to that of other techniques that involve helping people in trouble: to support personal change according to the client’s wishes and to help him reach his highest limits.” (44)

In the field of education, coaching was intensively theorized after 2010. We emphasize here the extraordinary contribution of Christian van Nieuwerburgh (2012) and of his collaborators to clarify the concept of coaching in education, understood as a professional dialogue specially designed to help develop skills specific to pupils / students, teachers and school canteens in order to achieve the intended educational objectives. According to van Nieuwerburgh (2012) and his collaborators, *coaching in education* is “a one-on-one conversation focused on improving learning and development by increasing self-knowledge, self-analysis and personal responsibility” (p.17). In this context, the coach facilitates students’ self-directed learning, using techniques such as active listening, dialogue, support and ongoing encouragement. Applied to students, coaching can lead

to improved confidence and self-motivation, performance and wellness (Devine, Meyers, Houssemand, 2013).

Stan C. (2020) believes that coaching education leads to a conscious evolution of the student, which “combines self-knowledge with self-understanding, but also with recognition and overcoming limits, in order to achieve performance in a particular field or context.” (p.102).

Polish researchers Babicka-Wirkus A, Wirkus L, Stasiak K. and Kozłowski P. (2021) recommend that universities introduce interpersonal training and stress adaptation workshops for individual groups of students, as well as other forms of participatory intervention, support and self-support of students during the pandemic. Furthermore, online workshops/virtual coaching and personal development sessions were organized during the coronavirus pandemic for students in the Romanian university space (Bucharest, Cluj, Iasi, Timisoara), starting from the premise that during this period, more than ever, students need to feel that they belong to a resilient academic community, and that their academic life, even if they have moved into virtual space, does not imply isolation and loneliness, but interactivity, interesting teaching activities focused on their learning needs, flexible and professional network. The descriptive-exploratory study initiated at the level of the Faculty of Education Sciences, Social Sciences and Psychology within the University of Pitești goes in the same direction.

### **3. Purpose of the study**

The aim of the study was both to probe the perceptions of future teachers in preschool and primary education about the needs, fears/concerns they have during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as about the need to implement a possible online coaching and development program to support them during this period. At the same time, the opinions of experts in education sciences and psychology were consulted with respect to the concrete way to implement such a distance learning program for students.

### **4. Research Methodology**

The research methodology brought together a questionnaire-based survey, interviews with experts, content analysis and the statistical processing of the partial results.

#### **Participants and procedure**

The study was conducted in 2 stages:

- designing and conducting the survey based on an electronically-administered questionnaire (Google Forms) to students from the Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education (PIPP) program within the Faculty of

Education Sciences, Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Pitesti (November 2020);

- application of the Delphi technique by organizing and conducting interviews with psycho-pedagogical experts within the faculty in November 2020-January 2021.

The survey participants were students ( $n = 192$ ) aged 18-36, 54.7% from urban areas, 45.3% from rural areas; female students had the highest weight (190), together with 2 (male) students, the sample being made up of first- (57,8%), second-(25%) and third-year (17,2%) students from the specialization Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, the field of Education sciences.

Delphi interviews were conducted with 6 psycho-pedagogical experts, who were selected from the faculty for their proven expertise in scientific research, as well as for their direct involvement in academic teaching, with over 10 years of teaching the subjects of self-knowledge and personal development, personality psychology and educational psychology. There were 3 rounds of panel discussion with experts using the Google Meet app. The objectives of the panel discussion with the experts were:

- the need to implement a virtual coaching and personal development program for students, based on the needs analysis and identification of the design stages of such a program;
- the advancement of a possible design for the virtual coaching and personal development program for students who are preparing for a teaching career;
- the analysis of effective coaching models and strategies, which can be capitalised in discovering the internal resources of students, in activating the factors that can motivate them in the direction of change, orientation towards performance and continuous development.

### **Materials and instruments**

To achieve the purpose of the research, the following research data collection tools were designed: a questionnaire with 28 questions for students (5 factual questions, 20 questions on the Likert scale and 3 open-ended questions) and 3 interview guides for applying the Delphi technique. All instruments were administered electronically. According to the rules of research ethics, the agreement of the research participants was obtained in advance.

## **4. Results and discussions**

Students were asked to what extent an online coaching and personal development program could meet their needs for optimizing individual



performance, acquiring new skills, and even correcting some inappropriate behaviours.

The responses they offered are summarized below (Table 1).

**Table 1. To what extent do you consider that an online coaching and personal development program is useful for you....**

Questions from the questionnaire	Percentage <i>*to a very large extent</i>	Questions from the questionnaire	Percentage <i>*to a very large extent</i>
to adjust to student life	31,8	to apply certain behavioural self-regulation strategies	43,8
to get to know yourself better	51,6	to strengthen / increase your self-esteem	48,4
to discover some inclinations, talents, skills	40,6	to identify your personal priorities	45,3
to find out what you really value in life	48,4	to identify your academic priorities	39,6
to better understand your own reactions	47,9	to change certain habits in your life	33,3
to better understand how your own thoughts affect your emotions and behaviour	52,6	to learn to deal with crisis situations	36,5
to develop your assertive communication skills	40,1	to prepare yourself psychologically for academic evaluations	38,5
to practise active listening	40,1	to learn how to get well	41,1
to train certain personal skills	45,3	to cope with changes on a personal level	41,1
to find solutions to personal problems	37,5	to learn to cooperate more effectively with colleagues	40,1

We notice that the students participating in the study consider this program useful, to a large extent, for self-knowledge and a better understanding of their own thoughts that affect emotions and behaviour, but also to correctly identify their own set of values. In addition, they mentioned they need this program to get used to student life (especially first-year students), but also to develop their communication and active listening skills.

To a large extent, respondents believe that such a program is useful for them to strengthen their self-confidence and increase self-esteem, to identify personal priorities and to learn certain behavioural self-regulation strategies. It is useful for them to learn to cooperate effectively with colleagues, but also to deal with crisis situations and to prepare them psychologically for academic evaluations.

In case of the open question from the questionnaire which aimed at naming 2 personal needs and 2 concerns/fears that students have during the pandemic crisis and which claim their need for coaching and personal development, they listed:

- the need to feel safe in terms of health;
- the need to increase self-confidence;
- the need for freedom;
- the need for peace;
- the need to communicate more and in any way with the people around;
- the need to better manage emotions in public, be it virtual;
- the need to acquire professional language;
- the need for professional stability;
- the need for support in achieving the objectives proposed;
- the need to be taught how to learn quickly and efficiently;
- the need to empathize with other peers in need;
- the need to lose weight in a healthy way and have a personalized sports program.

The worries / fears that the students expressed are related to the fear of disease, of the danger of coronavirus infection, the fear of not losing loved ones, the fear that they will not be able to express their opinions freely, the fear that they will not be able to manage effectively their learning time and the fear that they will have less and less free time due to the busy schedule, the theme of isolation, the fear of loneliness, fear of failure in exams and in the future profession, of financial instability.

To question Q23. *In your opinion, which type of work would you prefer in carrying out a future online coaching and personal development program?*, most students (46.9%) prefer that these activities be organized as group training, 29.7% mentioned that they want individual coaching, and 23.4%

as mentoring activities (individual/group) which demonstrates that students do not distinguish very well between coaching and mentoring.

The students' opinions on this question are in agreement with the opinions of the experts who mentioned, at one point, that group coaching workshops are flexible in terms of focusing on students' needs: developing personal skills, increasing motivation, overcoming procrastination, reducing stress, managing testing anxiety, effective time management, building a virtual community based on trust.

Following the interviews with the experts from round I, it was possible to identify the main stages of the implementation of a possible online coaching and personal development program for students:

- analysis of the training/personal development needs expressed by students;
- in-house training of trainers and setting up a coherent program delivery strategy;
- setting objectives and criteria for evaluating progress/performance;
- establishing the coaching strategies adopted, selecting the most appropriate coaching tools and techniques;
- the actual testing of the program (minimum 3 months) on the online platform of the university or on a specialized application;
- evaluating the success of the program and adjusting it for a new stage of implementation.

In round 2, the experts were asked about the coaching strategies that could be applied by the trainers in the distance learning program for students and the discussions led to the following tools and techniques: the reflective cycle G. Gibbs (1988), the GROW model (Whitmore, 1992, 2019) and the TGROW model (Downey, 2003), Wise Choice Process (Downing, 2013), NPL techniques for coaching (O.Connor, Lages., 2019). For coaches, experts recommended that the application of coaching strategies happen with a diversity of contexts and situations that involve students in the process of autonomous learning of resolute behaviours. The experts also discussed the benefits of coaching on students in terms of gain: positive changes on the mental, physical and emotional level, trust-based relations, development of new skills, optimal conflict management, increased involvement in activities, motivation and creativity, focusing on desirable goals and better results.

Following round 3, the experts expressed their consensus on the group/team coaching approach which involves a series of workshop-type sessions over periods of several weeks or months and on the coaching process as explained by many specialists (Whitmore, Zeus, Skiffington, et. all). Experts have proposed a possible design of the virtual coaching program and personal development for students (Table 2) that could be tested from this

academic year, taking into account the recommendations of other specialists (Stolovich, Keeps, Rosenberg, 2017) regarding the "careful and systematic design of online training, accompanied by cycles of testing and review by real beneficiaries, is an essential feature of the quality design of online education (p.304).

**Table 2.A possible design of the online coaching program and personal development for students**

Virtual coaching and personal development workshops	No. of hrs
Coaching lab for happy students:	20
coaching methods and techniques applied in education	
Self-coaching and peer-coaching	6
Journal of reflection and program evaluation	2
	28 hrs

Discussions were also held on the concrete way of implementing the program and the following variants were launched: coaching strategies can be applied / infused both in formal seminar activities such as self-knowledge and personal development, personality psychology, and in non-formal environment as specific activities of the student scientific circles/personal development workshops type. The advantage of the latter forms of organization is that the program can respect the distribution of time allocated by experts or the needs of each student. The experts also proposed the option of organizing *joint distance learning courses* (via videoconferencing) through inter-university collaborations that can constitute new research projects.

## 6. Conclusions

The conclusions of the study highlight the need and possibility of organizing and implementing an online coaching and personal development program that meets the current needs of students, bringing them, in this period of health crisis, emotional balance, confidence, satisfaction, motivation, self-awareness and personal development. A coaching program for students, conducted even at a distance, has the power to trigger positive changes in the mind and behaviour of students in a very short period of time, developing their responsibility and self-confidence, their individual potential and own resources to achieve the performance desired. Furthermore, other

advantages are worth mentioning, as shown by the study, in terms of time flexibility, location, arrangement and rearrangement of workshops, integration of electronic and audio-video tools in the coaching process, reminder-type specifications, follow-ups and aftercare, possibility of reflection, etc.

The results of the study created the premises for experimenting with the program for students and open new directions for coaching research in the initial training of students for the teaching profession.

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## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF SERVICE EMPLOYEES OF STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

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**Abstract.** *The article considers emotional intelligence as a subject of scientific knowledge in psychological science and its impact on the professional success of employees of the state employment service. The relevance of the study of psychological factors of emotional intelligence of employees of the employment service is associated with unpredictable socio-economic and political conditions of society in our country, which require considerable transformation by the public employment service. All transformations are directly related to the staff of this service because it is specialists who must master new approaches, innovations, as well as competencies to reach a new qualitatively higher professional level, to best meet the needs of customers of the service. Theoretical analysis of psychological factors of emotional intelligence of employees of the state employment service is given. The general strategy of empirical research is stated and the choice of methods for determination of the level of emotional intelligence of employees of the employment service and psychological factors influencing this level is substantiated. The sample of employees of the employment service is*

*substantiated. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results of the study, as well as a comparative analysis of the levels of manifestation of indicators of psychological factors in groups of specialists with different work in the employment service. The stages of social and psychological support for activating the development of emotional intelligence for effective professional activity and successful self-realization of the personality are revealed. The content of the training program provides a comprehensive impact on the cognitive (assessment), emotional (experience) and behavioural (communicative behaviour) areas of personality. The training program is based on the basic principles of socio-psychological training practice – establishing a connection (affiliation), empathy, acceptance of others, cognitive processing of experience. The most productive methods of activating the development of emotional intelligence were the basic methods of socio-psychological training (group discussion, role play) and means of art therapy (dance therapy, music therapy, etc.). The use of techniques and methods of art therapy during socio-psychological training has proven their effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence; Psychological Factors; Intensification of Development; Professional Activity; the Success of the Professional Activity; Social and Psychological Support; Employees of the State Employment Service.*

**Introduction.** In modern society, the problem of competence in understanding and expressing emotions is quite acute, as the cult of rational attitude to life is gaining more and more supporters, which, in principle, contradicts the psycho-physiological and social characteristics, human needs. The very combination of the concepts of «intelligence» and «emotions» has caused much controversy and debate in the scientific community.

Today, due to the unstable socio-economic and political situation, in particular in Ukraine, the destabilization of the psychological state of the population has significantly increased. Researchers point to the negative phenomena experienced by a significant number of the country's population: tension, irritability, fear and uncertainty about the future. Therefore, emotional intelligence in recent decades has become the subject of scientific knowledge in psychological science and has led to the growing interest of scientists in the study of this phenomenon. The professional responsibilities of employees of the public employment service often require a specialist to



make urgent decisions, self-discipline, the ability to maintain high performance in different conditions, emotional impact, constant psychological and intellectual stress.

All this can lead to depletion of psychological and physical resources of the specialist and, as a consequence, – to his emotional burnout. That is why the development of emotional intelligence in employees of the public employment service is of particular importance. Because to help a person who is desperate and depressed, the employee must have high self-efficacy, self-confidence, skillfully combine intelligence and emotions, belief in their strength to motivate the unemployed to make more efforts to find work and to succeed in professional activities.

The relevance of the study of psychological factors of emotional intelligence of employees of the public employment service is because the employment service specialist must cope with the tasks and quickly adapt to new requirements provided his appropriate level of professional competence as a specialist, his psychological and physical health, and also mental resistance to the development of negative states due to the stress of his work. The latter task is especially difficult for people who work in the «man-man» system. Therefore, a modern employee of the employment service must not only be professionally competent but also must have a high enough level of emotional intelligence, which should ensure his success in psychological and professional adaptation.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The introduction of the concept of emotional intelligence in the psychological thesaurus contributed to the intensive growth of research aimed at operationalizing the emotional-intellectual construct (I. Andrieieva, O. Vlasova, J. Mayer, E. Nosenko, P. Salovey), the study of adaptive functions and adaptive potential of emotional intelligence (I. Arshava, M. Breckett, N. Kovryha, T. Kumskova, V. Ovsianynkova, G. Yusupova).

The analysis of these sources shows that at this stage the theoretical and methodological foundations of intelligence, emotions and the relationship between them are quite deeply studied; emotional intelligence as a separate psychological phenomenon is investigated, its essence, the structure is revealed. However, research on the role of emotional intelligence and its activation of development as a way to optimize the successful professional activity of the individual remains insufficiently covered both in psychological theory and in practice.

The development of the problem of emotional intelligence is of interest for the complex and long-term process of professional development of the personality of the specialist. Numerous studies have been devoted to

the problem of formation of professional orientation, development of theoretical and methodological bases of professional training of future specialists (O. Holomshtok, E. Klimov, S. Pavliutenkov, M. Priazhnykov, H. Radchuk, B. Fedoryshyn, S. Chystiakova, P. Shavir, etc.). The ideas of personality development and the formation of a person's psychological readiness for future work were reflected in the works of K. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, O. Asmolov, L. Bozhovych, L. Vyhotskyi, O. Leontiev, V. Rybalka, S. Rubinstein, and others. However, the contribution of emotional intelligence to improving the psychological readiness for future professional activity of employees of the state employment service has not been studied enough. The relevance of the topic is due to the awareness of its practical significance in terms of finding new ways to train these professionals.

In today's world, scientists offer different models of emotional intelligence, and it is usually described as a complex multicomponent construct. Since the set of components and their hierarchy do not have a clear definition, it is difficult to delineate the boundaries of this mental phenomenon and at the same time identify those components that are affected. However, most agree that emotional intelligence develops in the process of interpersonal communication.

Emotional intelligence (hereinafter – EI) – a group of mental abilities that are involved in understanding and understanding their own emotions and the emotions of others. People with a high level of EI understand the emotions and feelings of others, can effectively manage their emotional sphere, and therefore in society their behaviour is more adaptive and they more easily achieve their goals in interaction with others [6; 8]. The term «emotional intelligence» began to be used in the early 1990s. Psychologists John Mayer and Peter Salovey began to use it to describe the degree of development of such human qualities as self-awareness, self-control, motivation, the ability to put yourself in the place of others, communication skills, the ability to establish mutual understanding. This term combines the ability of people to understand their thoughts, feelings and control their own emotions [9]. Emotional intelligence, according to researchers, is:

- the ability to understand the attitudes of the individual, represented in emotions and manage the emotional sphere based on intellectual analysis and synthesis; as the ability to effectively control emotions and use them to improve thinking, etc. (J. Mayer, P. Salovey) [9];
- integral property of the individual to recognize, understand, control, regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others and use these abilities to achieve vital goals (V. Zarytska) [3];
- the complex construct of mental abilities related to the operation

of emotional information and the formation of the emotional experience of the subject (Yu. Breus) [2];

– a set of mental abilities to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others, as well as to manage the emotional sphere (I. Andrieieva) [1].

M. Smulson proposes the definition of intelligence as a holistic (integral) mental education, which is responsible for generating, constructing and restructuring mental models of the world by setting and solving problems and points out that intelligence has interprocess and metacognitive nature and different modalities depending on specific tasks and features of the context in which they are carried out [7]. Of the three leading functions of intelligence – reflective, value-oriented and prognostic – the most important for the study of emotional intelligence is the second, which will serve as a strong argument in the appropriate context.

The biological prerequisites for the development of EI are innate features related to the functional asymmetry of the brain and the properties of temperament. The social preconditions of EI are formed primarily in the family environment. They are determined by the nature of relations between parents, their attention to the inner life of the child and the strategy of education, which involves the formation of adequate self-esteem and positive self-image, development of self-control and ability to weigh emotional information, lack of rigid attitude to the child's behaviour.

The influence of EI on human life proves the feasibility of studying the psychological factors that affect its development, which is presented in Fig. 1.

The psychological factors include such components EI as: behavioural, motivational, cognitive-target, professional.

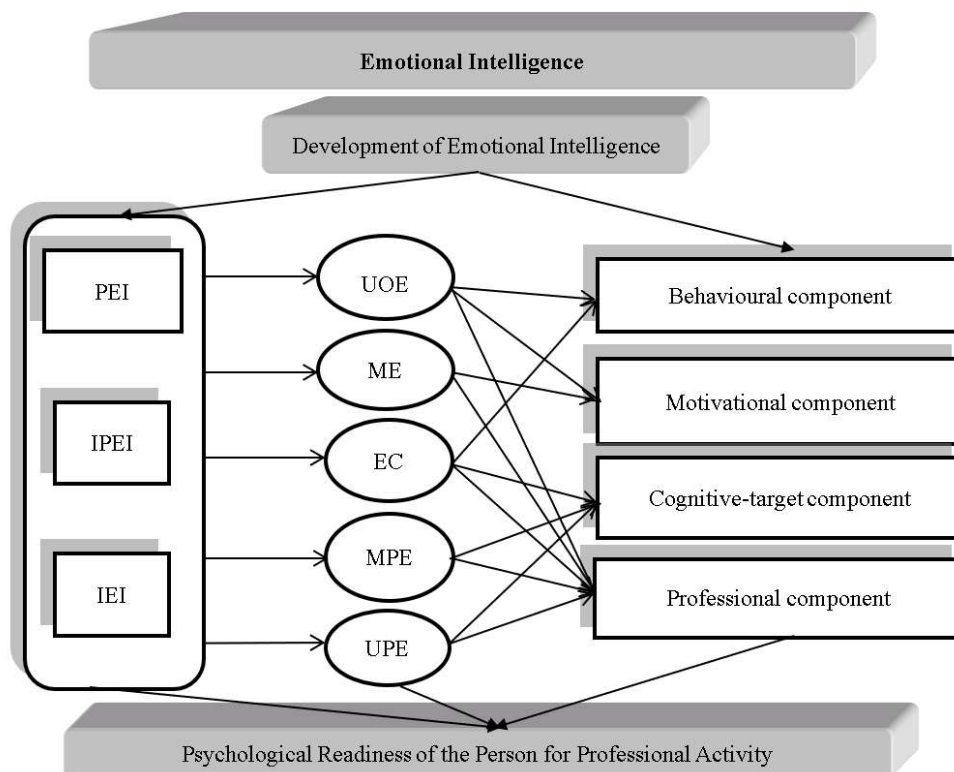
Psychological factors include elements such as temperament, character, motivation, perception, assimilation, beliefs, attitudes, information processing, confidence in their emotional competence, emotional knowledge and skills, the manifestation of EI depending on the environment.

*Temperament* in its characteristics largely determines such dimensions of adult personality as neuroticism, extraversion and consciousness, which are highly correlated with questionnaires on EI.

*Character* – a set of stable individual personality traits that cause a similar algorithm of behaviour in similar situations and form a systemic structure of character, which consists of the following subsystems: traits that express attitudes toward other people (friendliness, aggression, sociability, sensitivity, compassion, demanding, distrust 'I, tact, decency); traits that express the attitude to work (responsibility, initiative, inertia, diligence, punctuality, purposefulness); traits that express self-esteem (selfishness, self-

criticism, egocentrism, pride, modesty, self-sacrifice).

*Motivation* is a psychophysiological process that determines the direction, organization, activity of a person to meet their own needs, in particular: biogenic (satisfaction of which is necessary to support physiological life) (food, water, air, clothing, housing), psychogenic (satisfaction of which is necessary for psychological comfort (social status, social status), utilitarian (satisfaction of which is necessary to improve the quality of life), hedonic (the need to achieve which is necessary for pleasure, the satisfaction of the person).



**Fig. 1.** Model of influence of psychological factors of EI on the professional activity of the person

Note. PEI – potential emotional intelligence; IPEI – intrapersonal emotional intelligence; IEI – interpersonal emotional intelligence; UOE – understanding of their own emotions; ME – management of own emotions; EC – expression control MPE – managing other people’s emotions; UPE – understanding other people’s emotions.

*Perception* is a cognitive process, which consists of the reflection by the consumer of processes, phenomena, objects under the action of external

information on the senses.

*Beliefs* are generalizations, imaginary characteristics made by a person about the surrounding world and ways of interacting with it, generalized rules of life that determine what to do in certain situations. Beliefs guide behaviour and volitional actions.

*Attitude* is a stable positive or negative assessment of the objects of the material or spiritual world formed based on beliefs. These are the feelings that a person feels towards the object and guide its behaviour.

*Information processing.* It can be assumed that some cognitive factors contribute to the processing of emotionally coloured stimuli and, consequently, affect the level of EI. Apparently, as a tool for measuring them can be considered, in particular, the emotional test of Strup and Scherer's method for recognizing the emotional colour of voices.

*Confidence in their emotional competence.* This aspect of EI reflects a person's knowledge and ideas about their ability to understand emotions, manage them and use them in interpersonal interaction. The basis of confidence in their emotional competence is the processes of self-esteem and self-regulation. Thus, this construct is formed in the process of social learning. Therefore, it should depend more on learning at different stages of ontogenesis than on temperament.

*Emotional knowledge and skills.* High EI implies the availability of specific knowledge and skills that help to behave successfully in certain situations. Acquisition and implementation of skills in the field of emotions are facilitated by high confidence in their emotional competence.

*Manifestation of EI depending on the environment.* In a research environment that is usually calm, there are more opportunities to focus on the task, on the emotional manifestations, other conditions that can contribute to the suppression of EI. If this assumption is correct, then EI is a characteristic that describes the process and result of human activity in certain environmental conditions, taking into account their characteristics.

Thus, the psychological factors of EI of employees of the public employment service include temperament, character, motivation, perception, assimilation, beliefs, attitudes, information processing, confidence in their emotional competence, emotional knowledge and skills, the manifestation of EI depending on the environment.

**Methodology.** The sample consisted of 84 employees of the state employment service. The workers who took part in the study were people aged 26 to 52 with higher education, of whom 73 were women and 11 were men. Group 1 – surveyed employees of the employment centre who work in the service from 1 to 5 years (30 people). Group 2 – surveyed employees of the employment centre who work in the service for 5 to 15 years (40 people).

Group 3 – surveyed employees of the employment centre who have been working in the service for 15 years or more (14 people).

The study was conducted in three stages. At the first stage of the research, the theoretical sources on this problem are analyzed, the sample of employees of the state employment service is determined, the methods and general strategy of the research are chosen. At the second (ascertaining) stage of research the collection, processing, quantitative and qualitative analysis of empirical data was carried out. At the third (formative) stage, the «Program to promote the development of EI in employees of the state employment service» was developed and tested. To study the level of EI of employees of the public employment service and the psychological factors of emotional intelligence of these employees, the following methods were selected: the method of diagnosis of «emotional intelligence of N. Hall»; D. Lusin's «Emin» method; methods of diagnosing EI M. Manoilova; method «Integral job satisfaction» (N. Fetiskin, V. Kozlov, G. Manuilov); method «Test of communication skills» by L. Michelson.

**Presentation of the main material and substantiation of the obtained results.** According to the method of «Test of communicative skills» (L. Michelson) the level of communicative competence and quality of formation of basic communicative skills of all interviewed employees of the state employment service is determined. In general, analyzing the obtained empirical data, it was found that the predominant style of communication of employees of the state employment service is a competent style, namely of 84 people: 57 people (67.9%) – competent; 23 persons (27.4%) – dependent; 4 people (4.8%) – aggressive style.

In general, a competent style of communication involves a high level of orientation in the communication situation, adequate assessment of others, understanding of the subtext of communication and the emotional state of the interlocutor; aggressive indicates that people do not have sufficient analysis of their behaviour and the behaviour of another person, inadequate evaluation of others, poor self-control, lack of ability to find the appropriate form of communication to effectively influence the interlocutor; dependent communication style is characterized by the manifestation to some extent of both trends, ie understanding of people and situations is incomplete, the impact on others is not always effective in the situation, and such behaviour can be called insecure. Thus, it was found in a sample of subjects with work experience from 1 to 5 years (30 people): dependent communication style in 15 (50%) people; competent style in 13 (43.3%) people; aggressive style in 2 (6.7%) people; in a sample of subjects with work experience from 5 to 15 years (40 people): dependent communication style in 5 (12.5%) people;

competent style in 34 (85%) people; aggressive style in 1 (2.5%) person; in the sample of subjects with work experience of 15 years or more (14 people): dependent communication style in 3 (21.4%) people; competent style in 10 (71.4%) people; aggressive style in 1 (7.1%) person. Thus, in the sample of respondents with work experience from 5 to 15 years, the most people with a competent communication style 34 (85%), the least 5 (12.5%) people with a dependent style and only 1 (2.5%) person with an aggressive style of communication compared to other groups.

According to the method of «Integrated Job Satisfaction» (N. Fetiskin, V. Kozlov, G. Manuilov) the level of overall job satisfaction of all interviewed employees of the state employment service is determined, in particular, the predominant are average and high rates, namely of 84 people: 7 people (8, 3%) – low; 42 people (50%) – medium; 35 people (41.7%) – high rates. Sample of subjects with service experience from 1 to 5 years (30 people): low rates in 3 (10%) people; average figures for 20 (66.7%) people; high rates in 7 (23.3%) people. Sample of subjects with work experience in the service from 5 to 15 years (40 people): no low rates; average rates in 14 (35%) people; high rates in 26 (65%) people. Sample of subjects with work experience of 15 years or more (14 people): low rates in 4 (28.6%) people; average figures for 8 (57.1%) people; high rates in 2 (14.3%) people. Thus, in the sample of respondents with 5 to 15 years of service, the highest rates are 26 (65%), all others have an average of 14 (35%) and there are no people with low rates compared to other samples.

As a result of empirical research, qualitative and quantitative processing of the obtained data, including the use of mathematical statistics, namely the Mann-Whitney U-test, it was concluded that the results of the methods «Test of communication skills» (L. Michelson) and «Integral Job Satisfaction» (N. Fetiskin, V. Kozlov, G. Manuilov), employees of the employment service with work experience from 5 to 15 years, have a higher level of EI than employees working in this service from 1 to 5 years, and also from 15 years and more. Also, employees working from 5 to 15 years have a higher level of job satisfaction and a higher level of communication skills than those of other groups.

The general level of job satisfaction and communication skills of employees of the public employment service is at a fairly high level (most respondents have from medium to high rates). This level is influenced by the fact that the work of employees of the state employment service is work with people, some employees have psychological education.

Activation of the development of EI for effective professional activity and successful self-realization involves socio-psychological support, which includes the following stages:

*The first stage* is the formation of a person's readiness to know the world, its laws, self-knowledge, which consists in the realization of the influence of the emotional sphere on life, and the emotional experiences themselves – as values; the importance of inner harmony, psychological well-being, healthy relationships with other people for a full life; life values, priorities, ie primary and secondary; responsibility for one's own emotional experiences; own basic life position, life beliefs, internal guidelines – as resources for the development of EI; the existential value of life «here and now».

*The second stage* – the provision of personality and their assimilation of information about the inner world of man and the place of emotions and feelings in it; emotions, their types, functions, causes, features of the course, levels of manifestation; ways of managing emotions, verbal and nonverbal level of expression of emotions, emotional qualities of personality.

*The third stage* is the implementation of exercises aimed at understanding values, changing restrictive stereotypes, acquiring skills of conscious emotion management, using them in a training environment and further in everyday life.

The tasks of social and psychological support are:

1) enrichment of training participant's experience of self-knowledge related to psycho-emotional states; mastering the skills of identification of psycho-emotional states that promote and hinder activities;

2) formation by participants of training of internal ways of transformation of the psychoemotional state;

3) the formation of abilities for emotional self-regulation through the development of emotional and intellectual abilities;

4) optimization of psycho-emotional states through the development of methods of self-organization of activities, including activity planning and goal setting;

5) the development of methods of self-regulation of psycho-emotional states (learning anxiety, fears, frustration, aggressive tendencies, anxiety, helplessness and insecurity, mental stress, etc.);

6) development of communication skills and abilities as a means of regulating psycho-emotional states;

7) the development of self-confidence as the basis of constructive psycho-emotional states;

8) correction of behaviour (coping strategies and coping resources) when experiencing negative psycho-emotional states in the activity (development of constructive strategies for coping with stress).

Methodological support for the development of EI of civil servants includes the development of a program to promote the development of EI of



civil servants, including a mini-course «Phenomenology of emotional intelligence: socio-psychological aspects», socio-psychological training «Development of emotional intelligence through awareness and self-regulation»; experimental approbation of a mini-course and training; measuring the effectiveness of the EI development program.

The methodology of training sessions is based on the principle of gradual development of the group and continuity in self-knowledge and self-improvement of the individual. Each lesson is a logical continuation of the previous one, and in terms of content – the basis of the next.

The content of the training program provides a comprehensive impact on the cognitive (assessment), emotional (experience) and behavioural (communicative behaviour) areas of personality.

The training program is based on the basic principles of socio-psychological training practice – establishing a connection (affiliation), empathy, acceptance of others, cognitive processing of experience. The basic principle is the inclusion of the subject in the process of training interaction, which involves three main areas: cognitive, emotional, behavioural – a change in one of which leads to a change in all others.

The program of training sessions on activating the development of EI involves the use of five groups of training tools. The first group includes training procedures aimed at forming empathy, trust of participants in each other, the ability to recognize and understand the emotional state of people. Their purpose: to relieve emotional tension and improve the mood of group members; develop empathy, form an emotionally positive attitude between group members. The second group includes training procedures aimed at developing communicative tolerance. Their purpose: to improve the behaviour of other people. The third group includes training procedures aimed at the formation of assertive behaviour. Their purpose: to increase the level of communicative competence of participants, to develop the ability to understand and accept different positions, lifestyles, self-confidence styles, to expand the range of ways of confident behaviour. The fourth group included procedures aimed at forming a positive adequate self-esteem and a high level of claims. The fifth group includes procedures aimed at developing self-regulation skills. Their purpose: mastering the techniques of relaxation and regulation of their emotional state. It is important to create an emotionally comfortable, psychologically safe space in the classroom so that participants can feel the impact of positive emotions and the desire to support and cultivate them.

The training used such methods and techniques as mini-lectures, group discussion, brainstorming, practical exercises, drawing, role-playing games, case method, project defence (used to consolidate the information

obtained during the training) [5]. The results of the implementation of the program to promote the development of EI were analyzed according to objective and subjective evaluation criteria. The training was implemented in a logical sequence. The result expected after the training: participants should change their attitude to themselves, have new life goals and confidence that they can be achieved, there will be a rethinking of life values, their professional activities and will be treated as an opportunity development and self-realization of the individual. After the training, an analysis and comparison of changes that occurred in satisfaction with professional activities in the experimental group that participated in the training, with the indicators of the control group participants who did not participate in the training (Table 1).

According to the results of primary data processing of the study of EI indicators conducted before and after the implementation of the experimental program (calculation of mean values, standard deviation of asymmetry and excess coefficients), it was found that empirical data obtained by Emin questionnaire correspond to normal data distribution. This makes it possible to use the methods of parametric statistics as a means of studying experimental indicators. According to the results of calculating the Student's t-test for dependent samples, significant differences in the indicators of EI of the experimental group compared with the control group (Table 2).

*Table 1*

**Comparative analysis of satisfaction with professional activity by employees of the employment service before and after the formative experiment**

The name of the scale	Experimental group		Control group	
	Before the experiment	After the experiment	Before the experiment	After the experiment
Interest in work	2,1	2,9*	2,1	2,2
Satisfaction with achievements in work	1,9	2,8*	2,0	2,0
Satisfaction with working conditions	2,0	2,7*	2,0	2,0
Satisfaction with relationships with employees	2,1	2,9*	2,2	2,3
Satisfaction with the relationship with management	1,9	2,6*	2,0	1,9
Professional responsibility	2,1	2,7*	1,9	2,0
The level of claims in professional activities	2,1	2,5*	2,0	2,0
The advantage of the work performed over high earnings	1,9	2,4*	1,7	1,6
Overall job satisfaction	2,0	2,7*	2,1	2,2

Components of EI	Experimental group				Control group			
	Before the experiment (M±σ)	After the experiment (M±σ)	t <sub>crit</sub>	p	Before the experiment (M±σ)	After the experiment (M±σ)	t <sub>crit</sub>	p
IPEI	39,88 ±8,61	42,15 ±7,69	- 3,019	<b>0,005</b>	38,94 ±6,06	38,97 ±6,19	- 0,050	0,960
EC	11,15 ±2,92	11,48 ±2,95	- 1,000	0,325	10,32 ±2,47	10,06 ±2,64	0,931	0,358
UOE	15,94 ±4,19	17,24 ±3,52	- 2,089	<b>0,005</b>	16,29 ±3,23	16,56 ±3,33	- 0,646	0,523
ME	12,79 ±3,85	13,42 ±3,47	- 2,443	<b>0,020</b>	12,32 ±2,73	12,35 ±2,77	- 0,239	0,812
IEI	39,09 ±8,07	41,30 ±6,93	- 3,078	<b>0,004</b>	40,32 ±6,39	40,26 ±5,92	0,186	0,853
UPE	21,12 ±4,91	22,03 ±4,79	- 2,734	<b>0,010</b>	21,38 ±3,67	21,12 ±3,47	1,507	0,141
MPE	17,97 ±4,38	19,27 ±3,28	- 2,363	<b>0,024</b>	18,94 ±3,49	19,15 ±3,35	- 0,698	0,490
UE	37,06 ±7,94	39,27 ±7,32	- 3,061	<b>0,004</b>	37,68 ±5,09	37,68 ±5,64	0,000	1,000
EM	41,91 ±8,35	44,18 ±7,18	- 2,989	<b>0,005</b>	41,59 ±7,06	41,56 ±6,89	0,062	0,951

*Table 2. Emotional intelligence indicators according to the results of the study of the experimental and control groups (Student's t-test for dependent samples)*

Note. Significant discrepancies at the level of  $p < 0.05$  and above are indicated in bold. IPEI – intrapersonal emotional intelligence; EC – expression control; UOE – understanding of their own emotions; ME – management of own emotions; EI – emotional intelligence; IEI – interpersonal emotional intelligence; UPE – understanding other people's emotions; MPE – managing other people's emotions; UE – understanding of emotions; EM – emotion management.

According to the data, the indicators of the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, the emotions of others – significantly increased among the representatives of the experimental group after the implementation of the program for the development of EI.

Comparing the results of the experimental and control groups, gave grounds to state the effectiveness of experimental influences using the development of EI in training groups on the indicators of EI of employees of the public employment service. According to the indicators of

communicative behaviour, which is included in the formula for calculating the coefficient of satisfaction with the relationship, there are also some differences between the data of the study of the experimental and control groups.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the art therapeutic effect were also confirmed by the results of evaluating the informativeness and pragmatism of the content of training sessions by participants of the experiment.

According to the subjective criterion based on the results of the survey (in the form of a written self-report), the vast majority of responses (87.4%) indicate positive changes in the field of integration into intragroup relations and relationships. No negative or unproductive changes associated with participation in the experiment were recorded. Meaningless answers, which indicate a passive perception of experimental influences, were recorded in 7.1% of experimental participants.

According to the criterion of informativeness, the content of answers to the following questions was analyzed: «What impact did the special course and training on the development of EI have on you?», «What changes do you plan to make in the process of communicating with colleagues?». Content analysis of answers to the question «What impact did the special course and training on the development of EI have on you?» showed that 87.4% of participants in the experiment increased interest in the emotional experiences of other members of the group, 78.2% decreased indifference to the emotional states of others, 82.8% of participants increased understanding of their emotional states.

Thus, based on the obtained data, we claim that the proposed program for the development of EI promotes socio-psychological reflection of emotional experiences and awareness of communicative choices at the level of constructive intrapersonal transformations in the behavioural sphere.

### **Conclusion**

Summarizing and analyzing existing approaches to understanding the concept of EI, we formulate it as an integrative ability of the individual, which is the ability to feel, distinguish, name emotions and manage them through awareness and self-regulation.

The psychological factors of EI of employees of the state employment service include temperament, character, motivation, perception, assimilation, beliefs, attitudes, information processing, confidence in their emotional competence, emotional knowledge and skills, the manifestation of EI depending on the environment.

Emotional intelligence is not a permanent sign and therefore it can be

developed throughout life. However, it is important to remember that everything you learn needs constant use because only by putting your knowledge into practice do you gain new skills, experience and growth, otherwise new achievements will leave you very quickly. Therefore, for the development of EI, it is necessary to constantly work on yourself. activation of the development of EI depends on the expansion of ideas about it, the role in their own lives; developing skills to manage their own emotions; understanding other people's emotions, which will contribute to the process of successful and effective professional activity.

Methodological support for the development of EI of employees of the state employment service included the development of a program to promote the development of EI of employees of the state employment service.

The structure of the program, which consists of two parts: a mini-course aimed at developing the cognitive and motivational sphere of the participants of the experiment, and socio-psychological training, which provides a comprehensive impact on cognitive (assessment), emotional (experience) and behavioural (communicative) behaviour) sphere of personality. The internal concept of training is expressed in the dyad – «awareness of experiences – awareness of choice», which reflects the student's perception as a subject of emotions, and focused on the harmonization of internal (assessment, experience) and external (status positions).

According to the survey, the vast majority of participants observed positive changes in the field of integration into intra-group relations and relationships – increasing interest in the emotional experiences of other group members, reducing indifference to the emotional states of others, increasing the ability to understand and effectively manage their emotional states.

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## THE REASONS I WANT TO BE A TEACHER

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to investigate the reasons why students choose to attend the psycho-pedagogical module, from the perspective of their age and the relationship between students' desire to be employed in education and their degree of satisfaction generated from attending to the activities in the psycho-pedagogical module. The research group included: 221 students (university years 1st, 2nd and 3rd - undergraduate level), students who have completed or are completing the psycho-pedagogical module. Most students - 32.6%, 72 participants choose the psycho-pedagogical module out of the desire to become a teacher / trainer. At a rather large difference are those who choose the module to obtain a second specialization / diploma - 13.6% - 30 of the students respectively, those who want to work in education / fields related to education 11.8% - 26 participants.*

**Key words:** *future teachers; psycho-pedagogical module; degree of satisfaction; reasons for choosing the teaching profession*

### 1. Introduction

Teacher's training systems have a great impact on the education of future generations, who will be the adults of tomorrow's society. In the recent years, teacher's training issues have led many governments to reconsider their systems and therefore to rebuild them to promote equality, acceptance, tolerance, social harmony, personal development according to the national context. . In this sense, one of the objectives set by the European Union in their European 2020 Strategy is to focus on smart growth through more efficient investments in education, research and innovation. In addition, European education policies state specific objectives aimed at: improving the quality and efficiency of education and training systems in the EU, improving the quality of education and teacher's training, developing new

skills concerning social skills and knowledge, ensuring access to ICT for teachers (Stăiculescu, 2013). This is how the implementation of a learning strategy focused on personality, on individuality will be possible, if the training is conceived as a communicative and cognitive learning activity between teachers and students, and learning is aimed for the development of both parties (Jumagalieva, Kussainova, Aitjanova, 2014).

## **2. Background**

Teacher's training is the key component for a high-quality education (Buchberger et al., 2000) and the way in which teachers, at the beginning of their career, apply the skills they have trained, is a relevant aspect for evaluating the effectiveness of learning when training teachers (Ciraso, 2012). In the context of the harsh reality of the pandemic crisis from the beginning of the 21st century, the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) has led to changes in the teaching-learning process, especially in implementing ways and methods to improve the quality of education. It started from identifying teachers' attitudes and teaching needs with the help of information and communication technologies (ICT) in order to improve their training by changing the curriculum and by adapting the teaching-learning process to informational and communication technologies (Pegalajar Palomino, 2017). A research carried out in Flanders (Belgium) investigated the training of future teachers for pre-school education in the field of ICT, while in their training phase. Gender and age did not affect the ICT competence of future teachers in educational practice and the results showed a positive impact of future teachers' attitudes towards ICT, as well as the ease of their usage and implementation in education (Tondeur, 2018). If we refer to the formation of teacher's identity, an important role is played by the interactions between personal histories and the ideal teacher identity for the future (O'Brien & Schillaci, 2002; Furlong, 2013; Sales de Melo, 2015).

We wanted to see what are the reasons that determine students to choose teaching training courses. Two types of dispositions of future teachers were sustaining the choice of a teaching profession: instructive intention and instructive attention, dispositions oriented towards instructive intention being related to the curricular content, while dispositions oriented towards instructive attention addressed to the personal and contextual factors of teaching. (Tiilikainen, et. All., 2019). When asked, future teachers considered intrinsic, altruistic traits and those of establishing interpersonal relationships as being strong job-specific motivators (Brown, 2006; Chong & Low, 2009; Tustiawati, 2017). Moreover, teachers prefer altruistic and interpersonal work values, while non-teachers are more attracted to individualistic work values, such as: career opportunities and executive



power (Cooman, et al., 2007). When we talk about intrinsic and altruistic motivators, we refer to the desire to work with / to teach children (Jarvis & Woodrow, 2005; Kyriacou, Hultgren, Stephens, 2006), to the pleasure generated by children's success (Kyriacou, 2007), to the development of skills and the knowledge that will be useful in their future teaching career (Struyven, Jacobs, Dochy, 2013), the joy they put into learning (Kyriacou, Hultgren, Stephens, 2006). Learning opportunities related to pedagogical content and teaching practice influence the enrichment of professional knowledge. While measures for pedagogical content related to teaching areas (adaptability in teaching, structuring of learning lessons) have effects on the enrichment of knowledge both at the individual level and at the level of the curriculum, didactic practice measures related to learning opportunities affect only the individual, or the future teacher (König, et al., 2017). There are also extrinsic factors that are mentioned, factors such as: good working conditions, long vacations and the ability to balance work and family responsibilities (Struyven, Jacobs, Dochy, 2013). Other extrinsic factors are mentioned by future Cypriot teachers who are pragmatic, wanting this profession for the salary and vacations associated with it. (Zembylas&Papanastasiou, 2004).

If we look at the teaching profession from a gender perspective, there were significant differences in motivation related to student characteristics, such as gender, age, educational background and self-reported academic achievement, suggesting that teacher's recruitment could benefit from population-specific approaches. that aim to increase the attractiveness of teacher learning and training (Struyven, Jacobs, Dochy, 2013). Research has shown that boys are generally less likely than girls to expect to work as teachers, as they tend to choose this profession in countries with a higher representation of male teachers and in countries that have higher salaries for teachers. (Han, Borgonovi&Guerriero, 2020). The age perspective is investigated in a comparative study on ICT skills and attitudes of student teachers. The study reveals that younger students lagged behind older male colleagues in terms of the ICT attitudes that have been studied (Murphy, 2000).

Mentoring has become an increasingly important aspect of the process by which future teachers begin to learn how to become teachers. In Spain, the strength of the feedback provided by mentors relies on the support, in the guidance provided, while the main weakness highlighted was the need for more detailed and continuous feedback provided by mentors (Agudo 2016). In England, prospective teachers consider mentoring to be the key aspect in their training, but they reproach mentors the fact that they are not always successful in creating the conditions for effective learning (Hobson, 2010).

Prospective teachers suggest that the research-based approach could be the main theme around which teacher education should be organized (Jyrhämä et al., 2008) as well as travel or teaching abroad - which are seen as teaching methods, leading to new perspectives on the human, cultural differences and the professional identity of future teachers (Walters, Garii & Walters, 2009). But the higher education lacks the development of coherent education policies and decision-makers at all levels, responsible for implementing educational policies, if they had adequate resources they could take steps to develop a hospitable environment both structurally and culturally (Trowler & Bamber, 2007). Difficulties in integration were encountered by young teachers due to: the criteria for selecting suitable candidates for teacher training programs in preschool and primary education; coherence and management of teaching practice; the impact of certain projects on the set of qualifications of the beginner teacher (Pălășan, 2015). But there are also withdrawals from teacher training courses, citing "personal" and "family" reasons, which combined with various issues related to the training institution and placement institutions for practice or internship provide a clearer picture of the phenomenon (Basit et al., 2006). In Romania, studies related to the requirements of employers on the labor market have identified problems almost similar to those in other countries. The Romanian labor market is not structured and there is no national program to ensure such development, but nevertheless, universities must provide labor for the next three, four or five years. Research conducted for this purpose shows that work experience is considered by employers, a main criteria, stronger than the graduation degree or the reputation of the university where they have graduated (Roman, Maxim, & Manolică, 2013).

If we refer to the expectations of future teachers towards the job, we can start from what they want: control over their own work, including work autonomy and non-routine work, these are positively associated with job satisfaction. Control over money is positively associated with job satisfaction for the well-educated, but it is negatively associated with the poorly educated. Control over others does not increase the satisfaction expected of any group (Ross & Reskin, 1992). Answering to the question: What do future teachers want? one could say: leadership through transparent information of students, the opportunity to develop skills needed in teacher's education, improving research skills, improving pedagogical practice (Kosnik et al., 2011), improving teaching skills, redesigning certain courses (Brinkley-Etzkorn, 2018). In order to meet the needs of students, teacher training should improve the means used in ICT, achieve effective management of online learning, create / improve digital educational products, develop programs that stimulate: critical thinking, health education, education for diversity or

sustainable development. To summarize: faculties that are training future teachers, need to redesign their curriculum to focus directly on developing the skills base needed for future teachers in order to teach effectively (Fullan, 1993).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research objectives and hypothesis

This research objectives are:

- (1) analysis of the reasons why students choose to attend to the psycho-pedagogical module, from the perspective of their age.
- (2) analyzing the relationship between the students' desire to be employed in education and their degree of satisfaction with the activities provided into the psycho-pedagogical module.

#### Research hypothesis

- (1) the first hypotheses: presupunemcă, odată cu înaintareaînvrstămotivelepentru care studențiiiparcurgmodulpsiho-pedagogic se concentreazăpedorințaacestora de deveniprofesorii, de a profesia, înviitorîndomeniulînvățământului
- (2) The second hypotheses: presupunemcăexistăcorelații semnificativeîntredorințastudenților de angajareînînvățământșigradul de mulțumirefață de activitățile din modululpsiho-pedagogic

#### 3.2. Research method

The survey was focused on the questionnaire method, as this is the main method used in the research. The questionnaire was built on three main dimensions: choosing the faculty specialization, choosing the psycho-pedagogical module and socio-demographic data. The first dimension followed: the reasons for choosing the faculty, the people involved in the choice, the satisfaction with the training, the degree of readiness for employment, the expectations of the employers, the choice-wishes correspondence and the competencies formed by the faculty. The second dimension focused on the psycho-pedagogical module, is investigating: the reasons for choosing to attend the teaching module, the desire to be employed in education, the satisfaction with the activities provided within the module and the competencies formed by the psycho-pedagogical module. The third dimension concerns socio-demographic data: gender, age, faculty, specialization, year of study. Most of the items were closed response questions, including also items with scale type answers (from 1-10) and also have been included items of open answers. The questionnaire was constructed and validated especially for this research, the calculated Alpha Chronbach coefficient had a high value level: 0.864. The data were collected

since June until July 2019. The questionnaire was the self-applied type. Participants have been assured of the data confidentiality. On average, the completion of the questionnaire took 15-20 minutes for each participant. Initially, 258 questionnaires have been generated, out of which the incomplete ones were completely eliminated. Consent was obtained before the application of the tools, the subjects were being informed of the purpose of the research, also about the research methods and tools, the related risks and the rights they had as participants in the present research.

### **3.3. Research group**

The research group included 221 students (from years 1, 2, 3 of the faculty - bachelor level), students who have completed or are completing the psycho-pedagogical module (N - 221). Out of them, 82.8% (183 subjects) were girls, the remaining 17.2% (38 subjects) were boys. If we look at the distribution by age, we notice that most of the respondents belong to the age range 21-25 years (84.2% - 186 subjects), following in a small percentage, those aged between 31-40 years (7.7% - 17 subjects), then those aged between 26-30 years (6.8% - 15 subjects) and finally, there are those over 41 years old (1.4% - 3 subjects). Another criteria for characterizing the research subjects was: the faculty they attend to. Thus, most students (33.0% - 73 subjects) were from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences and from the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (25.8% - 57 subjects). Followed by those from the Faculty of Letters (16.7% - 37 subjects), from the Faculty of Physical Education and Mountain Sports (10.4% - 23 subjects), those from Music and Law (5.4% - 12 subjects), Sociology and Communication (1.8% - 4 subjects) and the fewest were from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (1.4% - 3 subjects). Among the investigated students, most of them were attending in the final year (year 3) - 94.1% - 208 students. Only 11 students (5.0%) were attending year 2 and there were only 2 students (0.9%) attending the 1st year at the University.

## **4. Results**

We started with the analysis of the first hypothesis: we assume that, along with aging, the reasons why students attend the psycho-pedagogical module centers on their desire to become teachers, to practice in the future, in the field of education. We start from the data concerning the reasons why the psycho-pedagogical module is followed by all students, regardless of their year of study. Thus, most - 32.6%, 72 subjects choose the psycho-pedagogical module out of the desire to become a teacher / trainer. On a rather significantly different spectrum are those who choose the module to obtain a second specialization / diploma - 13.6% - 30 of the subjects respectively, those who want to work in education / education-related fields

11.8% - 26 of the subjects (intrinsic reasons, confirmed also by other research: Cooman, et al. (2007), Jarvis & Woodrow (2005), Kyriacou, Hultgren, Stephens (2006) Following the application of the one-way ANOVA test, correlating the values of the reasons for choosing the psycho-pedagogical module and the age, the results generated F with 3 and 217 degrees of freedom, with the value 16,276 and a significant correlation on the level of .000 -  $F(3,217) = 16,276$ , we have the correlation  $p < .000$ . - pedagogical (see Table 1).

*Table 1. One-way ANOVA test results correlating between the age of the subjects and the reasons for opting for the psycho-pedagogical module*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	49249.059	3	16416.353	16.276	.000
Within Groups	218865.366	217	1008.596		
Total	268114.425	220			

If we go on a more in depth analysis analyze of the reasons why students follow the psycho-pedagogical module depending on their age of the subjects, one can note that for students aged between 21-25 years attend the psycho-pedagogical module with the aim become teachers (34.94%), do it to obtain a second specialization / diploma (13.97%), do it to work in education / fields related (12.90%) but also they attend for the opportunity to learn something new (6.98%), or out of curiosity (5.91%), or to help them improve / develop personally (4.83%), or because they like children / at the suggestion of other people from: family, colleagues, friends (3.22%) and a few other reasons with percentages below 2%. If for students aged 21-25, the reasons extend to a wider range, students aged 26-30 restrict their reasons to: to become a teacher / to obtain a second specialization or diploma / because they like children (each with 26.66%), to help them improve their skills (13.33%) and to work in education / related fields (6.66%). The reasons for students aged 31-40 are even more precise and limited: to become a teacher (58.82%), to acquire a second specialization / diploma (35.29%) and to help them improve (5.88%). Very precise when it comes to reasons are the oldest of the students, those over 40 years old, who attend the psycho-pedagogical module: to become a teacher / to obtain a second specialization or diploma / to work in education / fields related (each with 33.33%).

We wanted to investigate how the reasons of covering the participation into the psycho-pedagogical module look like from the gender perspective. The

analysis of the Independent Samples Test shows that there are no differences in the reasoning for attending the psycho-pedagogical module stated by girls and boys (the significance threshold is higher than 0.05). The analysis of the percentages registered by the reasoning for attending the psycho-pedagogical module shows that both girls and boys choose, first of all, to go through the psycho-pedagogical module in order to become teachers (36.18% - of girls and 51.51% of boys). Then the girls choose to attend the psycho-pedagogical module to acquire a second specialization / diploma (17.76%), respectively to work in education / related fields (11.84%). The same reasons, but reversed as a percentage, are registered by boys: to work in education / related fields (24.24%) and to obtain a second specialization / diploma (9.09%).

We have also stopped to analyze the reasons for participating the psycho-pedagogical module from the perspective of the faculty type. Here, too, there is a focus of motivations relying on: becoming a teacher, working in education / related fields and acquiring a second specialization / diploma, were most of the options. The students who have chosen the reason: to become a teacher are those from: Economic Sciences and Business Economics, Letters, Psychology and Education Sciences, Music, Physical Education and Mountain Sports. Acquiring a second specialization / diploma is another reason chosen by other students from the faculties: Economics and Business Economics, Psychology and Education Sciences and Law and Sociology. Working in education / related fields is another reason why the psycho-pedagogical module is followed by the students of the faculties: Physical Education and Mountain Sports, Letters, Economic Sciences and Business Economics.

The analysis of the second research hypothesis: we assume that there are significant correlations between the desire of students to engage in education and the degree of satisfaction with the activities included in the psycho-pedagogical module. We began with the investigation of the correlation between the two variables. A Spearman-type correlation was calculated between the students' desire to be employed in education and the degree of satisfaction with the activities provided by the psycho-pedagogical module. It has been obtained a positive but weak value, .302 \*\* for a significance threshold  $p < 0.01$ . So, if the degree of student satisfaction towards the activities carried out through the psycho-pedagogical module increases, their desire to be employed in education could also increase.

*Table 2. The results of the Spearman-type correlation between the students' desire for employment in education and the degree of satisfaction towards the activities included in the psycho-pedagogical module*

			Desire for employ- ment in education	The degree of satisfac- tion
Spearman's rho	Desire for employment in education	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.302**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	221	221
	The degree of satisfaction concerning the activities included into the psycho- pedagogical module	Correlation Coefficient	.302**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	221	221

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Looking separately, at the two variables were found the following correlations :

- the degree of satisfaction with the activities included into the psycho-pedagogical module -states a calculated average value of 7.52, where the minimum is 1, the maximum is 10 and the standard deviation is 2.91. Most students - 74.2% (164 subjects) are satisfied with the activities carried out through the psycho-pedagogical module, offering grades between 8-10. Fewer students give the maximum grade, only 21 students (16.7%). We can say that it is gratifying that only 3 students (1.4%) give a grade of 6, which is the lowest grade granted to the activities in the psycho-pedagogical module. If we look at the degree of satisfaction of students from the perspective of the age of the respondents, we can say: the older the students, the higher the grades they give to the activities in the psycho-pedagogical module. Only grades 9 and 10 have been given by students aged 31-40 years old, respectively over 41 years old, as follows: grade 9 were offered by 76.47% of students aged 31-40 years, respectively 66.66% of students aged over 41 years ; grade 10 was offered by 23.52% of students aged 31-40 years and 33.33% of students aged over 41 years. Concerning students that are aged at 26-30 years, they have provided grades of 8, there have been 60%, grades of 9, offered

by 13.33% subjects and grade 10, were offered by 26.66% subjects. We can say that the most demanding were the students aged 21-25. On this age spectrum, the range of marks was stated between 6 and 10, as follows: 1.61% of the subjects gave a grade of 6, 15.59% of the subjects gave a grade of 7, 32.25% of the subjects gave a grade of 8, 32.79% of the subjects gave grade 9 and 17.74% giving the maximum grade, 10. Calculation of Test Chi Square shows significant differences by the age of the subjects and the degree of satisfaction concerning the activities of the psycho-pedagogical module at  $\chi^2(18) = 59.78$ ,  $p = 0.04$  with a moderate effect for  $\phi = 0.520$  Phi coefficient.

- students' desire to be hired in education - it is big, 75.5% (167 subjects) of the students declaring that they would like to be hired in education at the end of the psycho-pedagogical module. Analyzing by age, the desire for employment is observed, as well as the degree of satisfaction which has been more clearly outlined by older students who stated their desire to be employed in education. All students who are aged between 31-40 and those over the age of 41 say they want to get involved in education. Students aged 26-30, we have registered a percentage of 12.5% as they say they do not want to engage in education and the percentage increases to 27.95% for students aged 21-25. As they progress in attending the psycho-pedagogical module, in general, the number of students decreases, remaining those interested in the activity of teaching. If we look at the desire to be employed in education from the perspective of the gender of the subjects, female subjects - 77.05% manifest this desire in a higher percentage than the male ones - 68.43%.

## 5. Conclusions

One can conclude that most participants- 32.6%, 72 have chosen to attend the psycho-pedagogical module out of the desire to become a teacher / trainer. At a rather significant difference are stated those who choose the module to obtain a second specialization / diploma - 13.6% - 30 subjects respectively, those who want to work in education / fields related to education 11.8% - 26 subjects. Following the application of the one-way ANOVA test, correlating between the reasoning for choosing the psycho-pedagogical module and the age of the subjects, an F variable was obtained with 3 and 217 degrees of freedom, on the value point of 16,276 and significantly at the level of .000 -  $F(3,217) = 16,276$ ,  $p < .000$ . It can be stated that there is a significant connection between the age of the subjects and the reasons for choosing the psycho-pedagogical module. Very specific when it comes to reasons are older students, over 40 years, who attend the psycho-pedagogical module: to become teachers / to obtain a second



specialization or diploma / to work in education / related fields (each of them by 33.33%). The analysis of the Independent Samples Test shows that there are no differences in the reasoning for choosing to participate into the psycho-pedagogical module by gender perspective, girls and boys (the significance threshold is higher than 0.05). It is shown that both girls and boys choose, first of all, to attend the psycho-pedagogical module to become teachers (36.18% - of girls and 51.51% of boys). Then the girls choose participate into the psycho-pedagogical module to acquire a second specialization / diploma (17.76%), respectively to work in education / related fields (11.84%). The same reasons, but reversed as a percentage, are registered by boys: to work in education / related fields (24.24%) and to obtain a second specialization / diploma (9.09%). A Spearman-type correlation was calculated between the students' desire to be employed in education and the degree of satisfaction concerning the activities included into the psycho-pedagogical module. This has a positive but weak value, .302 \*\* for a significance threshold  $p < 0.01$ . So, if the degree of students' satisfaction regarding the activities carried out through the psycho-pedagogical module increases, their desire to be employed in education could also increase. Calculation of Chi Square Test brings significant differences by correlating the age of the subjects and the degree of satisfaction related to the activities of the psycho-pedagogical module at  $\chi^2(18) = 59.78$ ,  $p = 0.04$  and this has a moderate effect for  $\phi = 0.520$  Phi coefficient. If we look at the degree of student satisfaction from the perspective of respondents age, we can comment that: the older the students, the higher the grades they give to the activities included in the psycho-pedagogical module. Analyzing the variables of: age, the desire for employment, as well as the degree of satisfaction, it was observed that older students have more clearly outlined the desire to be employed in education. All students between the ages of 31-40 and those over the age of 41 say that they want to get involved in education. For students aged between 26-30, we register a percentage of 12.5% of respondents, who say they do not want to engage in education and the percentage increases to 27.95% for students aged 21-25. As they advance in attending the psycho-pedagogical module, in general, the number of students decreases, remaining only those interested in the activity of teaching. This research asks a question that opens new leads for future studies, "How do we motivate students who attend the psycho-pedagogical module to complete their studies?"

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## BEING A PARENT OR O PROFESSIONAL? THE FOSTER CARERS DESCRIBING THE CHILD'S CARE EXPERIENCE

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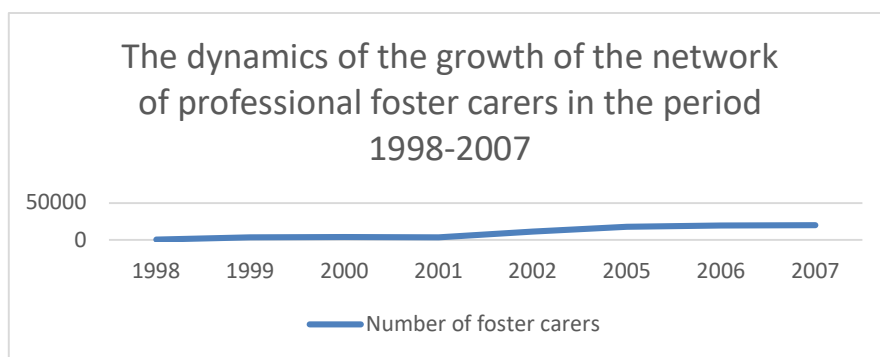
**Abstract:** *Maternal assistance is a form of special protection of the child separated from the parents; A rich literature, evident from everyday life indicates a higher quality level of child care in this format than other forms of care. Insufficient number of foster carers invites reflection; Too few studies investigate the perception of foster carers about their work, the difficulties they face or the needs they have during such a complex process of caring for a child (Wilson, Sinclair, Gibbs, 2000). We conducted 5 focus groups with 30 participants, nurses aged between 29 and 58 years. We aimed to identify the way they perceive and describe their experience / profession, what are their grievances and what are the skills they must have in order to be considered a good parent. The findings suggest the existence of attitudes confirmed in other previous specialized works, namely, dysfunctions of the protection system, lack of support from social assistance structures, failure to focus on the best interests of the child in making decisions, etc. Dissatisfaction was reported regarding the status of the foster parent profession. It is recommended to be included in the DGASPC strategy, to increase the visibility of the foster care profession as an objective, to inform and sensitize the population about the specifics and complexity of this profession. We suggest ensuring the provision of support services, consultancy and counselling to maternal assistants and improving their dialogue with the staff of the social protection departments.*

**Key word:** *foster care; profession; competences; difficulties*

### 1. Introduction

In Romania, maternal care is the newest form of child protection that has developed as a response to the deinstitutionalization process. In 1998, the Government Decision no. 217/1998 on the conditions for obtaining the certificate, the attestation procedures and the status of the professional foster carer, our country has adapted to the needs of the social environment and has implemented the practice of foster care, so appreciated in Western countries. Interest in this social field has increased significantly from year to year, so that in 1998 the number of foster children rises to 479, the maternal care network is constantly growing reaching 3085 a year later and 3833 in mid-2000. The success of the implementation of the unique national strategy regarding the placement of children in foster care has differed from one county to another depending on the decisions taken within the county councils (Neamtu, 2006).

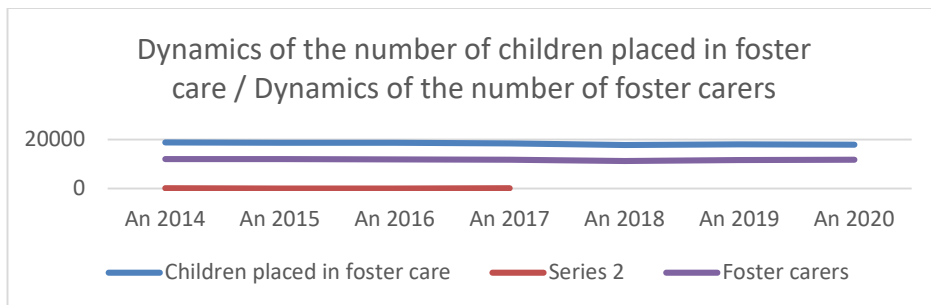
*Figure 1. The dynamics of the growth of the network of professional foster carers (1998-2007)*



Source: *The professional foster carer's manual*

On June 30, 2021, 17498 children were placed with professional foster carers employed within the DGASPC, 51 children were placed with foster carers employed by accredited private bodies. There is a shortage of foster carers in each county, especially with the entry into force of the new regulation according to which the child up to 9 years old must be placed with a foster carer

*Figure nr.2. Number of placed children in foster care; Number of foster carers (2014-2020)*



Source: <http://andpdca.gov.ro/w/statistici/><sup>1</sup>

In a short time, foster care has become one of the most effective forms of protection (Dumitrescu, 2016; Humphreys et al., 2015) and leads to beneficial results for the child, although a shortage of foster carers can be observed (Smyth & McHugh, 2006) and due to an inadequate support system (Walter 1993), however, as Blythe, Wilkes and Halcomb (2014) have not observed, maternity care activities.

## 2. Background

The authors identify in a literature review study the main characteristics / conditions that foster carers find important in order to be good parents: Stable and balanced relationships in their family, adequate payment for the service they provide, cultural sensitivity, good relationships work, personality traits. The same study shows that the ambiguity of the role and the deficient relations with the staff from the child protection system, the lack of support services have a negative impact on the well-being of the foster carers; Murray et al., (2011) finds the same results; in the study or nurses claim the need for training and support in managing behavioural or mental health problems of children.

Although it was necessary to professionalize nursing (Wilson K, Evetts, 2006), nurses are not perceived as professionals but as mothers (Blythe et al., 2013); This conclusion also derives from Kirton's (2001) study which suggests that although the financial factor is important, the strongest motivation is the desire to raise a child. It seems that placement with a foster carer involves more consistent resources and funding than placement with a

<sup>1</sup>National Authority for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Children and Adoptions, <http://andpdca.gov.ro/w/statistici/><sup>1</sup>

foster carer; this situation in the states shows that some kinship assistants (extended family, in Romania) may perceive this difference in status as either offensive or intrusive (Sykes, Sinclair, Gibbs, Wilson, 2002). Nurses reported discriminatory attitudes toward their profession, claiming they experienced social isolation and loss of status when they confirmed foster carer status (Blythe et al., 2012).

What do the research say about the experience of foster carers? What about raising children in this regime? Carbone et al (2007) concluded that children living in foster care reported more frequent physical, mental and developmental health problems compared to the general population (Blythe, Jackson, Halcomb, Wilkes, 2012). However, the impact of separation from the biological family is lower and the incidence of pathologies is significantly lower in children who were placed in the foster home compared to those placed in foster care (Dumitrescu, 2016). However, there are many questions that do not currently have an answer about this universe of raising a child in a foster home (Teculeasa, 2017; Macdonald, Turner, 2005); in a recent research conducted on the Romanian population shows that the majority of nurses describe an inner motivation for choosing to practice this profession (Neagoe, Neag, Lucheuş, 2019).

Concerns about identifying the needs of foster carers have intensified with declining interest in the profession; the increasingly complex expectations that social assistance structures have from foster carers require the provision of initial and continuing education services and support services for these workers so that they feel prepared for the role of parent (Randle et al., 2016). The author recommends the involvement of social workers in promoting foster care, their valorisation.

### **3. Methodology**

This study is a quality research which has the purpose of evaluating the perception of foster carers regarding the job of a professional parent to a child placed in a special protection programme.

#### **3.1.Objective**

1. The description maternal assistants give about the experience of taking care of foster children
2. Identifying the caregiver's perception of the skills and qualities needed to practice the profession of "professional parent"
3. Identifying the difficulties encountered in the procedure of care in the maternal system

**3.2.Participants.** The 5 organized focus groups were attended by 30 people, women aged between 29 and 56, with an average level of



education (86%) or higher (14%). Only 7 participants cared for the child in the absence of a partner. In only two cases has the experience of caring for a child with a disability been reported.

Table 1. Overview respondents.

Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Female	30	100
	Male	0	0
The number of children taken into foster care over time	1 children taken into foster care	4	13,3
	2 children taken into foster care	6	20
	3 children taken into foster care	5	16,6
	4 children taken into foster care	4	13,3
	5 children taken into foster care	3	10
	6 children taken into foster care	1	3,3
	7 children taken into foster care	1	3,3
	8 children taken into foster care	2	6,6
	13 children taken into foster care	1	3,3
	15 children taken into foster care	1	3,3
	16 children taken into foster care	1	3,3
Type of foster family	single-parent family	7	23
	biparental family	23	77
Years of experience as a foster carer			
Source of environment	Rural	11	36,6
	Urban	19	63,4

### 3.3.Methods

5 Focus Groups were organized with 6 participants each, identified through personal networks initially, then by applying the snowball technique. They are all employees of the general directorate of social assistance and child protection, maternal assistants with different seniority in raising the child. Each Focus Group has been registered. The data collection period was January-March 2021. All participants were women. The interview guide included questions aimed at achieving the above objectives.

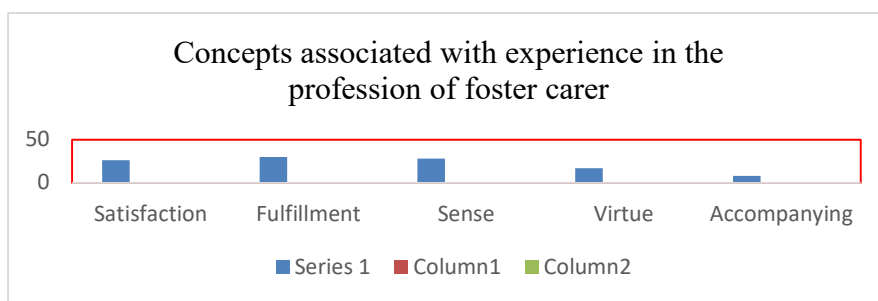
### 3.4.Results

#### *Description of the experience of caring for the child in foster care, made by the foster carers;*

We identified a number of concepts commonly used by nurses included in the study that describe the experience of child care. Study participants tend

to describe the experience of raising a child using concepts that describe emotions: love, dedication, fulfillment, satisfaction; caring for the child gives them a feeling that they describe as "alive", which gives them meaning and fills their lives. 26 of the participants associated the experience of raising the child with satisfaction, 28 of them perceived that this activity gives them a meaning and that it has an almost sacred meaning / purpose; for 17 of the respondents, the ability to give oneself to another child and to dedicate one's life to raising and saving another child is indispensable. The concept most used by the respondents was fulfilment (emotional, professional) and the least used but with a strong psychological significance was the accompanying one. Without using this exact word, the respondents' representations about their path regarding the care for a certain period of time of a child converge in this direction.

Figure3. *Concepts associated with experience in the profession of foster carer*



The term love was the most commonly used; "The condition of raising a child in placement (especially in placement) is the ability that the foster carer has to offer love" The other participants confirmed without any deviation.

*„I have the feeling that I am doing a good thing, that I am saving someone's life ... this also helps me to understand and accept the fact that I will break up with this child one day "*

*"... It bothers me a lot when people suspect that I take care of the child for money ... this is not a profession like any other .. first of all I am a mother..even if I accompany him in his upbringing only for a while .."*

### ***Identifying the caregiver's perception of the skills and qualities needed for a good caregiver***

Invariably, the respondents talked about the ability to give love, care, sensitivity (100%) and patience (100%) the main qualities / competencies of

a good foster carer. Other absolutely necessary qualities would be the acceptance of differences (90%) and honesty (60%, ie 18 respondents). The need to be honest was identified with the sour respondents caring for children placed with biological children; In this context, honesty referred to the ability to treat all children to the same standards. They acknowledged that they had experienced situations of internal conflict and that they had encountered problems with other family members (grandparents, partner, children) regarding the undifferentiated treatment of foster children and biological children. Other qualities mentioned were altruism (70%), optimism (93.3%). What drew attention to the approach of this topic was the fact that the respondents qualified as qualities what seemed rather coping mechanisms: detachment capacity and resilience. They completed the picture of the qualities of the foster carer who is constrained by the nature of the service she provides to "protect her soul".

The protection factors used by foster carers refer to the ability to detach when the child is reintegrated into the family or adopted. This involves building a vision in time:

*"When I took in the first child, I had no strategy in mind ... I raised him, I loved him ... when I separated from him it was the most traumatic experience I had. I realized that I had to prepare for this moment and I built a strategy for the moment of separation ... but it didn't fully work. Today, after the tenth child placed in the placement, I got upset; My vision of what I do (to raise children) is one that helps me when I have to break up with them ... I am a companion, a guide, a saviour for a while on their way ... Doing what I do, fulfil a desire of God, to give love and care to the other; because that's what it's about ... a foster carer does not make money caring for children "*

A unique method of getting used to separating from a child was found by one of the respondents who asks the child to call her mother, referring to the biological mother or the adoptive mother if it is the case as a mother. She believes that this differentiation will help the child to clarify himself with different roles and associations of the affective type name and therefore, to prepare him for the reality he is living.

### ***Highlighting the difficulties identified in the care procedure in the maternal system***

A key point of foster care status is the discriminatory mentality and attitude; a common perception of the respondents is that the choice of this profession is based exclusively on the financial criterion. This fact was also highlighted by the study of Blythe et al., (2012) which indicates the stigmatization of social workers and their social isolation. However, 14 women participating

in FG have experienced positive situations in terms of the appreciation and quality of relationships with the parents of the schoolmates of the child in the placement, for example. Some of them encouraged relationships between children. 4 of the women talk, however, about the discrimination of the child by the child's teachers themselves. An observation made almost unanimously refers to the regulations regarding the relationship of the foster carer with the child for whom the adoption procedure has started.

*" A competition is created between the adoptive family and us (the foster carer); they perceive us as a potential danger ... the child is not encouraged to want to see us even though he expresses his desire to look for us and see us again"*.

Another discussed aspect was related to the moment of the child's reintegration in the biological family (which is a priority for the child protection direction); they believe that it is often not in the best interest of the child to return to the family of origin. Often this will only deceive and unbalance him because, it often happens that the parent cannot assume parental responsibilities, and end up leave him again citing childish reasons.

*"... after great efforts to reassure him and create comfort and stability, we find out that the family wants him back, although we believe that the mother conceals and displays a certain state / availability and desire for the case manager, and another towards us ... We feel (the family of the foster carer) that everything we have built is falling apart but the worst thing is the fact that the child will suffer again"*

A consideration frequently discussed or approached in the literature is related to the financial one; the respondents of our study show that although this is a very important criterion, it is not defining; however, there are difficult situations (illness of the child, special needs, accidents) that emphasize the need for more consistent support.

"We have been sacrificial parents twice ... we often spend our money and do everything for the child; then he returned to his family, and after almost a year he still came to our house ... but he already had many problems ... he was no longer the child we raised ... he smokes, swears, lies ... had many behavioural problems "

Indeed, Separation from people for whom they have formed an attachment is very stressful for children and can have a long-term impact on their development, threatening the success of foster care in some cases (Selwyn et al, 2015). These situations are also a source of stress for all actors involved in the process, the families of the foster carer, the adoptive family.

Respondents to our study believe that these transitions are not always focused on children's needs. Boswell & Cudmore (2014) show that a number of problems arise from the practice and emotion that the adoptive parent offers to this transfer of care.

With all the coping mechanisms involved, the study participants refer to the moment of separation from the child as devastating, a source of suffering and anxiety. The experience of caring for several children also helps them overcome this moment; for some the complexity of the act of care is determined by a lot of dysfunctions of the protection system that produce limitations and frustrations. These have reinforced the great benefits of placing a child along with their own biological children. They believe that they learn and practice Christian values, such as love, acceptance, giving, forgiveness. Respondents unanimously state that the willingness to get involved in raising children separated from their families is the desire to change someone's life for the better, to guide them on their way to find an adoptive family (perception also confirmed by MacGregor et al., 2006). Lack of information about this profession, poor transparency, failure to promote maternity care as a profession with special status are factors that weaken its prestige and indirectly damage the image of nurses.

#### **4. Discussion**

The present study confirms previous research (Murray et al., 2011; Blythe, Wilkes and Halcomb, 2014) on the most important needs of foster carers and the issues that affect their well-being. Romanian social workers - participants in the study expressed that the strongest motivation for involvement in childcare activities is to bring happiness to change children's lives, which confirms a study conducted in 2006 by MacGregor and colleagues. (et al.,) In all the focus groups, it was proposed / suggested the development of information and awareness programs for the situation of the child separated from the parents and for the status of the foster carer. According to them, the perception of the vast majority is that being a foster carer means "making the parenting profession a paid role, being understood as a profession."

A dysfunction of the system is represented by the regulations regarding the return of the child to the family of origin; One conclusion of the respondents would be that the family, as a risk factor, rarely turns into the family as a protective factor. However, the return of the child to the place from which he was taken is in itself a basic principle in the protection of the child.

This qualitative research, which included 30 women nurses, highlights the relevance of the perception of what it means to be a nurse and what are the conditions for it to be considered "good". They need to be listened to when

the child's reintegration into the family is decided; they also need support and care alternatives during certain breathing periods because they are in great need. According to previous research (Ahmed et al., 2015) the creation of an environment of safety, security and love are the necessary conditions for achieving an optimal level of satisfaction from the child's perspective; all respondents associated raising the child with these characteristics, recalling that the balance and support of their own family make this goal possible.

### **5. Recommendation for practice**

The obtained results show that there is a need for an increase in the visibility of foster carers and for an increase in the prestige of this profession. The large number of children in need of foster care remains constant despite social policies to prevent abandonment (Triseliotis, Borland, Hill, 1998). Under these conditions, the foster carer remains the most valuable solution for the child separated from the parents.

Some observations of the nurses included in the study attracted attention because they were very vocal:

- ✓ *" We do not raise children for money; raising these children does not bring us much financial gain"*
- ✓ *" No child replaces the other"*
- ✓ *" Instead of being understood as parents, we are perceived as people who make a business / profession out of it; this is why we are set aside"*
- ✓ *" There is a need for more support from the social assistance departments"*
- ✓ *" We need time to breathe ... some children have health problems or special needs and managing these situations induces a very high state of stress."*

### **6. Strengths and limitations**

The experiences of parents, be they social parents, are as diverse and complex as possible and are mediated by a multitude of variables. The merit of this paper is the analysis of a less approached subject that requires, it seems a great deal of attention; as the respondents themselves stated, "we are satisfied and happy that someone is interested in what we are doing." We identified gaps in the knowledge regarding the experience of nurses in the Romanian literature of the challenges they face. Due to the subjective nature of the data we investigated, we used the group interview / focus group as a method and qualitative analysis, appropriate in this context (Steenbackers,

van der Steen, & Grietens, 2016). The limit of this study is given by the non-generalization of the results, although the investigated subjects constituted a heterogeneous group (different age groups, differentiated educational level, large variation of the number of children placed: from 1 child to 17, different experience, different background).

## 7. Conclusions

Maternal care, as it is perceived by the poor, is a practice that is more than a profession; it is a doubling of the parental status, it is a huge challenge because it starts from the premise that it cannot be exercised apart from the total dedication and involvement of the soul. However, it is a relationship "that has a term of validity" and for this, foster carers train complex psychological mechanisms.

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## EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS ADAPTED TO STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISORDERS

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**Abstract:** *Inclusive education is an educational desideratum whose transposition into practice implies a concrete, punctual educational reform, with directions of action clearly outlined by unequivocal legislation, complete and in terms of the role of all factors involved and specially adapted to Romanian society. Learning disorders are relatively new concepts in pedagogical theory and practice, and in terms of their legal recognition, in Romania only in 2016 appeared a legal provision that recognizes and clarifies this issue: the notions of dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia and provides intervention to provide the personalized and individualized learning that these students need. The prevalence of specific learning disabilities (ISDs) is estimated to be between 5 and 15%, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Trying to clearly distinguish between a child with a specific learning disability and a child with a low motivation to learn or generally low learning ability is complicated and challenging. In order to remedy learning disabilities in the classroom, the teacher must know and build a series of teaching strategies tailored to the individual characteristics of the student with TSI, but also to achieve a genuine partnership with the family, other teachers in the classroom, the speech therapist or school counsellor, the support teacher and other specialists involved in the learning and recovery process. Lucrarea de față încearcă să identifice și să exemplifice câteva demersuri specifice de intervenție psihopedagogică în cazul copiilor cu tulburări specifice de învățare.*

**Keywords:** *specific learning disorders; personalized intervention plan; early intervention.*

Inclusive education is an educational desideratum whose practical transposition supposes a concrete and punctual educational reform with action directions marked through legislation without equivocation, complete

from the point of view of all involved factors' role, and specially adapted to the Romanian society. The examples of good practice from other educational, international systems can build models with the condition to be piloted, tested and specially analysed in different economic, cultural contexts specific to our society.

Learning disorders represent relatively new concepts in pedagogical theory and practice. Regarding their legal recognition, in Romania only in 2016, a lawful provision was enforced, which recognises and clarifies this issue: dyslexia notions, dysgraphia and dyscalculia, and foresees the intervention method in order to offer personalised and individualised learning these students' need. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders, the prevalence of specific learning disorders (TSI) is estimated to be between 5 and 15% (DSM-5).

According to the European Dyslexia Association research, the European people's segment that presents dyslexia is approximately between 5 and 12% of the population, with the highest prevalence from the learning disorder types. There is also a significantly lower percentage between 3-5% of students who present severe cases combined between the classical types: dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia.

There are no extensive studies on this issue in Romania at the national level. The prevalence of these disorders is unknown at the school population's level since the Romanian specialists' efforts are in the early stages. Such a study on the dyslexia incidence among children under 11 years is from 2011 within the "Move forward reading" (a partnership between OMV and the Romanian Association for Dyslexic Children). This study outlines that four from ten cases of students supervised by a specialist would be dyslexia cases.

The current legal provisions are not sufficiently known by teaching staff are not correspondingly applied. The educational needs of specific learning disorder students can not be separated from the social, economic, and cultural context where they live. It will affect their development from the point of view of precocious diagnosis and intervention, representing the pedagogical intervention's successful premises.

From the point of the educational need of view, the more and more complex casuistry from the previous years is a challenge for all the involved factors: student, school, family.

It is one of the most significant challenges because it involves multiple actions, which must converge in the desired meaning. These actions are interdependent starting from knowing students' particularities, learning disorder typology, teaching staff training, adapting teaching strategies to students' needs, content structuring, classroom arrangement, ensuring necessary support, involving the family in continuing teaching endeavour

from school; all to reduce barriers in learning and ensure the necessary support.

### **Definition of specific learning disorders concepts**

The syntagma: "specific learning disorders", known under the acronym TSI or DYS in English, comprises the concepts analysed in this paper.

It is essential to underline the fact that a specific learning disorder (TSI) is not considered to be a disease, which is treated or cured, but a *particular modality of processing the information* due to the different development and functioning of the central nervous system, which persists the entire life and which can only be remediated. We can discuss specific learning disorders (dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthography, dyscalculia), the case of students who obtain results at the calculation or reading-writing abilities' level way below expectations, reported to their intellectual capacities and involvement, effort in performing school tasks.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) (APA, 2013) includes specific learning disorders in the neurodevelopmental disorders' category: "heterogeneous group of biological disorders, started in the development period and which, through the specific deficits in the ability to perceive and process efficiently and correctly the information, it is characterised by difficulties at the level of reading-writing instrumental skills or mathematical calculation.

According to the German Association of Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, the comorbidities analysis should be considered when diagnosing a reading-writing disorder considering the existing comorbidities introduced in the intervention plan.

Comorbidities include, in most cases: anxiety disorders, depressive symptoms, hyperkinetic disorders or attention deficits, school absenteeism, teenagers' behaviour disorders.

According to Order 3124/2017 on approving the Methodology for ensuring the necessary support to students with learning disorders, the involved concepts have the following significations:

"Learning disorders, named other *specific learning disorders (TSI)* – designates a heterogeneous group that affects the typical process of school abilities' acquisition (reading, writing, mathematical): dyslexia, dysgraphia (including dysorthography), dyscalculia. This is not a consequence of the lack of learning opportunities or learning motivation. It is not the result of an intellectual disability, laminar intellect, sensory deficit (for example, auditory, visual, motor), affective and emotional disorders of psychiatric nature, other disorders of (neuro) development (for example, ASD – autism spectrum disorders, ADHD – attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), and any cerebral trauma of acquisition malady does not cause it.

Dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia may appear isolated or associated. They represent a biological origin disorder, not being a consequence of the lack of learning opportunities, the existence of some incapacitating conditions or some unfavourable conditions for learning”.

It is essential to outline the situations/conditions in which the diagnosis of **TSI is excluded:**

- the students' intelligence coefficient (IQ) lower than 85 indicates the presence of an intellectual disability of a laminar intellect, when the existence of special educative requests which behave like another type of support, is assumed;
- sensorial, auditive and visual or motor deficits uncorrected, which may represent a significant obstacle in the reception and transmission of messages;
- psychiatric or neurological disorders organic or functional of acquisition (for example, autism, TSA, ADHD);
- the absence of learning opportunities (absenteeism, extended hospitalisation, belonging to unfavoured groups, lack of stimulation in both family and pre-primary education non-attendance, lack of practice, precarious or insufficient education);
- psychosocial disadvantages, including the insufficiency of knowledge of the teaching language;
- lack of learning motivation;
- other external influences relevant to the acquisition process.

### **The differentiation between students with a specific learning disorder and students with schooling difficulties**

The difficulties encountered by students in the school have an impact not only on the school performance but also on school adaptation, learning motivation, and class group integration.

Concerning the learning difficulties, the Pedagogy Dictionary (Horst Scaub și Karl G. Zenke, 2001, p.73) presents a synthetic definition that refers to the manifestation domain: ***“learning difficulties manifest especially in the yield domain. Ofter, they are connected with repeated failures and have undesired influences on the personality development”.***

The attempt to distinguish a child with a specific learning disorder and low learning motivation or a general low capacity of learning is a complicated and challenging job.

In literature, the differences between learning difficulties and learning disorders are approached (Dubois și Roberge, 2010), which refer to the temporary character and remediation possibility of learning difficulties and, over time, persistence, the resistance to intervention in the case of learning disorders. Learning disorders appear earlier than the learning difficulties,

which install progressively through the increase of knowledge gaps and may appear in any stage of learning. Most of the students with TSI have a low level of school motivation (due to the lack of success, despite the efforts made), avoidant, oppositionist behaviours, passive (they get involved only if requested), had to train in tasks, develop anxiety about the school tasks or even, school phobia. All these characteristics may also appear at the students uninterested in school, with behaviour or school adaptation problems, with low learning potential, which is challenging to achieve a clear distinction.

Following recent approaches and legal provision, at the national and international level, the TSI suspicion requires a **closer observation** (minimum six consecutive months) from the teacher, the insurance of **a sufficient period of adequate instruction** for excluding the cases of schooling difficulties caused by an unfavourable context for learning and motivation growth for learning (children from deficient educational families, with a low socioeconomic and cultural level, children insufficiently stimulated in the preschool period, disharmonic families, etc.) or children with a slower neuronal maturation or caused by the fact that were schooled earlier concerning their psychotic development.

The establishment of learning difficulties is made after a summative pedagogical evaluation, in line with the programmes in which the learning objectives and performance standards are included.

Learning difficulties may be recovered, fully or partially, through an adequate psycho-pedagogical endeavour (followed by medication or not) or eliminating the conditions that lead to the pedagogical retardation instalment.

The main difference between the two issues approached: the uninterested student, insufficiently motivated, with knowledge gaps, school adaptation problems, and the student with TSI refers to the **recorded progress**. The students from the first category may have significant improvement due to adequate, supportive training, remedial activities, or resolving some external causes that generated or supported some behaviours (for example, resolving some familial conflicts). When speaking of the TSI student, the progress is plodding despite the constant effort made by the student, the family and the teachers involved in the educative process.

It happens because the specific learning disorders imply a deficit at the neuronal, cognitive level, which may be compensated only partially, not totally, remediated. The difference is made by the early on as possible specific therapeutical intervention, or on the contrary, made only later or not at all, which leads to educational gaps accumulation, but especially to emotional and school adaptation disorders besides the disorders mentioned above.

### **The Methodology for ensuring necessary support for students with specific learning disorders**

The individualisation process of differentiated learning/training represents a core principle of classic pedagogy that in students with TSI, has great relevance.

The differentiation of training supposes an adaptation strategy of instructive – educative actions at the psycho-physical particularities of students to better integrate into the school activity. The projecting and realisation of differentiated training supposes the **relation valorisation** between the engaged *human resources* on one side and required *knowledge and capacities/competencies* through school programmes and the school institution structure on the other side.

The main request in learning organisation and guidance is the individualisation of strategies and methods for students with learning disorders.

In order to remediate the learning disorders at the students from the classroom, the teacher shall know and build a series of particularised teaching strategies based on the individual characteristics of the students with TSI, and also to realise an authentic partnership with the family, the other teachers from the classroom, the speech therapist or the school counsellor, the supporting teacher and other involved specialists in the process of learning and recovering.

This endeavour shall be preceded by an excellent preliminary investigation of the student's abilities by identifying the predominant learning style and recognising strengths that may constitute valuable resources in the learning process.

The teacher (professors, schoolmasters, educators), who educates the students with learning disorders, shall fulfil a couple of fundamental requests:

- to know as well as possible each student's learning difficulties/disorders, specific to some curricular areas and study disciplines, as well as their manifestation mode;
- to apply instruments of observation, monitorisation of students' acquisitions;
- to adapt the methodological and procedural resources, as well as the material ones to the learning difficulties specificity, to diminish and overcome them;
- to apply the legal provisions in force;
- to apply compensation measures, compensatory instruments, dispensaries measures foreseen by the law;
- to make adapted evaluations to these students;
- to compile personalised educational plans;

- to collaborate with the supportive teacher (if any in the unity), the family, and all factors involved in the recovering process;
- to ensure that the students in a problematic situation own the necessary acquisitions (knowledge, capacities, abilities, etc.) for exceeding the crisis in which they are;
- to self-evaluate the learning activities efficacy to adjust learning conditions;
- to contribute to constructing a secure, adequate and stimulative learning environment.

In the last years, Romanian specialists focused their attention on studying this issue and their efforts and work on the standardisation of some tests' batteries. One such example is that the Research Laboratory within the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences from Cluj Napoca, where the MT reading tests for the primary cycle – 2(MT) (Cornoli and Colpo, 2011, used in Italy) are in the process of standardisation.

**Order 3124/2017** on approving the Methodology for ensuring necessary support for students with learning disorders regulates the adequate evaluation proceedings for screening dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthography, dyscalculia, and the intervention type for providing individualised and personalised learning in their case.

***The purpose and objectives*** of this legal provision are:

- guaranteeing the right to education of all students identified with TSI;
- favouring the early diagnosis and the establishment of the rehabilitative didactic pathways;
- adopting forms of verification and evaluation adequate to the formative need of the students;
- fostering students' schooling success through supportive teaching measures, ensuring adequate training and promoting the development of each student's potential
- training teachers, support teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, school counsellors, as well as empowering and sensitising parents in dealing with problems related to learning disabilities;
- reducing relational and emotional difficulties, secondary to learning disorders;
- providing support measures (compensatory instruments and exemption measures);
- ensuring equal opportunities for the development of all students' abilities, necessary in the social and professional environment.
- increasing communication and collaboration between school, family and other involved institutions (CJRAE, medical units, non-governmental associations)

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### **The purpose and general objectives of the research**

In the school environment, students with specific learning disorders, which have certain particularities, determine the development of supportive educational policies but especially require implementing differentiated teaching strategies that fit their psycho-educational profile.

**The purpose of the psycho-pedagogical intervention is to improve** the school skills of students with specific learning disabilities and by using differentiated educational strategies adapted to their particularities and providing support measures.

### **General objectives of the research:**

- Knowing the psycho-educational profile of the students with specific learning disabilities.
- Ensuring supportive measures foreseen by the national legislation.
- Design and implementation of personalised intervention programs.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Ø *The case study* is used as an investigation method of data collection on the subject and for analysing the effects of psycho-pedagogical intervention carried out in this research.

Ø *Questionnaire-based survey method*: on its basis, answers are obtained regarding the phenomena, situations, behaviours analysed/investigated.

Ø *Interview method*

Ø *The Method of observation* that allowed and collected data on the investigated subject also identified problems or problematic situations regarding the reporting manner to work tasks and the group of students in the classroom.

Observations provide essential information about the purpose and manner of learning, communication, social skills, desirable or undesirable behaviours during activities.

- *The analysis of the activity products/students' portfolios/school documents* – presents the students' results following the instructive-educational activities.

## Research plan organisation

### **Documentation**

The issue investigated and presented in this paper is engaging due to the novelty but especially comes to meet a growing need of the Romanian education system related to applying adapted methods and ensuring the necessary support for students with specific learning disabilities.



### **Selecting subjects**

The three subjects of the case studies presented are students diagnosed with TSI and were selected from the Assessment Service for School and Vocational Guidance's database (SEOSP). Certificates of school and professional guidance by COSP were issued, on which basis the school units to which they are registered must provide the supportive measures foreseen by Order 3124/2017. The parents were the ones who addressed SEOSP and requested additional information about the supporting efforts to which they are entitled. They noted that students are not adequately supported because their teachers have not attended training activities on the learning disabilities issue, do not know and do not apply the supportive measures provided by the legislation in force, mainly due to its novelty and bureaucratic complexity. The CJRAE network of school counsellors facilitated the intervention over them.

### **Initial evaluation of cases**

After identifying and locating the selected cases, a first step was the initial assessment of the subjects. Tests, questionnaires, observation grids, analysis of activity products, school results were all used to establish and identify the difficulties with which they also face the initial level of their acquisitions. The initial assessment of the subjects was performed by using a questionnaire to identify students at risk of a diagnosis of specific learning disorders, under Order 3124/2017. The questionnaire followed the students' monitoring by the teachers during the first semester of the school year 2018-2019 and from the observations made and the student's results in the previous years. Simultaneously, the students' school results, the products of the activity, and the evaluations from the class, the families were interviewed to draw a psycho-educational profile of them as complete as possible.

### **Building an intervention team**

The psycho-pedagogical intervention supposes a joint effort, teamwork both from the teachers and the family's involvement in supporting the steps from the class/school and especially their continuation at home. Within this research, a unique partnership was accomplished between the classes' teachers, the school counsellor, the family and the pedagogue who implements the intervention program. Each team member had his/her contribution and made all the necessary efforts to apply the agreed and assumed support measures.

Due to the novelty of the legislative provisions and the lack of teacher training on TSI, there was a slight reluctance of teachers in approaching proposed measures, methods of intervention, given the superior interest of

the student and especially the benefits we had from all the support in the planning and implementation of the intervention plan.

### **Intervention plan elaboration**

Concerning the design stage of the psycho-pedagogical intervention plan on the identified subjects, the analysis of the initial tests results, observation grids, study of the school documents (school results), school means (notebooks, products of the activity) was taken into account. There were also several meetings with all team members: teachers, counsellor, family and pedagogue, whose primary purpose was to establish the role and involvement of each one during the psycho-pedagogical intervention.

The questionnaires, observation grids, monitoring sheets that they may/will use, and the structure of a personalised educational plan that will be completed for each subject must be respected by all teachers.

### **The per se implementation of the intervention plan**

There were ten individual sessions with subjects, 5 group activities in class, five meetings with parents and five working sessions with teachers.

The intervention plan included the realisation of personalised education Plans for the three subjects and the teachers from the class. An educational plan model was used for students with TSI adapted from the model found in the guide “The dyslexic child - a common responsibility” developed by Bartok Eva.

Phonological awareness is an essential component of reading, seen as a bridge between oral and written language. A. Roşan and C. David (2019) define phonological awareness as the ability to perceive, represent and manipulate the phonemes that make up words and propose a structured training program of phonological awareness based on scientific evidence.

Romanian is a phonetic language in which the correspondence between phoneme and grapheme is high. It is suitable to apply phonetic methods in interventions in reading and writing disorders. Depending on the type of learning disorder, the individual characteristics of the subjects it intervened with educational methods frequently used at national and international level that proved their effectiveness to students with TSI.

Out of these, we mention:

- **The multisensorial approach** uses different materials simultaneously to help the child learn reading, writing and mathematic calculation.

Thus, the information is presented simultaneously in several sensory ways: visual, auditory, kinesthetic.

*Example - learning a sound:*

Visually – cards with that letter and objects that represent words that start with that letter.

Hearing – the instructor pronounces the sound.

Kinesthetic – movement and touch – the child can draw the letter in the sand, write it with his finger on the table surface or manipulate plastic letters.

Within the multisensorial approach, the following techniques and methods were used:

- ***Borel-Maisonny Method*** – phonetic and gestural; an associative complex is formed between the phoneme-grapheme and the ideomotor scheme of sound pronunciation: the phoneme is associated with a gesture, involving the analysers: tactile-kinesthetic, auditory and visual.
- ***Multisensorial techniques for writing-reading learning*** (writing letters, numbers or words in the kinetic sand tray, forming/modelling plasticine letters, performing the letters on the back to be aware of the movements);
- ***Constructing words from magnetic letters*** can be magnetic letters of different colours for consonants and vowels to highlight the difference between them visually.

The students pronounce each sound corresponding to the letter s/he places it on the board.

New words can be constructed by changing the initial or final letters/syllables.

- ***The read-build-write Method*** involves the design of a sheet with three headings:

1. The word is written in the first column, and the child must read it
2. Build – is an empty space where the child places plastic letters and says the word out loud
3. Write – is an empty space where the child writes the word.

- ***Sticks with clues about stories***; they help the child understand the meaning of the text read and visualise the elements of a story.

On the sticks are pasted questions that guide the student, such as: Who are the characters? Where does the action take place?

- ***Reading with the instructor*** is a method that involves using worksheets in 2 copies so that the student can watch on his worksheet while he reads aloud or can listen to the instructor or an audiobook while watching on the worksheet.

They can interact with the text by emphasising a specific type of word or sound that s/he considers difficult.

It is the kind of technique that was also suitable to be drawn as a task for parents and practised at home.

- **Meixner Method** uses the principle of triple association: speech-written word-read word/tactile and visual-auditory representation. **Activities for phonemic hearing education** for the development of differentiation capacity and sounds identification.
- **The strategy of problems' resolution after Pressley and Woloshyn** involves step by step following of the five stages of the decision-making process, as follows:
  1. Describe the problem in your own words;
  2. Decide if there is a chance that your answer will be the one you suspect;
  3. Represent the problem concretely;
  4. Write the problem and the answer;
  5. Check the answer;
  6. Self-evaluate.
    - **Individual worksheets** – the teacher uses worksheets in which the volume and degree of difficulty of the tasks vary depending on the students.
    - **Memory optimisation methods:** intuitive material (images) is easier to memorise compared to verbal material (texts)
      - the familiarity of the material facilitates the memorisation, and the new or too little known ideas require more effort for their memorisation (the connection is made with the previous experience of the students)
      - their successive exposure
      - the beginning or end of a series is easier to remember than the material in the middle
      - the stimulating ambience facilitates
      - the most active processing of information by establishing similarities and differences, in-depth understanding of the material, finding examples for specific mathematical rules, etc.
      - the role of rest in the memorisation process is emphasised, especially the parents have the primary role in structuring the daily regime of the students, in avoiding the appearance of their intellectual fatigue, in the optimal combination of the intellectual activity with the physical one;
      - better memorise the materials related to interests, concerns, preferences, attitudes, analogies can be made.
    - **Group activities** - for increasing group cohesion - the students collective of classrooms where these students belong.

### ***Examples of activities/exercises performed within the group activities***

#### ***1. "Find partners."***

Purpose: stimulating the spirit of cooperation, the division into teams

Materials: 2 packs of playing cards

Duration: 10 min

Content:

1. We select the playing cards as follows: if we want to make three groups of 6 people, we choose from the playing cards six black heart cards, six red heart cards, six rhombus cards.
2. Each participant receives a playing card that he must put on his forehead without looking at it.
3. The rule is to find your team partners by discovering the grouping rule without talking, knowing that there are three work teams.
4. It can be completed with a short discussion: did you like the exercise? What was difficult? What helped you achieve your goal? What did you learn from this exercise?

## **2. *Interactive story - "The Castle."***

Purpose: stimulating the spirit of cooperation, the division into teams

Duration: 15 min

Content:

Interactive stories are short stories that create a dynamic, attention-grabbing atmosphere, involving children throughout to follow, to make certain gestures (to clap, to trot, etc.), or to make certain sounds, words, onomatopoeias depending on the character. There may be collective roles to which all children react and personal roles to which only one child responds. The animator must know the story very well.

Subject: a castle is visited by several people and the ghosts in the castle above it.

Keywords-gesture: castle - clapping, ghost - shouting bu-hu-hu.

Roles: mother ghost, father ghost, ghost, ghost, dog, four visitors, mayor, etc.

Gestures for roles: clapping, 360-degree rotations, screams, various onomatopoeias, etc.

## **3. *"Fruit salad."***

Objectives: release of tension, relaxation, entertainment.

Description of the exercise:

Students are seated in chairs in a large circle. Everyone is given a note with the name of a fruit (apple, banana, orange, plum and cherry) written on it.

The group leader stands in the centre of the circle, standing, shouting the name of a fruit. Students who have the ticket with this fruit must get up and change their place as soon as possible. Whoever remains standing without a home will stay in the centre of the circle, and thus the game continues. We can say "fruit salad", and then everyone has to change seats from time to time. You are not allowed to sit in the chair next to you. The game ends when the students are tired.

#### **4. “Parking spot.”**

It is the classic Method used to keep participants focused on the specific topic. During class/activities, students often ask questions that seem important but not always entirely relevant for that moment of the discussion.

These questions or problems will be “parked” on the flipchart sheet, to be repeated and to be answered later.

This practice helps us make sure that important questions will not be forgotten. The discussion group can stay focused on essential discussions without being interrupted by questions that support procrastination.

Time required: 5-30 minutes

Materials needed: pencils, coloured markers, flipchart, coloured notes

##### Step 1:

At the beginning of the activity, explain to the group that you will use a “parking space” for further questions.

Write a capital letter “P” at the top of a flipchart sheet and stick this sheet on a visible wall. Explain to the participants that whenever a new idea or question arises that is not directly related to the current topic, you will write it on a coloured note and stick it on the flipchart sheet.

Note that any group member can also ask questions at the “parking space” whenever needed.

##### Step 2:

Use the ones explained at the beginning during the activity.

##### Step 3:

As you approach the end of the work session, make sure you have enough time to resume the questions and the ideas placed on the “parking spot” on the flipchart sheet. Take them one at a time and discuss them.

#### **5. “Spiders.”**

Purpose: development of team spirit, development of motor skills

Duration: 10-20 minutes

Content: the group of children is divided into at least three groups of at least four participants. Each group forms circles holding hands. He must try to capture other people in the opposing groups by running his hands over his head to the level of the shoulders of the one s/he is catching. They cannot let go of their hands during the game, and the detached circle is sanctioned.

#### **3.3.2. Programme finalisation**

- Presentation and analysing the results obtained by the subjects;
- Conclusions in each of the cases presented.

## **INTERVENTION PROGRAMME SCROLLING**

**The intervention plan aims to reduce** learning difficulties by practising and developing writing-reading instrumental capacities, arithmetic calculation, and psychomotricity development.

### **Objectives:**

**O1** - Ensuring compensatory measures and instruments.

**O2** - Improving writing-calculation disorders, implementing a program adapted to the student's psycho-educational peculiarities, comprises phonematic hearing education, fine motricity development, and mathematic calculation skills development.

**O3** Family Counseling, its involvement in respecting the recovering plan.

### ***O1 – Ensuring compensatory measures and instruments***

Corroborating the data obtained from the initial assessment, the difficulties identified by the didactic framework, and the information obtained following the discussions with the parents, in subject 1, substantial problems were highlighted at the level of mathematical calculation operations and the level of writing.

A first step was elaborating the Personalised Educational Plan, which includes all the support measures granted by the school according to the legal regulations brought by Order 3124/2017. The personalised educational plan was completed together with the English teacher, following a working meeting, presented in Annex 3. The student's parents were requested at a meeting during which they were informed of the provisions of the personalised educational plan; they must provide the student with the teaching resources requested by the teacher and complete/continue at home the steps initiated in class.

**Perioda:** 11-15 February 2019

***O2. Improving writing-calculation disorders, the implementation of a program adapted to the psycho-educational peculiarities of the student.***

#### ***1. Education and development of phonemic hearing***

In order to achieve this objective, specific activities were carried out during the individual counselling sessions:

- auditory differentiation exercises,
- recognising and imitating various sounds in nature or emitted by animals, insects,
- repeating a beat with your fingers on the table,
- sound differentiation,
- lip reading for attention development,
- phonetic analysis exercises, sound differentiation, awareness of the order of phonemes in the spoken word, division into syllables.

**Period:** February 18 – March 22, 2019

### 1. *Development of fine motricity*

Following the initial evaluation of topic 1, there was a slight delay in developing fine motor skills, so the intervention plan included activities/exercises to monitor motor development.

During individual sessions and the school program at practical skills classes, these activities were carried out when they had to make gifts for Mother's Day, the exhibition of handmade trinkets, thus capitalising on the work done. The following exercises were performed:

- Rolling glass balls on the table with each finger, one by one.
- Creating necklaces that involved stringing beads or buttons on a silicone string and making trinkets;
- "Finger greeting" - the thumb must "greet" in turn with each of the other fingers, touching them in turn;
- Tracing patterns;
- Squeezing and relaxing the fist with squishy toys;
- Picking peas with tweezers.

**Period:** February 18 – March 22, 2019

1. *Development of arithmetic calculation skills:* this is the most critical part of the intervention and consists of applying techniques and exercises tailored to the student's work style, skills, and preferences.

The types of exercises chosen and the techniques used were applied in individual sessions, especially in class. The teacher took into account the compensatory measures in the personalised educational plan.

Simultaneously, at home, the parents continued the steps started at school, applied the exercises, and involved the student more in the household activities.

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Simultaneously, at home, the parents continued the steps started at school, applied the exercises, and involved the student more in the household activities.

Were applied:

- the teacher made the student responsible for distributing the food supplement, the various objects that must be distributed to all colleagues: this activity ensures both interactions with all students in the class but especially allows him/her to practice basic operations: addition or subtraction (how many are missing? how many more are needed? how many are left?);
- Pressley and Woloshyn problem-solving strategy;
- Individual worksheets are used, the student does not copy from the board, and in the tests, all the students of the class receive individual worksheets, so



the modified content of the worksheets for the subject is not highlighted in class.

Verbalising *how to solve* the calculations is helpful for the inversions of numbers (for example,  $8 + 5 = 13$ , and he writes  $8 + 5 = 31$ ) to apply algorithms, calculate aloud, and repeat the steps the student can observe mistakes. This technique is also encouraged in doing homework;

- *the addition with nine* can be explained as the addition with ten from which one is subtracted;
- Exercises for differentiation and identification: predecessor, the analogy with the left hand, successor analogy with the right hand;
- to learn fractions, use cards divided into rectangles or triangles, sectors of a circle; by joining them, one can learn the division by 2, 3, 4, etc. and the names a quarter, a half, etc.;
- the use of the pocket computer in the more complex operations: multiplication, division, additionally over the order of hundreds was a compensatory measure that led to the relaxation of the student regarding the execution of these operations.
- possible explanations for various notions: when they come together, they are put together; when it decreases, it separates; multiplication is repeated addition, but a more straightforward method of calculation;
- plate with synonyms for basic operations: for *addition*, the following terms are used: sum, total, plus, together, increase by..., more by..., for *decrease*: decrease, give, take, less, difference, minus, when *multiplied* we find terms like the product, so many times, double, triple, multiple, when *divided*: half, divided, divided, per, percentage, separately; graphics representation of problems;
- using concrete supports to understand the notions;
- in order to eliminate the confusion when comparing numbers of the order of similar hundreds, it is practised to write above the numbers o the symbols U, Z, S to arrange them properly, and in terms of signs for more extensive, smaller analogies are made with the mouth of a crocodile which is always open to the more significant number.

It is very relevant to immediately observe the mistakes and identify their cause to know what needs to be corrected, the difficulties, and what has not been understood.

The frequent feedback to students also determined the increase of his self-evaluation capacity and the regular accomplishment of the self-evaluation of the results, especially in mathematics.

**Period:** February 25 - May 10, 2019

*03 Family Counseling and its involvement in respecting the recovery plan.*

The relationship with the family is of great importance for the success of any school activity/task. It can continue at home the steps initiated by the school and because it provides psychological therapy that enhances the psycho-pedagogical intervention.

There were five counselling sessions with the parents where the school's actions were presented, support measures provided by the school. They were offered suggestions on organisations that offer resources for various education that can be taken and travelled together with them.

The development of technology allows educational software found nationally and internationally because mathematical operations and computational algorithms are the same. Among these, we mention:

The family was also advised on the student's involvement in shopping, spending time together by detaching from school problems and engaging in extracurricular activities: sports, volunteering, creative workshops, etc., that allow him to achieve small successes. But with beneficial effects on self-esteem.

### **Conclusions/or final report on the investigation**

Following the application of the psycho-pedagogical intervention program, between February 11 and May 17, 2019, at the level of subject 1, improvements were observed in the level of arithmetic calculation skills highlighted by the school results.

Ensuring the compensatory measures and instruments provided by the legislation and included in the personalised educational plan have significantly contributed to changing the attitude of subject one towards school tasks. S/he felt supported and reducing the anxiety felt during the five years of school, was more involved, and discovered and used their skills in school and extracurricular activities. In most cases, classmates' attitude was supportive; they integrated topic 1 in their games, chose it in teams, and considered it incorrect that they not to use these compensatory means and motivating that they also need guidance.

The teacher managed these situations very well, devoting more time to activities/games to increase group cohesion, started and suggested by the counsellor. Were performed extracurricular activities together, trying to involve topic 1 in as many activities as possible, and through the responsibilities received, he frequently interacted with all his colleagues.

In terms of writing skills, they have not been significantly improved because by applying compensatory and dispensing measures, writing tasks have been significantly reduced, individual worksheets, grid-type assessment tests have been provided. There are improvements at the written-reading level. However, especially at the level of mathematical calculation, which denotes the positive effects of the measures adopted, the working methods

can be used further, with other contents depending on the curricular requirements. Slight difficulties in graphically translating the information presented orally, in taking notes are unintentional. Still, this shortcoming is offset because the student generally receives homework and homework on individual worksheets.

In the individual counselling activities, we observed an increase in the involvement and concentration on proposed activities from topic 1, due to centring these activities on the student interests and abilities of the student. She was receptive and consistent in applying at home the methods practised at school, the work style. The overflowing energy and the frequent switching of the interest on other actions of subject 3 were channelled in its involvement in domestic activities and by applying unique working methods identified by consulting some general recommendations found in the literature and sites that address ADHD.

An example is using a stationary bicycle inside the house for the student, while pedalling, to memorise the lessons or the poems read by the grandmother. This working capitalised on the particular interest/pleasure that the student has for cycling, using this interest as a resource and way of reward.

## CONCLUSIONS

The knowledge/shaping of the psycho-educational profile of the analysed subjects was an indispensable condition for the design and implementation of the psycho-pedagogical intervention that was carried out following the evaluations, discussions with the teachers and these students' family members.

Specific common characteristics were observed, which allowed the application of working methods to all but the essential resource were even subjects who, through their skills and interests and varied family context, led to the selection of activities to arouse interest to motivate their involvement in the instructive-educational process. The most important results are given by applying compensatory measures, dispensation and adapted evaluation which was the absolute novelty of this intervention. Methods and techniques have been proposed and started to be used. Differentiated work, surprising both for the teachers and for the analysed subjects and their colleagues. The most visible and relevant effects were those observed at the subjects' attitude towards everything the school represents.

There has been a transformation and perception of these students: from blamed children, considered lazy and comfortable, unjustly condemned, sometimes disturbed class factors or even problem students, have changed into students with potential, with skills that if they are correct capitalisation can lead to beneficial results, such as changing the perspective from which

the problem of students with TSI was approached, using those “inconveniences” as resources, providing immediate feedback on activities, capitalising on them in the classroom, had surprising, positive effects on increasing the cohesion of the group by raising awareness of the value of each, raising awareness and empathy with certain shortcomings that each of us has. Clarifying the status of students with specific learning disabilities is another significant result of the intervention, especially when it comes to schools and different localities where it was implemented.

The individualised didactic approach, necessary in students with specific learning disabilities, allowed us to improve writing, reading, calculation skills highlighted in the assessments made.

The limits of the paper are paradoxically also given by the novelty of both the concept of students with specific learning disabilities and the legal provisions insufficiently known and accepted by teachers: ambiguity, insecurity, distrust, reluctance was often encountered in the design stage and implementation of the psycho-pedagogical intervention. The lack of training activities on this issue, especially of the working Methodology, was another impediment encountered and which can be a perspective for continuation, extrapolation of the steps taken and presented in this paper. The feedback immediately after carrying out an activity is of great importance because it allows students to adjust their actions, identify viable alternatives to problematic situations, and enable them to consolidate the knowledge insufficiently assimilated by students.

There is also a need for specialised studies, the construction of observation grids, behaviour monitoring sheets, the acquisition of students with specific learning disabilities, a possible continuation of the steps taken, and a professional development perspective.

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## **SCHOOL PLANT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NNEWI EDUCATION ZONE OF ANAMBRA STATE**

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**Abstract:** *This study was aimed at determining the relationship between school plant and student academic performance in public secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra State. Four Research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. Correlation research design was adopted. The population of the study was 1779 respondents made up of 49 Principals and 1730 students in the 49 schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra state. The sample comprised of 88 respondents selected through simple random sampling technique. For data collection, questionnaires were distributed to students and principals. The instrument was validated by experts and reliability ascertained using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability index of 0.82 was deemed high enough. Mean score was used to answer the four research questions. The chi-square test was used in testing hypotheses one while hypothesis two, three and four were tested using the t-test statistic. From the results, it was discovered among others that there is a positive relationship between school plant and students' academic performance; that schools in urban areas have more components of school plants than their counterparts in the rural areas; principals in the urban areas had positive attitude towards school plant maintenance while the principals in rural areas had negative attitude towards school plant maintenance. Based on the findings, recommendations were made including a clarion call on the state government to increase funding to schools in*

*the annual budget, and make efforts to balance the allocation of the education sector equally among schools in the urban areas and those in the rural areas. Conclusions were drawn and implications and suggestions for further studies made.*

**Keywords:** *School Plant; Students Academic Performance*

## **Introduction**

The Encarta Dictionary (2009) defines education as the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning'. It has to do with the transmission of knowledge from one source (or sources) to a person or group of persons. It can be in the form of informal and formal education. Compton's interactive encyclopaedia (2009) defines informal Education as "the process through which people endeavour to pass along to their children their hard-won wisdom and their aspirations for a better world". It's the process where they try to inculcate in the child the right attitudes and skills that will help him/her in life.

Compton's interactive encyclopaedia further states that formal education 'consists of experiences that are deliberately planned and utilized to help young people learn what adults consider important for them to know and to help teach them how they should respond to choices. Unlike informal education, formal education consists of well-planned activities, programmes and policies that necessitate high academic performance of students through improved teaching and learning processes (Oluchukwu, 2000). Certain structures and facilities should be available for formal education to take place. These structures are known as school plants.

The school plants are also known as the physical facilities of a school. These facilities are non-consumable. They are tangible assets that are meant to promote a healthy teaching and learning environment. They range from the land, buildings to laboratory equipment and furniture. They are the facilities or structures that are put in place before the school begins.

It has been observed that adequate attention is now being paid to school plant throughout the world's educational systems including Nigeria. Educational facilities such as school plant have been repeatedly found to have positive relationship with standard and quality of educational system. (Nwagwu, 1978; Adesina, 1990; Ojedele, 2000). Nigeria as a nation strives to experience real growth and development. This requires a clearly defined development strategy that allows intensive utilization of resources which is endowed. These resources are the various school physical facilities that are indispensable in the educational process. They include the sitting, the building and physical equipment, recreation places for the achievement of educational objectives (Adepoju, 1998; Oluchukwu, 2000).

School plants which include instructional spaces, administrative places, circulation spaces, spaces for conveniences and accessories are essential in teaching-learning process. The extent to which these spaces could enhance teaching and learning depends on their location within the school compound, their structure, and accessories (Asiegbu, 2014). It is believed that a well planned school plant will gear up expected outcomes of education that will facilitate good social, political and economic emancipation, effective teaching and learning process and academic performance of the students.

Emphasizing the importance of school plant to students academic performance (Oluchukwu, 2000), asserted school plant as an essential aspect of educational planning, he went further to explain that “unless schools are well suited, buildings adequately constructed and equipment adequately utilized and maintained, much teaching and learning may not take place. Corroborating these, Mark (2002) and Ajayi and Yusuf (2009), maintained that high levels of students’ academic performance may not be guaranteed where instructional space such as classrooms, libraries, technical workshops and laboratories are structurally defective. They also emphasized that structural effectiveness, proper ventilation and well sited instructional space lead to successful teaching and learning process in Nigerian secondary schools.

Williams, Persaud, and Turner (2008), quoting Marsden (2005), which reported that safe and orderly classroom environment, as well as school facilities were significantly related to students’ academic performance in elementary schools in India. The three researchers, also quoted Glassman (1994), asserting that a comfortable and caring environment among other treatments helped to contribute to students’ academic performance. Such an environment is seen mostly in urban areas order than the rural areas. Such experience is not far from the Nigerian situation. Majority of the rural schools are left in the hands of their community to provide them facilities and equipment while their counterparts in the urban areas enjoys government assistance and sponsorship (Odufowokan, 2011).

School plants are vulnerable to wear and tear; hence, it is very important that they be adequately maintained to keep them in their original state as much as possible. Maintenance of the school plants involve those elements related to servicing, preserving, repairing and protecting them. It is not just limited to the day-to-day tasks, but it has to be a long term project, a continuous cycle of maintenance to ensure the suitability of the environment for learning, and provide a good atmosphere for both staff and students.

According to Mark (2002), the type of school plant maintenance adopted by the school administrator will certainly determine the tone of the school, which in-turn will promote either effective or ineffective teaching & learning process in the school. Onyene (2000) opines that the most effective



strategy for school plant maintenance is through adequate integration and professional effort. In other words, maintenance involves everyone – the proprietors (in this case, the government), the administrators, the experts, staff and the students. In appraising the existing status of school plant maintenance in public secondary school, Onyene further stated that school administrators and managers just like their counterparts in the corporate world are grossly deficient in matters of school plant maintenance and management.

Unfortunately, this seemingly lack of maintenance culture has become a worrisome trend in the Nigerian Nation recently. It has become a tradition that has woven itself into the fabric of every public institution in Nigeria. Some of our secondary schools are indicators of total neglect as they portray pictures of abandonment (Lawanson&Gede, 2011). The reality of the day is a picture that is not encouraging: dilapidated structures, laboratories with outdated equipment and specimens, absence of a green environment, crowded common rooms that serve as staff room, and more others. This seems to be the reason why students accord high rate of failure in the country. Sadly, some principals have the notion that the failure of the students is not in any way related to the poor infrastructure in the school, but failure of the teachers to impact sound knowledge to their students.

During the various interactions that the researchers had with students of some secondary schools in Nnewi Education Zone of Anambra State, most excuses given by the students for their dismal academic performance was that they lacked a good learning environment in the schools due to the inadequacy of school plants or the state of the school plants. This is what prompted the researchers to investigate if any relationship actually exists between school plants and academic performance of the students. Relationship between school plants and academic performance of students in Anambra State secondary schools has not been exclusively established in literature. This is rather unfortunate because such information would have helped the government to understand the importance of having adequate school plants and maintaining the school plants as a way of boosting the academic performance of the students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of school plant on the academic performance of secondary school students in Anambra State. Based on this, the specific purposes are as follows:

1. To determine the type of school plant available in secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. To determine the attitude of principals towards school plant maintenance in their school.

3. To determine the type of school plant maintenance strategies the principals adopt in schools.
4. To determine the influence of school plant on students' academic performance.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be of great benefit to the government, parents, teachers, and school administrators as it will help them to understand better the academic performance of students from the perspective of the contribution of the school plant.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What type of school plants are available in secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the attitude of principals towards school plant maintenance in their schools?
3. What type of school plant maintenance strategies do the principals adopt in their schools?
4. What influence do school plants have on students' academic performance?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypothesis is tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the response of students in rural areas and those in urban areas with respect to the type of school plant available in their school.
2. There is no significant difference in attitude of principals in rural areas and those in urban areas as regards school plant maintenance.
3. There is no significant difference between the response of principals in rural areas and those in urban areas with respect to the type of school plant maintenance strategies they adopt in their school.
4. There is no significant difference in academic performance of students in schools with adequate school plant and those in schools with inadequate school plant.

### **Method**

The study which was conducted in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra State, Nigeria adopted a Correlation research design for the study. The population for this study is 1779 respondents which comprises all the 49 (forty-nine) principals of all the public secondary schools in Nnewi

Education zone and all the 1,730 (one thousand, seven hundred and thirty) Senior Secondary three (SS3) students in Nnewi Education zone as at June, 2013. The sample for the study was 88 respondents made up of 8 principals and 80 students. The simple random sampling technique was adopted in composing the sample. The instruments for data collection were two sets of questionnaires for the students and the principals, and the examination results of the students which was used as a check and for comparison. The questionnaires which were critically validated by three experts were subjected to reliability testing, and a reliability index obtained was 0.82 which is highly enough for the study. For the collection of data for the study, the eight secondary schools were visited by the researchers and two trained research assistants, while the questionnaire were administered to them. A total of 80 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the students and the principals. Above all, 90% return was recorded, which was okay for the study. The data was analyzed using mean score to answer the four research questions. Hypotheses one was tested using chi-square, while hypothesis two, three and four were tested using the t-test statistic.

## Results

In this chapter, the data collected from the field were analyzed and the summary of the findings for the research questions and hypotheses are presented in frequency tables below:

Research Question 1: What type of School plants are available in Secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra State?

**Table 1: Frequency scores of students on the type of School plants available in their schools**

U R B A N				R U R A L			
S/N	Yes	No	Decision	S/N	Yes	No	Decision
1.	36	-	Yes	1.	36	-	Yes
2.	28	8	Yes	2.	11	25	No
3.	31	5	Yes	3.	13	23	No
4.	36	-	Yes	4.	26	10	Yes
5.	32	4	Yes	5.	36	-	Yes
6.	36	-	Yes	6.	27	9	Yes
7.	30	6	Yes	7.	36	-	Yes
8.	28	8	Yes	8.	6	30	No
9.	36	-	Yes	9.	36	-	Yes
10.	30	6	Yes	10.	18	18	Yes
11.	24	12	Yes	11.	25	11	Yes
12.	29	7	Yes	12.	36	-	Yes
13.	6	30	No	13.	8	28	No
14.	10	26	No	14.	2	34	No

15.	36	-	Yes	15.	36	-	Yes
16.	14	22	No	16.	16	20	No
17.	20	16	Yes	17.	5	31	No
18.	19	17	Yes	18.	6	30	No
19.	26	10	Yes	19.	9	27	No
20.	-	36	No	20.	-	36	No
21.	9	27	No	21.	1	35	No
22.	26	10	Yes	22.	9	27	No
23.	36	-	Yes	23.	24	12	Yes
24.	36.	-	Yes	24.	36	-	Yes

From table 1 above, it was obvious and clearly seen that items 13, 14, 16, 20 & 21 for the urban schools were rated poor, which shows that these types of school plants are either very poor or not present in the various schools. The items include: storage facilities, counselling units, school hall, tractors and volleyball court. For the rural schools, the following items were also rated poor: items 2, 3, 8, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 & 22. This shows that there are less school plant in the rural schools compared to the urban schools.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of principals towards school plant maintenance in their schools?

**Table 2: Mean scores of principals on their attitude towards school plant maintenance in their schools.**

URBAN								
S/N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Decision		
1.	3	1	0	0	3.75	Agree		
2.	1	2	1	0	3.00	Agree		
3.	3	1	0	0	3.75	Agree		
4.	0	1	2	1	2.00	Disagree		
5.	0	2	2	0	2.50	Agree		
6.	0	1	3	0	2.25	Disagree		
7.	0	1	2	1	2.00	Disagree		
8.	0	0	2	2	1.50	Disagree		
9.	0	1	3	0	2.25	Disagree		
10.	0	1	2	1	2.00	Disagree		
				Gross mean	=	2.5		
RURAL								
S/N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Decision		
1.	0	4	0	0	3.00	Agree		
2.	0	3	1	0	2.75	Agree		

3.	3	1	0	0	3.75	Agree
4.	0	1	3	0	2.25	Disagree
5.	1	3	0	0	3.25	Agree
6.	0	0	4	0	2.00	Disagree
7.	0	0	3	1	1.75	Disagree
8.	0	0	1	3	1.25	Disagree
9.	0	1	2	1	2.00	Disagree
10.	0	0	4	0	2.00	Disagree

Gross mean = 2.5

From table 2 above, under the urban schools, it is observed that a gross mean of 2.5 was obtained showing that the principals in urban schools have positive attitude towards school plants maintenance in their schools, although they rated 6 items poor which include items 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10. On the other hand, it is also observed that the gross mean of 2.4 was obtained for the rural schools which indicates that the principals in rural schools have negative attitude towards school plant maintenance in their school.

Research Question 3: What type of school plant maintenance strategies do the principals adopt in their schools

**Table 3: Mean scores of students on the type of school plant maintenance strategies their principals adopt.**

URBAN						
S/N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Decision
25.	2	10	20	4	2.78	Agree
26.	6	18	8	4	2.72	Agree
27.	10	17	7	2	2.97	Agree
28.	9	13	10	4	2.75	Agree
29.	19	10	6	1	3.31	Agree
30.	8	12	10	6	2.61	Agree
31.	23	10	3	0	3.56	Agree
32.	20	13	2	1	3.44	Agree
33.	7	13	12	4	2.64	Agree

Gross mean = 2.98

RURAL						
S/N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Decision
1.	6	12	16	2	2.61	Agree
2.	7	13	12	4	2.64	Agree
3.	8	13	10	5	2.67	Agree

4.	7	10	10	9	2.42	Disagree
5.	10	8	10	8	2.56	Agree
6.	4	10	14	8	2.28	Disagree
7.	16	8	6	6	2.94	Agree
8.	18	12	5	1	3.31	Agree
9.	6	18	8	4	2.72	Agree

Gross mean = 2.68

From table 3, the gross mean for urban schools is 2.98, and also shows that principals in urban schools adopt all the strategies identified in the questionnaire based on their ratings of 2.50 and above. On the other hand, the gross mean for rural schools shows a value of 2.68. Although 2 items were rated poor but that does not affect the general gross mean for the rural schools. The two items that were rated poor are items 4 & 6.

Research Question 4: What influence do school plant have on students' academic performance?

**Table 4: Mean scores of students on the influence of school plant on their academic performance.**

URBAN						
S/N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Decision
34.	12	21	0	0	3.33	Agree
35.	6	14	5	1	3.25	Agree
36.	10	10	10	6	2.67	Agree
37.	9	16	7	4	2.83	Agree
38.	3	7	12	14	1.97	Disagree
39.	11	12	9	4	2.83	Agree
40.	18	10	6	2	3.22	Agree
41.	9	8	8	11	2.42	Disagree

Gross mean = 2.82

RURAL						
S/N	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Decision
10.	19	10	6	1	3.31	Agree
11.	20	13	2	1	3.44	Agree
12.	2	6	10	18	1.78	Disagree
13.	7	13	12	4	2.64	Agree
14.	13	16	6	1	3.14	Agree
15.	17	13	6	0	3.33	Agree
16.	4	8	10	14	2.06	Disagree
17.	4	10	14	8	2.28	Disagree

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Gross mean = 2.75

From the table above, the gross mean for the urban school is 2.82. This indicates that school plant have positive influence on students' academic performance in urban areas, although 2 items were rejected or rated poor. They include items 38 & 41. For the rural areas, the gross mean obtained was 2.75 which also shows that there is positive influence of the school plant on the academic performance of students in rural areas. Meanwhile items 36, 40 & 41 were rated poor by the rural students.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the response of students in urban schools and rural schools with respect to the type of school plant available in their school.

**Table 5: Chi-square of urban and rural students in the type of school plant available in their school.**

Respondents	N	df	$\chi^2$ - cal	$\chi^2$ - crit	$\alpha$	Decision
Rural Students	24	(24-1)(2-1)				
Urban Students	24	23x1 =23	451.88	35.17	0.05	

Reject H

---

Table 5 shows a calculated value of chi-square = 451.88 which is greater than the critical value of chi-square= 35.17. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore the alternative hypothesis will hold showing that there is significant difference between the response of students in urban schools and those in rural schools with respect to the type of school plant available in their school. (See appendix 3 for detailed calculation of results).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in attitude of principals in urban schools and those in rural schools as regards school maintenance.

**Table 6: t-test comparison of mean scores of urban and rural students on the attitude of principals towards school plant maintenance.**

Respondents	N	x	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	$\alpha$	Decision
Rural Students	36	2.98	0.35					
Urban Students	36	2.98	0.35	70	2.01	1.98	0.05	

Reject H

---

Table 6 shows that a calculated t-value of 2.01 is greater than the critical (table) value of t = 1.980. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis stands or upholds. This shows that there is significant difference in the attitude of principals in urban schools

and those in rural schools as regards school plant maintenance. (See appendix 4 for detailed evaluation of the result)

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the response of principals in urban schools and those in rural schools with respect to the type of school plant maintenance strategies they adopt in their school.

**Table 7: t-test comparison of mean score of urban and rural principals on the type of school plant maintenance strategies they adopt in their schools.**

Respondents	N	x	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	$\alpha$	Decision
Rural Students	36	2.5	0.72					
Urban Students	36	2.4	0.72	70	0.30	1.98	0.05	Accept H

Table 7 shows that the critical value of t (1.980) is greater than the calculated value of t (0.3086). This means that the hypothesis is accepted meaning that there is no significant difference between the response of principals in urban and those in rural schools with respect to the type of school plant maintenance strategies they adopt in the schools. (See appendix 5 for detailed calculation of results).

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of students in schools with adequate school plant and those students in schools with inadequate school plants.

**Table 8: Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) of urban and rural students' academic performance in relation to adequacy of school plant in their schools.**

Respondents	N	df	$\chi^2$ - cal	$\chi^2$ - crit	$\alpha$	Decision
Rural Students	36	(36-1)(2-1)				
Urban Students	36	35 x 1 = 35	1276.95	51.60	0.05	Accept H

Table 8 shows that the value of  $\chi^2$  obtained (calculated) is 1276.95 which is greater than the table value 51.60. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted which means that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students in schools with adequate school plant and those students in schools with inadequate school plant. (See appendix 6 for detailed calculation of results).

### Summary of Major Findings

The major findings that emerged from the study are summarised as follows:



1. Both urban and rural students rated poorly the following items as not part of the school plants available in their various schools: Storage facilities, counselling units, school hall, tractors and volleyball court.
2. Both urban and rural principals rated high the following items as the type of school plant maintenance strategies they adopt: involvement of both staff and student in maintenance, make fund available for maintenance, appoint teachers to supervise specific school plant, and apply preventive measure to care for school plant.
3. Urban students agreed that their principals have positive attitude towards school plant maintenance in all items while the rural students also agreed but rated items 28 & 30 poorly.
4. Both urban and rural students rejected item 41; the fact that they are able to study well under any condition.
5. The following types of school plant are available in urban school, but not available in rural schools. The items include: photocopy machine, fans in classrooms, fans in laboratories, printer and computers.
6. The urban students agreed that their classroom and laboratories help them to learn better while the rural students disagreed to it. Also, the urban students accept the fact that the state of their classroom does not affect their performance while the rural students reject the fact.
7. The result of the four hypotheses shows that hypothesis 1, 2 & 4 were rejected showing that there is significant difference while hypothesis 3 was accepted showing no significant difference.

### **Discussions of the Results.**

The results shall be discussed under each research questions, and then the results of the four hypotheses.

#### **The types of school plants available in secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra state.**

The result of the findings under this section reveals that students from urban schools rated high most of the school plants identified in the questionnaire especially the following which their counterpart in rural schools rated poor. These items include: photocopying machine, fans in the classrooms, fans in the laboratories, printers and computers. This means that these items are available in urban schools but not available in rural schools. This is in line with the idea of Ajayi (1999) who asserted that urban schools' pupils perform better than rural school pupils because they have better or more school plants as a result of their location closer to the government. Although both the urban school students and rural school students rated some items poor as not available in their schools, the urban school students have more and better school plants that the rural schools.

**The attitude of Principals towards school plant maintenance in secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra state.**

The result of the findings under this section shows that the Principals of urban schools have positive attitude towards school plant maintenance because all the items so identified were rated high by urban students. The rural school principals also had positive attitude towards school plant maintenance but not high compared to those in urban schools. The rural students rated poorly items 28 & 30 which shows that the principals of rural schools have negative attitude towards reminding staff/students to be conscious of cleanliness/orderliness as well as having negative attitude towards leading by example on maintenance. Meanwhile, both urban and rural principals portrayed a positive attitude towards school plant maintenance which is clearly seen or observed by the result of the gross mean obtained for both groups. The revelation of this result is in support of the view of Castaldi (1985;18) that “it is the basic justification of principals for giving significant attention to school plant maintenance as an administrative task of the educational system.”

**The type of school plant maintenance strategies the principals adopt in secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra state.**

In this section, the result of the findings revealed that the gross mean obtained for the urban school principals response is 2.50 while that of the rural school principals is 2.40. this shows that the urban school principals adopted a better school plant maintenance strategy compared to their counterparts in the rural schools. Although both groups rated the same number of items positively and negatively, the percentage rating of the principals from urban schools tends to be higher compared to those of principals in rural schools. The commonest strategies both groups seem to adopt include the following: involvement of both staff and students in the maintenance strategies, strive to make enough funds available for school plant maintenance, appoint teachers to supervise specific duties in plant maintenance, as well as apply preventive measures to care for school plants.

**The influence of school plant on students’ academic performance in secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra state.**

The result of the findings of this section shows that urban school students agree with items 36 & 40 that their classroom and laboratories help them to learn better and that the state of their classroom and laboratories does not affect their academic performance. On the other hand, the students from the rural school disagrees with items 36 & 40 which shows that their classroom and laboratories do not help them to learn better and that the state of their classroom and laboratories does affect their academic performance. This is in agreement with the assertion of the Tennessee Advisory Commission on InterGovernment Relations (TACR:2003) that there was a

growing evidence of a correlation between the adequacy of a school facility and student behaviour and performance. It went further to saying that school facilities and the classroom must be flexible enough to accommodate changing learning patterns and methods. Meanwhile, it was also observed that both the students in urban schools and their counterpart in rural schools do not agree with item 41 that they are able to study well under any condition. This goes further to buttress the point of Nwagwu (1998) that behind every successful performance of either the students, teachers or school administrator, there is a wonderful school plant. Castaldi (1985) also opined that when a skilful teacher or principal works in a well-designed and highly functional school building with necessary instructional facilities, he is likely to achieve a level of instructional effectiveness leading to high academic performance of his students than when those facilities are not provided.

#### **The results of the four hypotheses.**

Based on the results of the four hypotheses stated, hypothesis 1, 2 & 4 had a critical (table) value which is less than the calculated (obtained) value, revealing that there is significant differences with respect to each of their variables or conditions. Hypothesis 3 showed a critical value that is greater than calculated value which indicate that there is no significant difference between the response of principals in urban schools and those in rural schools with respect to the type of school plant maintenance strategies they adopt in their schools.

#### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that there is significantly positive influence of school plant on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nnewi Education zone of Anambra state.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government and other providers of education should equip the schools in rural areas with modern school plants so as to meet up with other schools in the urban areas who have better school plant than theirs. This will motivate people to remain in the rural areas the school plants there would be equal to that in the urban area, hence, avoiding over-enrolment in the urban areas and under-enrolment in the rural area.
2. Government should strive to allocate enough funds for schools in rural areas, and avoid the prejudice of giving more to the urban schools. When education administrators, like the principals in the rural areas do not get enough funds, little or no attention is paid to the school plants and

its maintenance, hence the importance of government striking a balance in the allocation of funds to schools in both rural and urban areas.

3. Education commissions/boards should organise seminars and conferences for principals in rural areas to promote their attitude towards school plant maintenance and better strategies for maintenance of school plant. The influence of school plant on students' academic performance will be improved and seen to be positive especially in rural schools if the government equip the rural schools with better plants to compete with their counterpart in the urban schools.

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## TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION OF THE MIDDLE YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT. ROMANIAN VERSION

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**Abstract:** *The middle years' age is a period of changes and challenges, due to physical growth and motor skill development, cognitive development, and socio-emotional development (Harold & Hay, 2005). Cognitive development refers to how a person thinks and perceives his or her world through the action of genetic and learned factors. During middle childhood, children's vocabularies increase, and they also develop the ability to express intentions. Socio-emotional development refers to understanding and regulating emotions. Children's autonomy, their secure emotional development and psychological well-being are strongly influenced by parenting style and disciplinary practices (Harold, 2005). The purpose of this paper was the translation, adaptation, and validation of the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) from English to Romanian. The aim was to assess the factor structure of the scale. The methodology used was the Exploratory factor analysis and we identified three dimensions of the Instrument: Social and emotional development, connectedness, and school experiences of the MDI - Romanian version. We decided to validate this instrument on a Romanian sample, because of the good psychometric properties of the original scale, which recommend it as a reliable tool and thus helps the process of studying this age. Results suggest that the translated and adapted instrument is adequate and valid for evaluating aspects of cognitive and socio-emotional development of middle years' Romanian children.*

**Keywords:** *Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI), children's well-being, contextual and social assets; population assessment; validation.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The importance and usefulness of this instrument has been demonstrated by the fact that it has been translated and adapted in several countries around the world. The original study validating the MDI Instrument was made by Kimberly et al. (2012). This tool collects data about important aspects of a child's life, such as thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The purpose to translate and adapt this instrument on a Romanian population is driven by the need of better understanding the lives of children and actively improve it. The MDI is a standardized measurement, it is sensitive to the complexity of development and so this can be a first step in this process of change. With this tool, we can assess the level of well-being and the factors that derive from it. It is important to discover these dimensions, to provide children with developmental opportunities and to understand their behavior which is constantly changing at this stage of development. In each country, there are different development characteristics that are dependent on the culture and attitudes promoted by the society.

Being a self-report questionnaire, The Middle Years Development Instrument collect answers from children about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in school and in the community. This instrument is not an assessment, it just helps gain a deeper understanding of their health and well-being during middle childhood (Kershaw, Irwin, Trafford, & Hertzman, 2005).

There are five dimensions of information that are gathered by the MDI (Schonert-Reichl, Guhn, Gadermann, Hymel, Sweiss, & Herzmann, 2013): physical health and well-being, connectedness, social and emotional development, school experiences, and the use of after school time.

As a developmental period, middle childhood brings some important changes. Children develop their autonomy by this time; they can dress themselves or tie their shoes. They also start to ask for independence from family members because this period is important for social dimension, they start school and therefore, they will spend much more time with their mates.

### *Cognition*

Socio-emotional development during the middle years highlights the acquisition of some abilities through which children are capable to express and regulate emotions. Friendships are also important (Perrier, Bernier, Dirks, Daspe, & Gregoire, 2020; Kershaw et al., 2005), because children spend more time in school and so they must interact, develop their autonomy, and respond adequately in different situations. With these major changes, they can feel stressed (Sachs, Rakow, Shepley, & Peditto, 2020), and for this matter, they experience different coping and emotional coping

strategies. During this process, they learn to control strong emotions (shame, guilt) by avoiding certain situations or by distracting others' attention. Children become aware that they may be in a state of emotional conflict (Verhees, Ceulemans, van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Bosmans, 2020), in which they have opposing feelings for the same person. For example, they may feel angry with a colleague, even if they are friends (Kenneth, 1998). The psychological well-being status of children is influenced by their ability to understand that other children have specific skills and deficits in the common areas (Kenneth, 1998).

### ***Behavior***

The concept of socio-emotional development is also defined as a process of developing and supporting skills and competences within a desirable environment, which includes active learning and the possibility of exploration (Vaida, 2016). The preschool period is a significant stage, as emotions are formed depending on the environment in which they were raised. Children that grow in a supportive environment, with responsive parents that are careful to their emotional changes, they will be able to recognize their emotions. In an environment where they are neglected and ignored, they will face emotional problems (Ulutas & Kanak, 2016).

As children grow more independent, it is essential for parents to be careful at injury risks. The highest cause of death from unintentional injury among children of this age are motor vehicle crashes (Centers of Disease and Control Central, 2016). Communication within the family is important for several reasons, the most important being that social interaction is the basis of the formation of a stable family. In fact, family communication is the mechanism of most early socializing experiences. By observing and interacting with family members, communication is formed for most children, and it is also how they begin to think about communication as a process (Bruner, 1990). By communicating with significant family members, children learn what they can and cannot anticipate from a person they are talking to, how social relationships work, and how they should behave within them.

### ***Brain***

A study by Ornaghi, Brockmeier & Grazzani (2014) shows that it is necessary to develop mental communication skills with schoolmates, as it helps to develop emotions and to understand false beliefs in the age range of 7-10 years old. According to this study, children who participate in mental conversations about stories show improvements in the theory of mind, as opposed to those who only listen to stories (Ornaghi, Brockmeier & Grazzani, 2014).



With these motivations in mind, Kimberly et al. (2012) designed the MDI instrument for children graded from 4 to 7. This instrument is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers, but it aims at finding the way children feel and think at school, at home, or with their friends. MDI assesses children's well-being and contextual assets during middle childhood (Kimberly, 2013). The original version consisted of 77 items on a Likert scale, and a few questions for demographic data. The revised version consisted of 30 items, and this is the version we decided to adapt for the Romanian population. There are five dimensions of the instrument:

1. Social and emotional development.
2. Connectedness to peers and adults at school, at home, and in the neighborhood.
3. School experiences.
4. Physical health and well-being.
5. Constructive use of time after school.

We have translated and adapted the instrument according to the scientific recommendations (Chavez & Canino, 2005; Sousa & Rojjanasrirat, 2011) for psychological instruments. The initial translation from English to Romanian was done by a group of five specialists, followed by a back translation.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The Romanian version of the scale was administered to a total of 205 children, aged 6 to 10, with a mean age of 8.16 years. Of the 205, 50,7% (104) were girls and 49,3% (101) were boys, mainly from large urban areas. All the participants and their parents were informed about the purpose of the questionnaire, the fact that they could withdraw at any time, and that the information was confidential. The time for answering the 30 items was approximately twenty minutes.

### *Procedure*

The original study validating the MDI Instrument was made by Kimberly et al. (2012) and we followed the steps from that study: we calculated the descriptive statistics, the internal consistency of the scale and the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 1:

*Means and standard deviations of the scale items.*

<b>item</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>item</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>item</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>1</b>	4.11	.849	<b>11</b>	2.90	1.21	<b>21</b>	3.09	.859
<b>2</b>	4.37	.739	<b>12</b>	2.60	1.18	<b>22</b>	3.05	.882
<b>3</b>	4.15	.783	<b>13</b>	1.03	.169	<b>23</b>	3.04	.877
<b>4</b>	2.14	1.19	<b>14</b>	3.18	.722	<b>24</b>	1.21	.609
<b>5</b>	2.10	1.12	<b>15</b>	3.26	.696	<b>25</b>	4.02	.826

<b>6</b>	2.32	1.21	<b>16</b>	3.24	.732	<b>26</b>	4.12	.826
<b>7</b>	3.23	1.22	<b>17</b>	3.38	.734	<b>27</b>	4.05	.922
<b>8</b>	3.33	1.33	<b>18</b>	3.45	.722	<b>28</b>	4.38	.767
<b>9</b>	3.61	1.15	<b>19</b>	3.40	.676	<b>29</b>	4.47	.744
<b>10</b>	3.28	1.25	<b>20</b>	3.47	.674	<b>30</b>	4.51	.757

Next, we calculated the KMO index, for sample adequacy, according to the recommendations of Tabachnick & Fidell (2006), followed by the Bartlett sphericity test, to verify if the correlation items are different from zero. The KMO value is recommended to be a minimum of .5 and a value of .9 represents an excellent adequacy of the sample (Kaiser, 1974). The results are represented in Table 2:

Table 2

*KMO Index and Bartlett Sphericity*

Test	Values	
Keiser Meyer Olkin Test	.732	
Bartlett Sphericity	Chi Square aprox.	2123.29
	Df.	465
	Sig.	.000

**RESULTS**

To determine the number of factors that the scale items are loading on, we did an exploratory factor analysis, which is the recommended when we are dealing with a translation and adaptation of a scale (Sava, 2004) and identified 7 factors that have an Eigenvalue over 1, as presented in figure 1, which is exactly as those obtained in the original scale. We calculated the total variance (table 5), which explains 55.9% of the total variance.

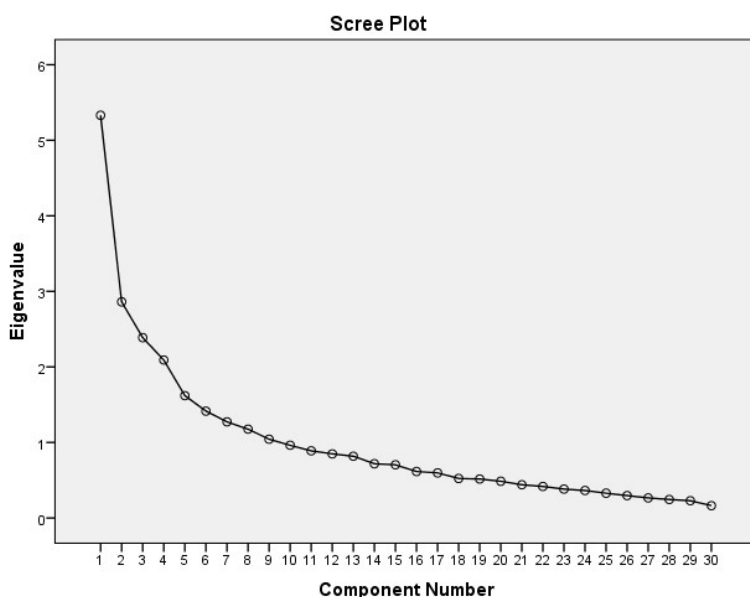
Table 5

*Total Variance explained*

Componen t	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
<b>1</b>	5.3	17.4	17.4
<b>2</b>	2.8	9.5	26.9
<b>3</b>	2.3	7.9	34.8

<b>4</b>	2.0	6.9	41.7
<b>5</b>	1.6	5.3	47.0
<b>6</b>	1.4	4.7	51.7
<b>7</b>	1.2	4.2	55.9

Figure 1  
*Graphic of the relevant factors*



Confirming that the translated scale has 7 factors, as in the original version (Kimberley et al., 2012), we computed an analysis on the main components, with a varimax rotation, to establish which items load on which factors. For this sample size, we have suppressed the values that fall below .30, for a better and simpler interpretation of the results (Field, 2000).

Table 6  
*Item loadings on factors*

	<b>FACTOR</b>						
<b>ITEM</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
29	.75						

30	.72		
28	.63		
27	.62		
26	.61		
25	.54		
<hr/>			
18	.81		
17	.76		
19	.75		
20	.66		
<hr/>			
23		.73	
22		.72	
21		.69	
12		.60	
11		.54	
10		.44	
24		.40	
<hr/>			
5		.81	
4		.71	
6		.63	
<hr/>			
14		.75	
15		.68	
16		.64	
<hr/>			
8		.82	
9		.76	
7		.63	
<hr/>			
2			.74
1			.71
3			.51
13			.42
<hr/>			

In the last part of data analysis, we calculated the internal consistency for the entire scale with the Alpha Cronbach coefficient. The obtained value (table 7) is acceptable and recommends the scale as a valid instrument for the Romanian population.

Table 7

*Alpha Cronbach value*

<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>	<b>Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of items</b>
.70	.74	30

## **DISCUSSIONS**

In this study, we aimed to translate and adapt the Middle Years Development Instrument and calculate the psychometric properties, to be used as a reliable tool for the Romanian population. We decided to adapt this instrument because its content is well integrated with the large dimensions of a child's development. It targets both the child's relationship with the parents and with the other relevant people in his life, such as teachers, mates, and neighbors. It is a tool that, following translation and adaptation, can be used to evaluate Romanian children, for screening and intervention purposes. It is also an easy tool to use by any parent.

The internal consistency of the scale of .70 is an acceptable one and we are confident that with a larger sample of respondents, the value will increase. The estimation of fidelity using methods of internal consistency is indicated only for homogeneous tests, and the scales translated and adapted by us are heterogeneous (it measures more than one feature). The scale has more than one feature, all of which are described in scale validation studies. For MDI, these dimensions are socio-emotional development, relationships with adults, colleagues, and neighbors ("connectedness"), experiences at school, physical health and well-being and time spent after school. Of these five, the translated scale covers only the first three dimensions. We chose to integrate only these dimensions because we considered that only they match our population, with our culture and habits; these are very important factors in the child's development, and we must consider that.

Based on the results obtained at the fidelity of the scale, we can identify some of the factors that probably influenced the score obtained. One of the factors is the test itself; there is a likelihood that some questions were ambiguous, misspelled, or too difficult for some respondents. Another factor may be the administration of the test; in the case of subjects who received the scale in physical format, error could be generated by disturbing factors or by the atmosphere itself in the classroom. The instructions may not have been understood or heard. In the case of subjects who responded to online questionnaires, error could have occurred due to the physical context in which they were when they completed or the psycho-physiological state in which they were. In fact, the psycho-physiological state is a specific factor that can influence fidelity - if the subject is tired, ill, or simply in a negative mood, biases can occur very easily. Future research should examine other relevant indices and apply the scale to a larger population.

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## MATHEMATICS AND NATURAL SCIENCES TEACHING MODELS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL USING OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** *Natural Sciences and Mathematics are a set of disciplines concerned with discovering, researching, and comprehending the laws that govern the natural world. People who are passionate about exact sciences have created the majority of the big discoveries that have revolutionized our planet. The goal of learning natural science is to increase scientific knowledge and understanding, improve science process skills, and get a better grasp of science's role in society. The goal of scientific education is to promote and empower pupils to develop curious minds and a fascination with science and the natural world. In scientific and other contexts, acquire knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skills to solve problems and make informed decisions. The present article, presents teaching models for the above-mentioned school subjects, by transposing it to the outdoor environment. The national curriculum for primary school was analyzed before creating the teaching patterns and activities.*

**Key words:** *math; science; environment; primary school; outdoor education.*



## **Introduction**

The world is changing and developing. Passed down from generation to generation, the demands of society are growing. Therefore, the modern education system is under pressure to meet these requirements, training competent young people who can easily adapt to the environment they belong to. The new era needs new people, who need to be trained in an open education system, which is always one step ahead of the changes that may occur along the way. Education in the 21st century is one that can respond to the economic, technological and societal changes that are taking place at an ever-increasing pace. (Chiş, 2002) It is an education that prepares children to succeed in a world where everything is based on the acquisition of new skills, abilities and attitudes. The role of educators in the modern century is to help each student learn how to learn, encourage collaboration, think critically and communicate effectively. These are skills that students need to develop during schooling to adapt to the dynamic workplace of today and tomorrow. (Roman & Balaş, 2010)

## **Theoretical foundation**

Different sorts and specific styles of education can be carried out in various educational environments. Formal education, non-formal education, and informal education are the three most common types of education studied. These sophisticated educational methods might be regarded as lifetime learning. Even though these three types of education have various fields of activity and functions throughout the educational process, they can all play a role through mutual reliance.

Outdoor education, teaching and learning in nature, kindergarten, and forestry school are terms that have lately surfaced in our country's educational environment. Because the notion is so broad, it necessitates a definite conceptual and semantic boundary. The terms "outdoor education," "outside education," and "outdoor learning" are commonly used in the Romanian educational system to characterize the notion. They can generate terminology confusion, just like borrowed words (mostly new words). Many names have been used in the literature to characterize outdoor learning spaces: outdoor, park, outdoor classroom, outdoor area, playground, and campus.

Outdoor education can take place during school hours or after school, while respecting the school curriculum. Its activities can be used as a supplement to class time or can be carried out independently of class time, as long as the content of the school curriculum is relevant and respected for each age group. It is worth mentioning that outdoor sports or recreational activities cannot be included in the field of outdoor education, as they are not

organized for educational purposes and therefore do not seek to achieve goals that lead to learning outcomes. (Egerău et all, 2020)

### **Recent perspectives**

Teachers are constantly concerned with the criteria for choosing the methods to use in the instructional-educational process. Education is constantly evolving and changing, and teachers need to keep up with social and educational updates. Trends are imposed both by students, through their needs and interests, and by society, through the requirements they launch daily. These directions are also established by the management of the educational systems, be they local, national or international, through the policies they operate with and the novelties they introduce in the curricula. These translate into concrete learning activities that are offered to learners directly, through the contents and practices with which they operate. Educators and teachers are the bridge between educators and society, and they must facilitate and streamline the educational process by knowing the class of students, traditional and modern working methods, adapting them to the needs of the group and constantly updating knowledge and their own training policies and styles. (Roman, 2014)

In order to be able to make the most of the knowledge about the curriculum and its components, it is proposed to analyze the school curriculum at the level of the fundamental acquisitions cycle. This is necessary because there must be a clear picture of expectations, so that later the outdoor activities can be integrated, closely respecting the curricular principles. (Herlo, 2016)

The preparatory class is a period designed to accommodate school life, a time that allows students a good adaptation to the program, community and specific requirements of this diverse environment, in order to develop socio-emotional, intellectual and physical. From a socio-emotional point of view, the preparatory class supports the child to receive confidence in their own strengths, to increase their self-esteem, initiative and desire for success. The preparatory class is part of the general compulsory education having the role of preparing the student for the specific learning first of all in the first grade, but also in the following years of school. The accommodation with the school environment is done in a friendly way, the main learning method being the game, as a predominant activity for the age of six.

The curricular areas around which the contents are developed are: language and communication, mathematics and natural sciences, man and society, physical education, sports and health, arts, technologies and counseling and guidance. These are designated on the basis of epistemological and psychopedagogical principles and criteria. In each of the curricular areas presented, the contents will be made with resources as varied as possible and in different types of activities, as attractive as possible for children. For

example, the activity can be organized in simultaneous workshops, so that there is variety, that those with a higher degree of difficulty can be better followed and supervised. Outdoor education finds its place in the organization of activities in the preparatory class, the school curriculum encouraging educational practices beneficial to learners, individually, but also as a group. (Cerghit, 2006)

Analyzing the competencies described at this level, it can be seen that cooperation, socialization, going out and participating in activities in as many and varied contexts as possible is desirable at this level. In the document presented by the specialists from the Ministry of National Education, it appears that in each of the areas, the emphasis is on the use of natural materials, the most familiar and open environments, self-discovery and belonging to various social groups, discovery of national identity and belonging to the city or village environment, manifestation of curiosity for phenomena, relationships, regularities in the immediate environment, manifestation of concern for a clean and friendly environment, etc. Problem solving, critical thinking, making observations or comparisons, are required to be carried out in an environment as natural and friendly as possible, which offers countless natural resources. Discovering sensations or emotions can be done in the natural setting close to the group room. Sensing the beauty of everyday life, participating in various racing games, identifying simple ways to maintain good health in the family environment, are skills that need to be developed at this age, using activities in outdoor education, and adapting the contents presented to the natural environment, so that the familiarization of the students with this educational level is easier and more efficient. (Bocoş, 2002)

The elements presented above indicate the openness and motivation to use outdoor education with all its components, in order to form key competences and transversal competences at the level of the preparatory class. The basic idea of interdisciplinarity is that, on the one hand, the conceptual and methodological apparatus of several disciplines are used in interconnection, to examine a topic or a problem but, above all, to develop integrated, transversal, key competencies. and interdisciplinary.

The second level of the fundamental acquisition cycle is class I. At this level, students take part in school programs that capitalize on the learning experience gained up to the age of seven, including that of the preparatory class. For children who have not graduated from the preparatory class, there is no obstacle in the accumulation of knowledge, and then the development of skills. This is due to the fact that the evaluation is carried out concentrically and the contents are always repeated. It was stated above that the first level of the cycle of fundamental acquisitions is intended for accommodation and socialization, in the first grade, it can be seen according

to the curricular analysis that it is the year of effective integration in the educational environment. As a novelty, the introduction of qualifiers as scoring conventions is observed.

The contents are introduced gradually, as in the preparatory class, using counting and intuitive support, in contexts of exploring the environment close and known to the student. The didactic game predominates, ensuring the active participation of the students. It encourages exploring the immediate environment, asking questions, verbal interventions, expressing one's own ideas and feelings about what one learns and proposing solutions to solve problems. It is preferable, whenever possible, to organize didactic sequences of observation, experimentation, measurement, data collection on various plants and animals, in the natural environment. Such a holistic learning, close to the child's knowledge universe, has the advantage of being more interesting, in order to ensure a deeper understanding of the concepts. (Roman & Coşarbă, 2020)

The current school programs promote experiential learning, through the direct involvement of the student in the studied reality. The emphasis is on capitalizing in real contexts on the knowledge, skills and values acquired, by increasing the share of practical-applicative activities within each school subject. Competence training depends to a large extent on how the teacher designs and organizes learning and the degree to which it emphasizes the applicative dimension of knowledge.

By analyzing the skills required of a student who has completed primary school, we can see the need for a dynamic, natural, open education, an education that is in constant contact with society and its members, but especially an education constantly concerned with the environment, natural areas, harmonious physical and cognitive development in the natural environment. We also notice the encouragement of self-discovery and relationships that are based on communication, sharing, discovery, experience, learning being holistic and especially interdisciplinary. The purpose of this level of education is to provide the conceptual, mental and behavioral bases that allow the child to adapt effectively to the next stage of schooling, but especially the social integration of each individual as quickly as possible. Competences can be acquired more easily and quickly if each teacher prepares the necessary space and resources for modern learning, starting from the needs and interests of each child. This can be achieved especially through the use of outdoor education activities.

### **Curriculum analysis at primary school level in terms of math and natural sciences**

Curriculum, in the educational sense, represents the values that a certain society or group believes in. The educational ideal, which underlies the

curriculum, indicates an orientation towards a set of values. This ideal is the expression of the personality project that the society wants for its members, becoming a fundamental attribution of the educational institutions. Currently, the concept of curriculum, the one used in the sciences of education, has various meanings. As a program of school activities, it includes all components of the educational process, namely curriculum, school curricula, curricular products, learning and assessment strategies, etc. The curriculum should respond to the educational ideal by aligning with the socio-economic reality of a given moment. In a world whose main characteristic is change, the curriculum can conflict with the requirements of society. In earlier times, progress was much slower, and cultural values seemed to last forever. Today the future is easy to approximate, so the curriculum must anticipate the future for which it prepares members of society.

Recent studies in the field of primary education have drawn the attention of specialists to the improvement of teaching methods and strategies, as well as the activities carried out in the classroom. Recently, we want to renew pedagogical methods, so that learning becomes one aimed at developing new skills. Thus, teachers must organize their educational approach taking into account: curricular provisions, organizational strategies and teaching methodology.

There are certain methods that are used in primary education in order to achieve a teaching-learning activity as efficient as possible. The method is a set of operations that is constituted as an instrument of human action, in general, through which the knowledgeable subject approaches the revelation of the essence of the objective world. The didactic methodology means the set of methods and procedures used in the training process based on a unitary conception regarding the teaching-learning-evaluation process, the principles and the laws according to which it is guided. Modern education no longer distinguishes between the importance of some methods and the placement of others in inferior positions. Education is currently pursuing how these methods are used to achieve the goals.

### **Mathematics and natural sciences teaching models**

Every student needs to develop a deep understanding of mathematical concepts and numerical skills, so they must engage in value contexts in which these abstract concepts can be applied to real life situations. In order for this approach to take place, it is recommended to use outdoor education in this curricular area as well. Numbers serve to make people's lives easier, and this must be understood even from an early age. Mathematics or science should not be difficult, nor should it scare students. Children can benefit from learning mathematics using outdoor strategies through the access that nature or the outdoor environment offers to various resources. Practical work

as well as teamwork help students to develop communication situations through which they independently develop their mathematical language. There are many activities in this regard, which can be used at any age. Especially at the level of the fundamental acquisition cycle, when students are eager to learn and curious to experiment, the mathematical and scientific activities carried out outside the classroom are more than beneficial, streamlining learning and the pace of accumulation of educational experiences leading to learning. Distances, measurements, comparisons with different objects collected from nature, calculations or the use of mathematical or physical formulas are much easier in nature, when students have the opportunity to experiment in a practical, direct, and not abstract. For some students this is a real help, because abstract concepts are harder to understand. At the preschool level, as they are used to learning through the use of different tools, it is more difficult for them to adapt to school age, where the use of these educational resources is increasingly rare. (Roman & Balaş, 2014)

*Teaching math outdoors*

1. A useful exercise in calculations is that in which the students sit in a single row, one behind the other, and at the organizer's whistle, they run one by one, over a distance of 400 meters. At the end of the race, each student will hear a simple operation with two terms, addition or subtraction, and will choose the result from a lot of posters that will be placed in front of him on the ground. The strong points of this exercise are: spending time in nature, physical exercise, a minimum of competitiveness, enough time to think about the exercise, fun, learning through play, etc. If such an exercise were done in the classroom, there would not be enough time for each child to go to the blackboard, on top of that there would be embarrassment and fear that he has to answer correctly or he will be laughed at in front of colleagues. During this exercise, each child has the opportunity to come forward, even several times in 15 minutes allocated to the exercise, and teachers have the opportunity to add other exercises at that time and capitalize on other content.

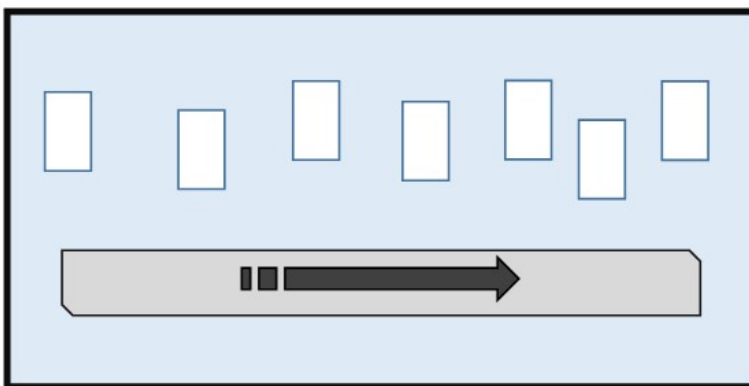


Image nb. 1. Exercise model

2. Another exercise designed to ensure the practice of mathematics is that in which each student stands with his feet apart in front of a tree and moves his gaze from the top of the tree to the base. When the student can clearly see the top of the tree, he will ask a colleague to measure the distance between the child and the tree. Then, to this distance is added the number that represents the length of the first student's leg. The end result is actually the height of the tree.
3. Choose a place on the school grounds and mark it with chalk. Students spread all over the field and choose different ways to get to the marked place. Beforehand, they estimate how many of the chosen moves will be needed to reach the marked place. The estimate is tested by putting the movements into practice. The exercise can be repeated by choosing other movements during the time allotted to the activity.
4. Introductory exercises in mathematical activities, with short duration, can be the choice of stones of different sizes and the choice of a partner. It will be calculated who has more and who has fewer elements. With a chalk, draw the representative signs (<, > or =) to measure the quantities or sizes of the objects found. The activity can continue with changing partners and performing other measurements using the same representative signs.

Usually, the mathematical exercises performed in the outdoor environment start from the students' curiosities and questions: How tall is the biggest building belonging to the school? How can we measure it? Each student can come up with answers and ideas, and even choose the most appropriate ones and test them. All the exercises are discussed in the classroom, and even some of them are noted on the notebooks and the educational process is continued, the two spaces complementing each other.

*Teaching natural sciences outdoors*

Within the natural sciences, a discipline belonging to the same curricular area, as many outdoor activities can be performed. It has been proven that all disciplines that are based on science are studied much more easily in practice, outside the classroom, where each student can experiment at his own pace. Natural sciences connect biology with physics and chemistry, and studied in the natural environment and leaving the usual classroom, students have unique learning experiences. In addition to these aspects, the natural sciences studied in the external environment, encourage children's correct thinking about the correct use of resources and about the human impact on the environment. Moreover, students have the opportunity to interact with the natural environment and its elements, learning freely about plants and animals, climate, cardinal points, etc. The effects of these outdoor activities do not take long to appear, because the respect for the environment and for all those around it increases in this way. Observation, experience, scoring and drawing conclusions are the steps that usually take place during science classes at the level of the fundamental acquisition cycle. Many principles can be observed, understood and applied even on a simple outing in nature or even on a simple walk around the school or on green spaces.

1. Suggested activities in this regard include experiences started right in class, when students can germinate some wheat seeds in a jar and can wait for the plant to grow in a jar, this exercise being beneficial in the sense that it is desired to explain the components of a plant. The exercise can continue with planting small trees, plants or flowers around the school or in the school garden. The activity can continue in the classroom, where students can come up with ideas about how to best care for these plants, how they grow or how people can intervene in their growth process.
2. More complex activities can be done by sending students to the school yard and encouraging them to find and photograph different plants or insects, to discuss identified differences, to motivate their choice, to make an exhibition with all the photos and specially to write down the multitude of questions. which can be born related to everything they observe, hear or feel in the external environment. Together with a partner, or in a small group, you can discuss questions and select those that are connected to the area, discipline, or topic of science. This exercise can continue if the organizer asks students to choose those questions that can be researched, and together or in small groups to try to find answers.
3. Students can make short outings in the four seasons and observe the changes that take place in nature. Orientation, or orientation with map and compass is a very good example of this. In order to have a clearer picture of the orientation activities, we want to present the steps



necessary for such an activity. Each orientation lesson begins with a plan. As leaders of the orientation activity, we need to know exactly the number of students we will work with. We also need to choose an area, taking into account some of the following aspects: size, placement, age of children involved in the orientation activity and the difficulty of the terrain. The next step is the map. If there is no map of the desired area and the leader cannot borrow or print it, he must create it himself. There are several applications that can be useful in this case, but if there is no other possibility, the leader can adapt an existing map to the needs of the group. The leader can also present different maps to the students, so that they can get a more obvious picture of the types of maps they can work with. Explanatory discussions should be made about the elements that can be found on a map, for example the colors of the relief forms, how they are represented, what each means, the measures on the map versus their meaning in reality, where the dangerous areas are, where there are areas slippery or damp, what areas should be avoided, etc. All maps should include the following: ladder, north arrow, legend and title. For starters, you can make maps of the classroom, of the school, of smaller areas, and you can study with the class before the longer outings.

4. Orienteering. There are certain steps that should be taken into account when planning guidance activities, with regard to safety and risk. Students should have a general knowledge of the plants and wildlife they may encounter along the way. They should know what they can touch, what they can pick and what they can eat. They should be aware of poisonous plants and animals and all the dangers involved. They should have first aid equipment on them and should know how to use it in case of accidents. Clothing is another important aspect of this type of activity. Each student should be responsible for dressing appropriately and bringing their own watch. The participant in well-equipped orientation activities must have a whistle, a long-sleeved shirt, a wristwatch; wrist compass, durable and comfortable boots or sneakers, tear-resistant old trousers. They should also have a back-up plan in the event of sudden changes in the weather, and the group must remain together at all times and act responsibly at all times during the activity.

Perhaps the most important aspect is the experience during these activities, because observation and living are the main aspects of orientation activities. You can analyze plants, animals, geographical areas, spaces and land. All these experiences are rich in learning situations, which can only take place in the external environment. (Torkos, 2020)

*Integrated activity example for first grade*

Activity title: "Indication of time - sundial"
First grade
Competence selection criteria: level of knowledge, level of skills, level of attitude
Areas / disciplines: Mathematics and natural sciences-Mathematics and environmental exploration
Arts and technologies-Visual arts and handicrafts
How to achieve: Outdoor education
Instruments: dowel or wooden pole with a length of at least 50 cm (one for the whole class), shadow markers (rocks, sticks, etc.), meter, plasticine, pencil, pebbles or other markers objects of nature, chalk, clock, chalk, compass
Competences pursued:
a) At the level of knowledge
List the components of a watch Listing several types of watch (wall, electronic, handheld, solar) The order of the numbers on the dial of a circular clock
b) At the level of skills
Drawing the position of the Sun in the morning and at noon, at the same time and in relation to the same landmark, for a week Making a watch with natural materials Positioning of the clock hands based on a given requirement Recording the observations made during the experiments by drawing / marking with various symbols the moment when a certain change took place Reading time using the sundial
c) The attitudinal level
Involvement Initiative in fulfilling the given task Consistency in the performance of the given task

Table nb.1. Activity plan

In describing this activity, we had to make three models, because the class level varied from those observed in the pre-test stage, so that the model originally thought could not be implemented. So, we thought of two additional models, adapted from the initial one, which can be made more easily and efficiently at the first grade level, and using fewer material resources and tools more accessible to students. At the same time, the acquisitions at the level of knowledge and skills could be assimilated more easily.

1. Select a sunny day with direct natural light for at least seven hours from the start of the school year. Students will go out in the school

yard on a relatively flat ground, which also has shade sources throughout the day. Place a pole in the ground, making sure it is perpendicular to the ground, using a lead grain (a piece of string weighing on it). Measure and record the height from the ground to the top. Students are asked to mark with the number "1" the first object they will use to mark the position of the pole shadow on the ground. Students will place the marker on the ground at the end of the shadow, and note the time shown by the watch. They will then measure the distance from the base of the gnomon to the end of the shadow and record the data in the given table.



Image nb. 2. Example of activity

Students will observe the gnomon at least once an hour throughout the school program. They will measure the length of the shadow or its angle, placing a new marker with the number indicated at the end of the shadow, marking the time of day. Students will also notice which marker is closest to the pole. This will be the time of the shortest shadow and the time close to noon. While waiting for the shadow to change, the children will collect materials from nature and make a watch, using them. In groups of two, students will practice positioning the clock hands according to a given requirement.



Image nb. 3. Example of sundial

2. On a flat field, in a sunny area without shade, each student will make a pole, from a pencil on a plasticine support. Students will place the gnomon on the chosen flat surface in the school yard or the natural environment. Each student will mark with a stone or other natural object the end of the shadow line left by the pencil. At the same time, students will check the indicated time on the watch and will mark with chalk next to the indicated time indicator. At the following markings, students can estimate the time shown by the sundial, checking the veracity of the estimate on the wristwatch. During the activity, students will watch how the shadow moves and the teacher will explain the reason for this phenomenon. With each shadow movement, participants will mark this by placing a marker at the end of the shadow.
3. The third model refers to the creation of a human sundial, with the replacement of the gnomon with a student. On a flat surface within the school grounds, draw a large circle with chalk, mark the middle with an "X". A student sits in the middle of the marked circle, adopting an upright position with his hands outstretched in front, according to the diagram below. The shadow of the outstretched arms falling on the circle will be the first marking, which will be made by contouring the shadow. Students check the time indicated by the clock and mark it on the circle. Another student passes in the middle of the circle and repeats the operation, being placed in the same position, having the same landmark as the one who started the exercise. The activity continues with the students' estimates regarding the time indicated by the human sundial.

This activity is especially important at the level of first grade, because not only can it develop different socio-affective skills, but especially due to the practical side it has, being able to develop students' life skills. Not only do they have the chance to operate with the resources offered by the immediate proximity, but they can develop key acquisitions, necessary for this level. As specified above, in the class I curriculum, the study of nature and its elements has a major role in the development of skills and competencies that can only be activated by exposure to the immediate environment and the elements and resources that it offers. In the Mathematics and Natural Sciences program, the emphasis is on developing skills that are related to observing the environment, noting observed information, making measurements on the length or shape of objects in the immediate environment, observing the position of the sun at different times. of the day and especially activities that help them understand the phenomena that take place in nature. We chose this activity because the skills selected from the curriculum of this level can be best developed through exercise in the natural

environment, using natural resources. It can be seen that the activity is a complex one requiring the selection of several skills for each chosen criterion, so that all areas related to the topic are covered and students can use the acquisitions acquired in all environments and times in which they operate.

### Conclusions

In some education systems, the National Curriculum includes directions for the participation of students of all ages in a series of outdoor, planned, progressive and creative learning experiences. These are challenging opportunities that occur throughout and outside of school. In Romania, following the analysis of the National Curriculum, we notice the encouragement of this type of activities and learning experiences even if they are not mentioned in documents as activities belonging to outdoor education. (Dughi & Roman, 2008)

If there are so many motivations and positive directions in this regard, all that remains is to face the challenges of ensuring that outdoor education is strongly anchored in the curriculum, so that it becomes a reality for students in Romania. This approach becomes a responsibility of each teacher, who will have to plan and integrate outdoor education activities in the instructional-educational process, in the form of interdisciplinary projects and in the form of cross-curricular activities. Each curricular area is molded to outdoor education, because each discipline has specific benefits in this regard. When planning outdoor activities, connections with educational activities undertaken in the classroom should be taken into account in the context of using the curriculum as a whole. Instead of offering a week of outdoor learning or a special day of outdoor workshops, it is more desirable that the formal activities that take place in the outdoor environment be part of a holistic approach to teaching-learning that is linked to a process. educational complex in progress. (Torkos, 2021)

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## RELEVANT STAGES OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DURING PREADOLESCENCE

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**Abstract:** *The praxiological significance of this article lies within the analysis and classification of relevant aspects of the emotional intelligence development during preadolescence. Accordingly, the focus has been set on determining the development process of emotional intelligence during preadolescence, of knowledge and own skills assimilation of this psychological construct, as well as the identification of the determining factors. Preadolescence is the period of great changes at biological, cognitive, and social experiences levels, and EQ's development has solid implications in human communication, inter-personal relationships and more, being a capacity with profound social implications. Emotional intelligence is seeded and developed throughout the entire life, and it allows to show our intellectual capabilities and our creativity, assuring success both in personal and professional life.*

**Key words:** *emotional intelligence; development; pre-teenagers; personality; emotion; family.*

### 1. Introduction

The evolution of contemporary social transformations requires an adaptive competence of the pre-teenager at the environment, which can only take place where the imperial role of using emotions intelligently is understood. The modern doctrines with respect to emotional intelligence have progressed over the simple fact that the individual is generally in a continuous development. A large part of the population ignores the emotional aspect of our intelligence, considering that academic intelligence comes first in obtaining performance, without taking into account the important role of emotional intelligence.

Worldwide studies have settled that the main factor which impacts the achievement of success is represented by emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a durable change, a dynamic phenomenon, an essential factor which improves human behaviour over the whole duration of life. The benefits of developing emotional intelligence are various: it offers a way of “settlement of frequently dealt with issues: conflict management, collaboration with others, solving emotional problems” (Rosca, C., 2015), strengthens the personality through assuring an emotional balance, a developed interior force, in order to maintain an optimistic perspective of life.

Emotional intelligence contributes to the efficiency of human activity, determining his performances in various fields, choosing multilateral directions of development, increasing the degree of responsibility in making decisions and performing tasks, both in individual personal life and the social and professional one. Emotional intelligence promotes wellbeing, being one of the main factors which facilitates an interpersonal relationship. Emotional intelligence represents a conglomeration of overriding factors, which intertwine as follows: self-awareness, emotions control, motivation, empathy and social relationships. Self-awareness and knowledge represent the basis of emotional intelligence.

## **2. Relevant aspects of developing emotional intelligence during preadolescence**

Although emotional intelligence starts to develop since early childhood, preadolescence

is the appropriate stage because the preadolescence age represents the most sensitive part of society, one of the most complicated periods of development. Preadolescence or puberty is the period between 10/11-14/15 years old. (Frătilă, I., 1998, Golu, F. 2015).

“The preadolescent age is considered the age between childhood and maturity, an intermediate stage between childhood and adult life, which happens differently for each person, but ends in the same result – maturity” (Racu, I., Racu, 2013).

This period presents multiple challenges of social development and a stage of significant physical and endocrine changes, making this period especially profound as far as emotional experiences are concerned, with frequent modifications of disposition. The pre-teenager has a specific behaviour that, more often than not, manifests through unexpected reactions. This is owed to the fact that preadolescence is the stage where the system of interests, personal values, moral orientations are formed, and a deep analysis and rigorous appreciation of accumulated individual experience and



determining the life position towards people and society is revised. (Racu, I., Racu, 2007).

The preadolescence period is influenced by various internal and external factors, which can lead to confusing the pre-teenager, with the chance of indoctrination of a false belief system, inconsistent with social expectations, leaning towards conflict and social inadaptability. The modifications at subjective level (experiencing emotion), cognitive level (the quality of emotion experience), biological/physiological level (the actual changes), behavioural level (emotional expression), are in fact, emotions. They assure our survival, as a warning signal, when the instinct goes missing. The most evident dimension of emotion is the subjective one, being the result of the other three levels accumulated changes. Emotions represent the direct and immediate effect of the way we see events, and the emotions we cross throughout our lives. (Lemeni, G., Miclea, M., 2004).

The psychic transformation is impetuous and with different internal misunderstandings, because of maintaining a continuous state of agitation, bustle, impulsivity, restlessness, and anxiety. "The pre-teenagers' emotional traits are much richer and nuanced due to the various activities and interpersonal relationships they sustain. Pre-teenagers experiment some significant investments at an emotional level, often outside of family, in friendships" (Paladi, A., 2018).

All these transformations require the capacity to emotionally self-regulate; they are having no flexibility. The pre-teenager tends towards social environment, looks for groups that will satisfy its need of affiliation, socialisation, and emotional security. The ability of making friends is one of the basis objectives of development at this age. The opinion of fellow students and friends has the most weight. All psychical functions of the general individual come as a result from interiorising social relationships.

During preadolescence all the self-awareness dimensions constitute of:

- Cognitive dimension (knowledge of our own qualities and traits);
- Affective dimension (personal emotions and feelings, self-respect);
- Behavioural dimension (refers to practical manifestation, in conduct, relations of these acquisitions of attitude towards self)

Under the aspect of affective life, preadolescence is marked by emotional instability, alternation in contrast of the affective evolution stages and even affective hypersensitivity. (Racu I, 2005). Unfortunately, emotional development is treated superficially, as it was understood by itself. Understanding emotions is of major importance. They must be known, understood, and ultimately, controlled. The given period is characterised by conflicting communication and the fight for autonomy, position, and acceptance (Bolboceanu, A., 2005).

During this period the first sexual experiences begin, becoming independent from the familial environment. The parental authority drops while the importance of the social group rises, the development of ability to properly communicate takes place simultaneously with the social capabilities. This is a period of life where the pre-teenager is the main standard in establishing the self-concept. At this stage, they no longer ask support from parents, but from colleagues and friends (Golu, P., Verza, E., Zlate, M., 2005, Schiopu, U., Verza, E., 1995).

The ability to understand thoughts, feelings, situations, opinion views of others develop step-by-step, when pre-teenagers become less egocentric, and more prepared to recognise and coordinate the multiple dimensions of inter-personal experiences (Astington, J., 1993, Wedeck, J., 1947). The typical egocentricity of this period makes the pre-teenager extremely self-centred, incapable of taking into account others' perspective. Relationships and communications with people take an important role in pre-teenager lives (Paladi, A., 2018). The most frequent form of human interaction is represented by communication.

Piaget J.'s studies highlight three factors which determine the development process: growing up, the empirical experience received from the physical environment and the action of the social environment (Goleman, D., 2001).

The development of the ability to assume the appropriate age social perspectives are essential because they involve the shift of personality the pre-teenager goes through in understanding the concept of friends, people with influence, peer groups and self-awareness (Selman, R., 1980).

During the process of reaching maturity, the pre-teenager evolves step-by-step in developing reflection capabilities, self-knowledge, inter-knowledge, which facilitate the development of empathy, communication skills and the ability to solve problems (Chandler, M. J., 1973, Mendelsohn, M., Straker, G., 1999).

Pre-teenagers act uncertain towards all kinds of temptations, and this leads to incorrectness and mistakes. They end up breaking rules because they are not ready to deal with the complex experiences coming their way, lived first-hand. The incapacity to control emotions determines a state of uncertainty, which can usually lead to anxious states, apathy and even depression. The most efficient way of preventing these types of situations is developing emotional intelligence. This shows a positive transformation of the pre-teenager behaviour and his attitude towards self and others, this being essential for achieving efficient communication at an emotional level (Lemeni, G., Miclea, M., 2004).

Developing emotional intelligence is a spontaneous, natural process, which develops gradually out of the pre-teenager life experience. Developing

intelligence at pre-teenager age takes place under important factors, one of them being social interaction, which manifests through different type of help and support from the adults. The social connection begins the path towards the establishing language, is the foundation and permits intellectual processes, through which the pre-teenager can adopt its beliefs, values, and other attitudes, consciously or unconsciously, in his ulterior development, which automatically operates as verbal thinking. This development pattern in which the intellectual processes move from the exterior (social) to interior, Vigotschi calls “the generic law of cultural development” (Goleman, D., 2001).

Human capabilities and their progressive evolution depend on the social and institutional context, where the individual preoccupation takes place: environment, group, individual development, and learning being tightly connected and co-dependent. The capacity to invest, anticipate events and behaviours represent one of the emotional intelligence components. The social context and cohabitated experiments mark the base orientation of personality.

The researcher D. Cristea (2015) mentions that is necessary to consider the following relation: “...The behaviour is the result of dynamic interaction between the subject responsibility and the characteristics of the social situation where he is placed.” (Cristea, D., 2015).

As far as reciprocal influences between the social environment and personality traits are concerned, Gerald M., Deary Ian J., Whiteman Martha C. (2005) mentions: “...developing personality is a two-sided road. The external social environment could influence the development of personality, but the child interacts with it actively and created his own social experience” (Gerald, M., Deary, I.J., Whiteman, M.C., 2005). Social relationships are the foundation in constructing self-awareness.

Individual differences in developing emotional intelligence manifest according to the pre-teenager experiential route and on the basis of parent-child relationship (Vlas, G., 1992).

“During puberty, irritability, instability, explosivity are found, all being characteristic to manifesting emotions and are at the basis of some conflicts with parents” (Paladi, A., 2018).

Family represents the prerequisite of general and emotional development of the pre-teenager, of his intellectual and moral training. Family is definitory is developing emotional intelligence. It represents a dynamic inter-relational system, expressed through mutual exchange of psychological needs between family members, and the promotion of an efficient parental model with positive attitudes favours the harmonious and integrated development of the child (Pellegrini, D.S., 1985).

The familial context is the first school of emotional intelligence development. The parents represent the main imitation model of their children. The relational method of the family, its affective climate and its socio-cultural model are essential for social insertion and forming social behaviours (Vlas, G., 1992). “Family represents a superior form of community – mainly the husband, wife and children – which relies on social and biological relationships, having as main goal to prepare the future generation, healthy and highly educated, leading to society development” (Banciu, D., Radulescu, S.M, Voicu M, 1987). As a result, pre-teenagers who live in a familial environment characterised by empathy, will gain appropriate models in developing emotionally healthy competencies.

The parents who do not answer pre-teenager needs generate an uncertain and avoiding attachment, stopping the emotional expression of their children. The conflicts between parents traumatise the child’s mind. The behaviour of these families precludes the development of controlling capabilities of their own emotions, as well as others’.

Considering the impact of the family in forming the pre-teenager personality, we can assume that his emotional intelligence will be determined by his family’s communication style, the parents’ attitude, the transited values and the psychological climate inside the family. The emotional style is tightly connected of the quality of affective relationship in the family. The pre-teenager learns to relate with the complexity of the social world, tries to understand others’ feelings, to be empathic, develop ideas about others’ ideas, emotions, and intentions. (Golu, M., 2007).

Pre-teenagers with a high degree of emotional intelligence adapts easier in social environment conditions which are always changing, succeeding to adapt to pressure, intense and difficult changes they face in this period of their lives (Papalia, D., Wendkos O., Duskin F, R., 2010). A high emotional coefficient indicates that the person is in touch with their feelings, that they have a good relationship with themselves, that they have a positive view about live and can reach their potential. This person understands how others feel, has the capacity to solve their issues through adapting at different circumstances, and therefore they succeed in their interactions. They act naturally with their peers, are accepted easily in a social group. Consequently, the emotionally intelligent individual is capable of innovation and creativity (Roco, 2001).

### **3. Psychological particularities of developing emotional intelligence during preadolescence**

The prosocial orientation opposed to the antisocial is determined by elementary factors of psychic development (genetic transmission, social groups, education). The pre-teenager personality is strongly marked by

an increase of self-awareness and the capacity of self-determination. Affective vulnerability is another characteristic of the pre-teenager's personality, the ambiance where he grows and develops, the circumstances outside of it are of major importance.

The most important aspects of developing personality during preadolescence are: self-awareness, temperamental particularities, character, skills, moral consciousness, the physical self (the way the person perceives its own physical appearance, especially the ones referring to their own body, body image and sexual orientation), the social self (what the pre-teenager sees as valuable and important in life), the emotional self (the way the pre-teenager sees his own emotions and feelings) (Lemeni G., Miclea, M., 2004).

Just as social intelligence, a developed emotional intelligence correlates in a positive manner with certain psychological characteristics, such as:

- The ability to decode non-verbal messages,
- Differentiating the self-concept,
- The saturation of self-image with understanding intellectual characteristics,
- The saturation of self-image with describing volitive characteristics of personality,
- Precision,
- Fulness,
- Sensitivity at emotional states of others in communication situations,
- Diversity of the expressive repertoire in communication,
- Openness and manifestation of friendliness in communication,
- Emotional stability,
- Sensitivity to answering in communication,
- The ability of receiving critique,
- Conscientiousness,
- Pronounced self-appreciation,
- Self-acceptance,
- The active spirit,
- Profound reflection,
- The capacity of understanding in which way the emotional state of a person is perceived by its partners of communication,
- Empathy,
- Non-verbal sensitivity,
- Depth of reflection,
- The feeling of dignity,
- Interest shown towards social issues,
- Social activity etc (Mikhailova, E., S., 1996)

The study of emotional intelligence development imposes investigations and additive research studies, so that both present and future generations to be able to adapt to new life situations and new attributions, developing their personality and personal life, becoming valuable and successful people.

Therefore, the necessity of multilateral thorough analysis of the emotional intelligence phenomenon, of its structure and defining factors is essential both for accentuating, signalling the basis of this process, as well as understanding relevant situations of developing emotional intelligence during preadolescence, of developing particularities of the emotional and personality field. It can be affirmed that the problem of emotional intelligence has an interdisciplinary character, being at the interference of the controversial types of approach in contemporary science and practice. In conclusion, it can be affirmed that developing emotional intelligence is a condition of performance and presents the ability to adapt in any new given situation.

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## A GLIMPSE INTO SERVICES FOR THE GIFTED/TALENTED IN WESTERN AND EASTERN CULTURES

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**Abstract:** *In this study the evolution of the gifted and talented education was explored, followed by a discussion of disparity between the western and eastern culture in terms of perceptions of the gifted and talented, diagnosis of the gifted and talented, curriculum options, and service delivery models in these two cultures. Disparity in gifted education between rural and urban areas in China was also discussed in this paper. Recommendations about how to properly serve the gifted and talented were provided.*

**Keywords:** *gifted diagnosis; available gifted programs; challenges; and future recommendations*

### **Introduction and Methodology**

For the gifted and talented, there are programs that serve this group of children. Different countries may have different types of programs for them. In order to receive services, traditionally, there will be a diagnosis using an IQ test. Children who score two standard deviation above the mean will qualify for gifted education, for example. However, in recent years it is realized that a single IQ test can't capture a whole picture of intelligence. Plus, an IQ test isn't an exact science. There are multiple court cases proving that solely using an IQ test for diagnosing the gifted and talented lead to misdiagnosis. In U.S. special education legislation mandates use of multifactorial, nondiscriminatory assessment for diagnosis of the gifted and talented. Therefore, instead of just using one assessment tool, other methods of assessment are recommended including but not limited to parents/caregivers and teachers' observations.

In addition, prior to formal diagnostic assessment teachers can differentiate instruction to accommodate these students in general educational settings. In other words, in order to avoid waiting time and cause a delay on appropriate services for this group of children, general education teachers can create tiers



and place these students in the appropriate tier before formal admission to the gifted/talented program, a.k.a.prereferral intervention in Response to Intervention (RTI).

Given service provision to the gifted/talented differ in western and eastern countries, this paper discusses disparity in diagnosis, available programs, existing challenges, and future recommendations for the gifted/talented programs in these two cultures. Articles published in the past two decades on the gifted and talented were reviewed. Search engine include Google Scholar, ERIC, a university owned data base. The university data base has education source that contains full text from over 1,800 journals and 550 books on PK-12 and higher education. Key words used to search articles include “gifted and talented”, “gifted education”, “education for those who are gifted and talented”, “special education for the gifted and talented”, and “enrichment”. Thirteen representative research studies were found. In this study the thirteen research articles were analyzed and compared. Research findings include gifted/talented identification, service delivery, and curriculum options. Based on the analysis of the research articles, the following is a discussion of the differences between U.S. as representative of the western culture and China as representative of eastern culture in serving the gifted/talented and different curriculum models in these two countries. Hopefully this study can provide a window to understand how cultural differences impact gifted/talented service delivery.

### **Background of Gifted/Talented Study**

In U.S. there are multiple versions of definitions in regard to the gifted/talented, among which some representative definitions include Renzulli's three-trait definition, Piirton's and Maker's definitions. According to Renzulli (Renzulli & Reis, 2018), giftedness refers to above average intelligence, high level of task commitment and creativity. Similarly, Piirto and Maker's definition (Heward, Alber-Morgan, & Konrad, 2017) also consider intelligence, commitment, motivation, and leadership skills as essential skills when define the gifted/talented. The evolution of definition in gifted and talented impacts the instruction and the way teachers teach the gifted/talented. Teachers not only accommodate student academic needs, but their leadership, self-determination, management, commitment, personal management skills, as well as social, emotional needs.

Gardner's multiple intelligence also pave the foundation for teaching the gifted/talented. According to multiple intelligence theory intelligence can manifest itself in multiple areas including athletic skills, linguistic skills, logical/mathematical skills, naturalistic/spatial, and musical skills. In

addition, there is a cultural aspect and the intelligence is determined by cultural factors in the environment (Manic&Randelovic, 2017). Talents don't come in one size, one type, and some children can be double exceptional, in other words, they could be talented and gifted on one hand, and have exceptionalities on the other hand. For instance, some children who have Asperger's may have giftedness/talents in math and technology, in this case, both the special needs and talents will need to be addressed and accommodated that they can be enrolled in both special education and in gifted education. Gardner's multiple intelligence also impacts instruction for the gifted and talented, that is, promotes the initiation of the differentiated instruction. The rationale behind this is children with different talents can benefit from different special programs targeted at different areas of talents the students have. Even before the formal diagnostic assessment when children show excellence in different areas, they could benefit from differentiated instruction in general education program according to the RTI.

### **Gifted and Talented Diagnosis**

Traditionally IQ test is administered to diagnose the gifted and talented. In order to qualify for the gifted and talented, the IQ must be at least two standard deviations above the mean, 100, so the minimum requirement for the gifted and talented is 130 in an IQ test. Intelligence is defined as with excellent memory, mastery of knowledge at a fast pace, having skills to apply knowledge, generalize information to use in different situations, and synthesize information to make decisions. The operational definition of the gifted and talented impact assessment criteria that an IQ test could consist of questions like recognizing patterns, analytical skills, visual spatial organization, short term memory, reasoning, comparing/contrast. Traditional use of IQ test includes Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, WISC (Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children).

Although the IQ test has been used for a long time to diagnose the gifted and talented and has been used to be served as the only criteria for diagnosis there are criticisms of solely using an IQ test for diagnosis of the gifted and talented. Some criticism includes IQ not as an exact science, not accurately reflecting a child's talent; instead, it only reflects a child's intelligence during a specific time period in the child's life; children's intelligence cannot be accurately tested; and the older the child is, the harder, because when the child is older, it is hard to get a picture of the child's IQ without being influenced by the child's experience, the external factors. Therefore, it is highly recommended to refer the child earlier if there is an early sign of exceling in certain areas. Another suggestion is instead of using a single assessment method, there should be other assessment methods including but not limited to parents/caregivers' observations, use of the

child's portfolio that reflect the child's performance in different areas, curriculum assessment, portfolio assessment that truly reflect the child's performance in everyday natural environment. This was reflected in recent legislation such that the IDEA requires nondiscriminatory multiple assessment be administered to assess children rather than solely using one assessment for diagnosis. Therefore, in addition to IQ test, other methods of assessment are also used for diagnosis. These include but are not limited to teacher observation, portfolio, writing samples, videotaped activities.

### **Comparison of the Gifted and Talented in China and U.S.**

Children with exceptionalities are entitled to special education in the U.S. and they are entitled to a free, appropriate public education same as children with other categories of exceptionalities. This was mandated in both special education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB). With the legislative support gifted programs receive funding to support the qualifying children (Hodges, 2018). A gifted individualized education plan (GIEP) is implemented that enable the qualifying students to receive additional support and resources to keep them engaged, challenged. The GIEP is in the same format as IEP for children with other types of disabilities. Additional support such as enrichment programs can be provided to the qualifying children. Gifted teachers and general education teachers collaborate to provide services for the students who qualify for gifted education. Similar to the IEP, the GIEP also requires specially designed instruction for the gifted and talented.

In eastern culture, for instance, in China, it is a different story. In China since the gifted and talented is not part of the special education, there is no comprehensive evaluation system diagnosis purpose. If the students excel academically, they could receive services through the after school programs, if there is after school enrichment program available. For instance, in schools who have more resources, students could receive services through clubs, after school programs, camps, while in regions that do not have much resources for the gifted/talented, children won't receive any extra services. So, in China there is a discrepancy of services available for the gifted/talented between rural and urban areas with more resources in urban and suburban areas than rural areas. Due to the lack of available services for the gifted and talented in general, there are fewer children diagnosed in the rural areas compared to the urban and suburban areas. Many children in rural areas are neglected and not identified, even when children are identified, they may not receive services that challenge them because there are no services available and teachers are not well trained to work with the gifted and talented.

In summary, the western and eastern culture differs in many different ways in terms of the gifted and talented education but in the meantime, they share some similarities as well. For instance, both western and eastern cultures consider the importance of early education. There are multiple research studies about early education, importance of early intervention, involvement of parents' roles in early education for the gifted and talented. Both cultures consider importance of gifted education, there are multiple studies of gifted education in both western and eastern cultures. On the other hand, western and eastern cultures differ in perception of gifted education, identification, and education of the gifted children. Western culture more of letting the child unfolding by itself, whereas in eastern culture like China, there is a concept of start educating children earlier, providing education program earlier, and developing well-rounded kids by providing all kinds of resources. One example is there are arising number of early programs who teach young children foreign language at a young age, so are art and music programs for young children. Most of these programs are available in urban areas, whereas fewer opportunities like this in rural, underdeveloped areas.

To analyze what cause the disparity in gifted/talented between the western and eastern culture we realize that the Chinese culture is mainly influenced by Confucian's perception of education. They see more of gift and talent derive from nurture rather than nature. The perception is with appropriate training, early education and development, the child can advance academically and may qualify for gifted program. Influenced by this perception there are rising number of early development programs, such as foreign language camps for preschool age children, painting, drawing camp for raising academically proficient kids. Parents especially those with high educational attainment, put more emphasis on their children's education and development, they are more likely to enroll their children in academic camps as well as after school programs. Another exception when comparing between the U.S. and China in regard to the gifted and talented education is we can't avoid discussing the situation in Hong Kong. The gifted/talented program in Hong Kong is different from what observed in China. Both western and eastern culture has an impact on Hong Kong's educational pedagogy. Hongkong not only follows some traditions of eastern culture, but also the western culture, which also favors differentiated instruction. The western definition of gifted education has been adopted by Hong Kong since 1997 (Tommasi, 2013). Hong Kong follows multiple principles of gifted education including: nurturing multiple intelligence, gifted education be part of quality education, recognizes multiple needs including intellectual, social, emotional as well as adopt a tiered support for the qualifying students.

### **Gifted/talented Curriculum/Programs**

Based on these variety of definitions of gifted and talented and Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, multiple gifted/talented programs have been designed and become prevalent in recent years, including, but not limited to, the acceleration and enrichment. The acceleration is fast paced introduction of content to students who are gifted and talented, such as the younger children receive early childhood education at an early age, newer content being offered to the younger children because they can master the contents at a faster pace and an earlier age. Advantages of this model is since the gifted and talented master new knowledge at a faster pace, the accelerated model can keep the child challenged and engaged. Another advantage of accelerated program is the student get to finish the program at a faster pace, so they can have some free time for more exploration, or more deeper understanding of the content covered. According to Zhang' (2017) study, acceleration in curriculum was widely used to teach the gifted/talented children, that provide new content to children at an earlier age. Some previous studies show models of expose younger children to academic content. The acceleration model is the one that most commonly used in China as well. In some China's universities, they have similar program like this that provide accelerated program for the gifted/talented students. The thought behind this is they want to cultivate contributing members to the society, advanced scholars that can contribute to the technology, science, mathematics areas.

Another model is the enrichment program that offers more in depth content. Examples include independent study on certain topics of the students' interest. Enrichment model means provides more in-depth content to students based on their learning differences, current level of abilities, potential, and interests. Enrichment program also can be individualized based on each individual child's different situations. Enrichment differs from the acceleration in that it doesn't speed up the instruction, instead it guides students to explore, deepen their understanding of the content and broaden their horizon. One example of the enrichment program in China can be found in Zhang's (2017) study. Zhang's study mentioned the one school that is affiliated to Renmin University of China offers additional programs, resources, and materials to gifted children. In this high school specialized program/curriculum was designed for these students through teacher team building effort. However, this type of program is limited in number in China.

In addition, differentiated instruction was discussed in Sekowski and Lubioanka's (2015) study that was implemented to encourage students of different ages to develop individual abilities in areas of their strengths. For instance, for elementary school students gifted education can be in separate setting that cater to their unique talents, for secondary education students

gifted education can be in a format of extended curriculum of particular subjects or individual program. Other format includes non-school based activities in extracurricular clubs, or through participation in competitive exams and the purpose of these activities is to develop students' abilities including summer schools, special courses, classes held at art centers, etc. Another model is independent study that the program is designed based on individual student's level and individual strengths and needs. Zhang's (2017) study reported one of the contributions of China's gifted education is an emphasis on the role of "effort and environmental influence in success and high achievement" (p. 10), which is believed that nurture plays a major role in preparing the gifted and talented. However, recently impacted by western culture, there is a mixture of perceiving both nature and nurture contribute to the gift/talent. Zhang's study summarized that the scale of gifted education in China is small as compared to China's population.

### **Challenges Encountered in Gifted/Talented Education**

Challenges exist in teaching the gifted and talented in both the two cultures. Research (Demirbaga, 2018) indicates that there is a lack of agreed upon understanding/concept of the gifted and talented among the gifted and regular teachers, this in turn influences the teachers' identification process and identification criteria. Therefore, teachers should be well trained to develop an understanding that they not only teach the kids content but also go beyond to expand students' understanding of themselves and their surroundings, their social, emotional well beings (Demirbaga, 2018; Russell, 2018). Below is a summary of the challenges in teaching the gifted/talented.

*Challenge in Socialization:* Socializing with peers is a big challenge in teaching the gifted/talented. Because sometimes the gifted children experience social isolation, unable to fit in group activities. Teachers should not only address the gifted and talented academic needs but also the social needs. Since the gifted/talented are more advanced academically than their peers, this may lead to difficulty interacting with peers if they do not know how peers struggle academically, even if they were provided opportunities to assist their peers.

*Challenge in Disparity of the Gifted/Talented Education between Rural and Urban Areas:* Challenge also exist in disparity of the gifted/talented education between rural and urban areas. The Rasheed's (2020) research synthesis on rural gifted education found that gifted curriculum varies from state to state due to the funding, staffing, leadership philosophy. Similarly, gifted education in China also varies from rural to urban areas due to different resources and teacher qualifications. For instance, in China since the gifted/talented is not part of special education, there is no official funding for the gifted and talented. In urban areas, there are more opportunities for

the gifted/talented to develop their academic, artistic, musical, athletic skills compared to children in rural, underdeveloped areas. According to Rasheed's (2020) study, challenges include access to resources and opportunities, staffing and funding in rural areas. This also reflects the scene of challenges experienced by rural programs in eastern cultures, like China. There are less resources for the gifted in rural China as compared to urban areas. Also, there are less parental involvement among parents with lower educational background versus those with high educational attainment. Parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to be supportive to their children's education, more supportive of their choices in extracurricular activities.

*Challenges in Diagnosis:* Although it is recommended to use other criteria to diagnose the gifted and talented, IQ still serves as the main assessment criteria to diagnose the gifted and talented. Mainly using one assessment to diagnose gifted and talented has a lot of disadvantages. The one disadvantage is if the child doesn't do well in one test, it wouldn't be able to pass the assessment test, so they won't qualify for the gifted/talented education, therefore misrepresented. In addition, for children who have talent in other areas other than excel in IQ test, their talents are often neglected because the IQ test can't pick up talent from other areas and if none of other assessments were used, it is hard to diagnosed children who have talent in other areas as talented/gifted. Therefore, it is not uncommon that the talented and gifted are underrepresented in special education, as the IQ test often can't accurately capture the extraordinary intelligence and talent in other areas.

## **Discussions**

The western and eastern cultures have differences in terms of perception of gifted education, the two cultures share some similarities as well. Below are some recommendations about the gifted education followed by implications for gifted education. Previous studies on gifted education shows general education and gifted education teachers should collaborate in educating children who are gifted and talented. There are benefits in this collaboration because when general education teachers and gifted teachers collaborated, there is a perceived growth in teachers' competence of differentiation and growth in student learning (Mofield, 2019). However, Mofield's study shows there are roadblocks that pose threat to this collaboration: it's hard to find a common time to schedule co-planning time, general education and gifted education teachers hold conflicting assumptions about gifted education. Administrators can emphasize the importance of collaboration, communicate clear purposes and rules and build trust between general education and gifted teachers.

Next recommendation is to tackle the misdiagnosis of the gifted/talented: gifted/talented education should start early. This is true in both China and U.S. Early signs of gifted and talented should be recognized, assistance provided and early identification test be administered. It is caregivers/early child education teachers' job to start modifying course materials and documents to challenge the children when they show early signs of excelling skills in different areas. This is as known as response to intervention (RTI), which provides differentiated instruction to accommodate the child's exceptionalities in regular classroom settings even before an official diagnosis. Teachers and caregivers should keep a close eye on the child's performance during this time and if it is confirmed that the child excelled in certain areas, they should be referred to gifted/talented diagnosis and then assessment should be arranged. RTI is mandatory in the U.S., however, it is not in China. In China, since the gifted and talented are not part of the special education, there is no official program for them, nor are there any RTI available for them. However, with the pre-service and in-service teacher training programs, it is recommended that a similar program like RTI could be provided.

Gifted education should not only focus on academic but also social emotional development. This is more emphasized in the western culture than in eastern, but recently more and more attention has been added to the social, emotional development of the gifted and talented in China as well. Traditionally the gifted and talented were identified through IQ test, they must excel in IQ test, it is critically important to challenge them academically, offer them individual based project that suits their needs. In western cultures, gifted and talented education is part of the special education, so these children receive additional support outside of their regular educational setting, that are funded by the Office of Special education of Department of Education with federal funding.

Another suggestion is encouraged both professional and parental involvement in educating the gifted and talented. It requires a village to raise a child. For gifted and talented it is true that the kids require multiple professionals' collaboration to raise the gifted and talented as well. This is true in both of the two cultures. As there are an increased attention made to education, parents want their children to be successful, there are increased attention from parents who hope their children achieve more, to be successful. Therefore, in rural areas there are more and more parental involvement in assisting their children when parents are educated. However, this is not true in families when parents do not have adequate educational background.

Parent and professional collaboration is a fundamental principle in western special education field. Special education mandates parental rights,



such as parents sign the consent form before the special education diagnosis procedure starts, parents should be notified if the child is referred for special education diagnosis, parents should be involved in decision making when discuss programs for their children. At year end, they will be invited to annual GIEP meeting to go over the child's progress in the past year and at the beginning of each year, parents will be invited to come in sharing their decisions, intervention strategies for their gifted/talented children. Some parents may even volunteer in their school programs, to be closely involved in their children's education. For the gifted and talented, it is the same, also requires parents, guardians, paraprofessionals, professionals, classroom teachers, experts' assistance to teach the children and improve their development academically and socially.

### **Conclusion**

There is an evolutionary understanding of the gifted/talented, adoption of multidisciplinary assessment of the gifted/talented, and increased number of programs available for the gifted and talented. In addition, the current study discussed potential challenges existing in the gifted/talented education, this include if using one assessment it may lead to misdiagnosis, the gifted and talented is still underfunded, discrepancy between the urban and rural areas in resources benefitting the gifted/talented, inadequate facilities, programs, and resources for the gifted and talented in rural areas, misconceptions and adol feeling for the gifted and talented in eastern cultures. In order to combat the challenges and potential barriers posed against the gifted and talented, suggestions such as RTI model adopted by the western culture could be an option for the eastern culture, emphasizing both nature and nurture when working with the gifted and talented, and increase collaboration between the professionals and families in serving the gifted and talented children.

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## HOME EDUCATION IMPACT ON FAMILY LIFE DURING THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC

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**Abstract.** *Family life satisfaction and their mental health has to receive a special attention in the psychological and health literature, so that the society together with the family can prevent the spread of the disease which have profoundly changed people's lifestyles and pose a threat to their physical and mental well-being. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of Covid -19 Pandemic on family considering the online education being an enormous pressure for parents concerning educational activities. In this respect, 146 parents have completed psychological instruments that measure the level of satisfaction with life, parental acceptance and the emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. They also gave demographic data which contain marital status, number of children, working experienced during the pandemic, etc. For statistical purposes linear regressions were used. The results showed that a high level of parental acceptance predicts a low level of life satisfaction and also high levels of depression and anxiety and a high level of life satisfaction predicts a low level of stress.*

**Keywords:** *life satisfaction; home education; parental acceptance; depression; anxiety; stress status*

### ***1. Introduction***

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in China in 2019 caused panic and stress globally. The challenges and stress that people have experienced could trigger common mental disorders, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder that could lead to dangers that outweigh the consequences of the epidemic (Bao, Sun, Meng, Shi & Lu, 2020 ).

This pandemic and public health measures which urge to slow the spread of the disease have profoundly changed people's lifestyles and pose a threat to their physical and mental well-being. The unpredictable nature of the disease, loss of control and freedom, contradictory messages from the authorities, sudden changes in plans for the near future or concern for one's own health and the well-being of the family and loved ones are examples of sources of stress associated with this pandemic. All these factors were related to the high negative level of psychological impact (Bueno-Nativol, Garcia-Garcia, Olaya, Lasheras, Lopez-Anton, Santabarbara, 2021).

Our life with the onset of the SARS COV-2 pandemic has taken an unexpected turn. This virus, which has been spreading alarmingly around the world for almost two years now, has affected all of us, some less and some more. Many recent studies have started from the premise that this virus has an impact on family life and its functioning and affects the health and well-being of the family. Measures taken in many countries to control the spread of Coronavirus have a disruptive effect on relationships in general and family relationships in particular (Ones, 2020).

Impositions such as the closure of schools nationwide have had a particularly strong impact on families with children. In this regard, a previous study conducted on Romanian students revealed the fact that students encountered many difficulties during the process of online learning such as: technical difficulties, poor interaction with teachers, poor communication with their peers (Coman et al. 2020). Although this may have led many parents to spend more time with their children, the measures have also led to disruption of established routines and enormous pressure for parents concerning educational activities. In the context of the pandemic, many parents have reduced their work schedule, and therefore family income, and have tried the difficult task of combining homework with childcare (Huebener, Waights, Spiess, Siegel & Wagner, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced families to try to maintain a work-life balance with few resources and little support. With kindergartens and schools closed, parents are solely responsible for caring for children and home education. Every family is different; some have more resources others less, resources such as device availability and internet access needed to achieve online learning (Fisher, Languilaire, Lawthom, Nieuwenhuis, Petts, Runswick-Cole, Yerkes, 2020). A good communication, lack of ambivalence, good cooperation between parents in interacting with their children is necessary (Sirbu, A., Vintila, M., Tisu, L., Stefanut, AM, Tudorel, O, Maguran, B., Toma, RA, 2020).

In this matter, educating children at home is no longer the choice of parents. This has become a necessity and even a duty. As of March 10th, 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has forced the closure of schools in almost

every country around the world, severely disrupting the education process. This decision completely interfered with the daily lives of most families. The school as an institution is a very important place for collecting social experiences. The isolation of a child from school in physical format generates many changes, especially in the context of the pandemic (Parczewska, 2020). With schools closed, home education has become the only form of schooling available, forcing educational institutions to establish emergency online teaching. Given that children actually have to learn from home, studies have shown that parents are struggling with this challenge (Pozas, Letzel & Schneider, 2021).

The restrictions imposed by this pandemic have been and continue to be a challenge for all categories of people regardless of age, but they can be particularly difficult for children and adolescents who are in a stage of continuous development and who rely heavily on connections with schoolmates for emotional support and social development (Gavrila-Ardelean, 2019; Magson, Freeman, Rapee, Richardson, Oar, Fardouly, 2021).

Schools provide essential matters for the development of children and adolescents beyond education, such as nutrition, exercise, social contact and mental health services, and the closure of schools can disrupt the day-to-day functioning of families.

Home education can be one of the activities associated with the strongest negative effects (Thorell, Skoglund, de la Peña, Baeyens, Fuermaier, Groom, Mammarella, van der Oord, van den Hoofdakker, Luman, de Miranda, Siu, Steinmayr, Idrees, Soares, Sorlin, Luque, Moscardino, Roch, Crisci & Christiansen, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic also affects children's psychological behavior, which seems to be a little more severe than on adults. Classes are closed all over the world, and families are largely isolated in their homes. For this reason there are disruptions in the education of children and the time they spent with friends to explore and play and now time is very limited or even non-existent. For children in the key stage of development, as well as for adolescents, the interruption over a year will have a great impact on their social development.

A balanced interaction in a family plays a crucial role in the development of an individual. The healthy functioning of these methods of interaction improves the mental health of family members. The positive functioning of the family can mitigate the impact of various variables in the child's development such as family income and its structure (Bahrami, 2017). Vaccination history and health anxiety can influence the attitude towards vaccination intention, parents can influence and even decide for their

children in accordance with their attitude (Stefanut, AM, Vintila, M, Tomita, M, Treglia, E., Lungu, MA, Tomassoni, R., 2021).

Parents' feelings about the pressure exerted by their children's presence at home are mixed. Some parents feel more connected to their child's school work, while others consider this an additional burden. In addition, schools and teachers do not have enough guidance to improve the experience of parents (Garbe, Ogurlu, Logan, Cook, 2020).

Also, the impact of the pandemic on the family, such as depression and anxiety in parents, is related to an increased risk of mental problems among children (Ramchandani, 2020).

Even if measures such as quarantine or alert were taken with a good aim to reduce the number of infected cases, restrictions and social isolation are a major concern for the psychological well-being of families (Spinelli, Lionetti, Pastore, Fasolo, 2020). Although the public health benefits of social distancing, isolation and quarantine are well established and essential for reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission, there are likely consequences for them. Here it is also a matter of adequate language used in communication by authorities and mass-media, in order to transmit the correct information without inducing panic (Goian, C., 2010). This information might reach vulnerable groups, which were identified to be women, the poor, or disabled (Gavrila-Ardelean & Gavrila-Ardelean, 2017; Goian, C, Vasiluta, M, 2013). A recent review of the psychological impact in the context of the pandemic indicated an increase in anger, confusion and post-traumatic stress symptoms. These types of negative emotions can increase violent behavior, especially within the family (Humphreys, Myint & Zeanah, 2020). In this matter life satisfaction refers to the perception of the quality of life as a whole. Empirical studies have shown a significant negative relationship between work, family and life satisfaction (Bai, Gopalan, Beutell, Ren, 2021). Life satisfaction or quality of life refers to the assessment of the individual's subject to the degree to which his or her most important needs, goals, and desires have been met. The degree of life satisfaction reported by parents also has direct implications for the effectiveness of interventions for children's behaviors. Also, many empirically supported treatments, such as acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), emphasize the importance of assessing and promoting satisfaction in life (Brock, Kochanska, O'Hara & Grekin, 2015).

Everyone has suffered an unprecedented form of social isolation in the modern world. Perceived social isolation can have a significant effect on health and well-being. Also in a study conducted in 2021 by Clair, Gordon, Kroon & Reilly in which they concluded that social isolation in the context of the pandemic was associated with low life satisfaction in all areas. Individuals who reported higher levels of risk with Covid-19 infection also

reported higher perceived social isolation. The experience of perceived social isolation has significant negative consequences related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being. In this situation long walks, being in open air, access to natural environment may help maintaining a healthier body and mind (Swami, V., Khatib, N.A.M., Vidal-Mollon, J., Vintila, M., Barron, D., Goian, C., Mayoral, O. Toh, E.K.L., Tudorel, O., Vazirani, S&Zahari, H.S., 2020). Also, good, healthy food can improve the psychological well-being of all family members and help managing the situation (Vintila, M. Todd, J., Goian, C., Tudorel, O., Barbat, CA, Swami, V., 2020).

This pandemic has dramatically changed many aspects of people's lives, including key features of family life. And it is a particularly important stressor for families that has rapidly and radically changed many stable characteristics of family environments (Rudolph, Zacher, 2021). Social or physical distance has led to the fact that virtually all children in the world stay at home, no longer go to school, with parents who have either been fired or work from home. There are challenges that test families' adaptability and flexibility (Prime, Wade & Browne, 2020).

One of the main concerns of parents during the pandemic was to maintain their children's education. This raises an issue, namely how the family has adapted to the new transition to create a new routine. In addition, lack of preparation time, as well as mental health issues, parental worries and stress, could hamper parents' ability to support their children's educational needs. Recent studies show that during the Covid-19 pandemic, parents reported higher levels of stress compared to adults without children (Lee, Ward, Chang, Downing, 2021). Research that examines psychological flexibility in the family context has also found a link between a parent's psychological flexibility and their child's psychological outcomes. For example, psychological flexibility can promote a positive, consistent parenting practice through parental acceptance of assertive cognitive-affective experiences so that parents' response to stress remains rooted in family parenting values and the best interests of the child (Brassell, Rosenberg, Parent, Rough, Fondacaro&Seehuus, 2016).

In a study by Pines, Ananat& Fitz-Henley started from the premise that this pandemic with Covid-19 affected the psychological well-being of the family and the satisfaction of family life through four mechanisms: loss of parents' jobs, loss of income, the burden of childcare and the disease itself. In addition these mechanisms can be correlated such as job loss leading to a loss of income. Thus, the ways in which the pandemic affects the psychological well-being and satisfaction of families' family life can accumulate and also causes uncertainty about the future, anxiety, fear, stress, sadness among individuals, especially in terms of health and finances. At the family level, parents try to cope with challenges and are subjected to

additional stress that can lead to emotional difficulties due to the fact that schools have closed and children stay at home. A recent investigation showed that fear of health related to Covid-19 influences the stress level of parents and consequently the well-being of the family. Social isolation, unstable incomes and psychological distress have been shown to be linked to higher levels of parental stress. Parental stress is a risk factor on mental health among both parents and children (Marchetti, Fontanesi, Mazza, Giandomenico, Rome, Verrocchio, 2020).

A study conducted in China reported an increase in negative emotions such as anxiety and depression and decreases in positive emotions measured by Oxford happiness scores and life satisfaction (Li, Wang, Xue, Zhao, Zhu, 2020). The two questionnaires were also used in this research.

Social distancing measures have created drastic and sudden changes in daily life in distinct areas such as family life, school, work, and families have faced an unforeseen increase in hours spent under the same roof. Although for some families spending more time together can bring family members closer to each other and foster a sense of well-being, it has been shown that several factors such as financial insecurity, health concerns, uncertainty about the duration of the pandemic, the lack of social and physical activities negatively affect the state of mind and psychological well-being. Families may also experience negative emotions that include stress, anxiety and even depression, as they face several daily problems and additional tasks (Janssen, Kullberg, Verkuil, van Zwieten, Wever, van Houtum, Wentholt, Elzinga, 2020).

## **2. Methodology**

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze if a high level of parental acceptance predicts a high level of life satisfaction in this period of Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing; if a high level of life satisfaction predicts a low level of depression and we also analyze the link between parental acceptance and a high level of stress and anxiety.

For this purpose, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*H1. A high level of parental acceptance predicts a low level of life satisfaction*

*H2. The high level of life satisfaction predicts a low level of stress*

*H3. The high level of parental acceptance predicts a high level of depression*

*H4. The high level of parental acceptance predicts a high level of anxiety*

### **2.1 Participants**



For this study we involved 146 people (N =146) of which 89.7% were women. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 65 years (M = 37.36; SD = 8.57). The participants for this study have the quality of parent having at least one child older than 2 years, having different level of studies. They have Romanian citizenship and they are coming from different socio-economic backgrounds.

## ***2.2. Instruments***

To highlight the results 3 instruments were used and we asked the participants to complete the questionnaires in order to predict some aspects due to the situation given by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The required demographic data were: age, gender, marital status, number of people living in the household, number of children and their age, education, development of professional activity, employed or not, where they spend the work hours, etc.

**Satisfaction with Life Scale.** (SWLS - Diener, Emmons, Larsen, Griffin, 1985); The SWLS Life Satisfaction Scale was developed to assess overall life satisfaction. The scale does not assess satisfaction with certain areas of life, such as health or finance, but allows subjects to integrate and weigh these areas in any way they choose. The scale comprises 5 items and the answers are given on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strong agreement). Higher levels represent greater satisfaction. The internal consistency for this instrument in the present study is .85 which is a good internal consistency.

**Acceptance and Parenting Questionnaire.** (6-PAQ- Greene, RL, 2013). The 6-PAQ Acceptance and Parenting Questionnaire is an 18-item questionnaire based on parental self-reporting. This questionnaire measures the six theorized primary processes that contribute to psychological flexibility among parents. Answers are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strong disagreement, 4 = strong agreement). The six primary processes are: acceptance (3,12,14), cognitive diffusion (6,11,16), contact with the present / moment (1,8,17), self as context (4,9,13), values of parenting (5,10,18) and the employed action (2,7,15), being processes that overlap and interrelate with each other. There are also 7 inverted items (1,2,5,7,10,15,18). Low scores for this scale indicate greater parental psychological flexibility, and high scores indicate greater psychological inflexibility. This questionnaire collects vital information from the perspective of parents that could help

guide psychological interventions. In our study the internal consistency for this instrument is .82 which is a good internal consistency.

**Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale.** The DASS-21 developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) is a set of three self-reporting scales designed to measure the emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. This scale was developed by selecting representative items of DASS-42 to reduce completion time. Scores for depression, anxiety and stress are calculated by summing the scores for the relevant items multiplied by two. This scale is based on a dimensional conception. The answers are given on a Linkert scale with 4 classes (0 = not applied in my case, 1 = applied to some extent or in some cases, 2 = applied to a considerable extent or a good part of the time, 3 = applied in my case most of the time). The assumption on which the development of DASS-21 was based and which was confirmed by research data is that the differences between depression, anxiety and stress experienced on normal subjects and clinical populations are essentially differences in degree. Therefore, this questionnaire has no direct implications for the allocation of patients to direct diagnostic categories found in classification systems. The depression subscale has an excellent internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha being .92, the anxiety subscale has an Alpha Cronbach value of .87, which represents a good internal consistency and the stress subscale Alpha Cronbach value is .91 representing an excellent internal consistency.

**Demographic data.** The study participants also provided demographic data regarding the age of the participants, marital status, and number of people living in the household, number of children and their age, education, professional activity (home, work, partially home).

### ***2.3 Procedure***

The above mentioned tools have been introduced in a Google application named Google Forms to be completed by participants online. The link was sent to several Facebook groups mentioning the request to be completed by one family member who is caring most of the time for at least one child older than two years old. Also they were informed regarding the completion process and the tools and time required completing the questionnaires. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of the processing methods and were provided with addresses and telephone numbers so that they could contact us if they have any question about the study.

### ***3. Results***

The raw data we collected were subsequently analyzed and interpreted using SPSS for Windows, v. 20.0. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences is a complex program which comprises several types of data about various subjects (Coman&Netedu, 2011, p.130) This study is non-experimental one. For the predictions we used linear regression for all three hypotheses.

*H1. A high level of parental acceptance predicts a low level of life satisfaction*

The results show that life satisfaction is predicted negatively by parental acceptance which means that a high level of parental acceptance predicts a low level of life satisfaction;  $R^2 = .144$ ;  $p < .001$  which indicates that life satisfaction is predicted by a coefficient of 14.4% by parental acceptance (Table 1).

*Table 1. The results of the linear regression analysis for parental acceptance as a predictor of the level of life satisfaction*

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Intercept	35.488	1.581	32.364	38.613	.000
Total Scor SWLS	-.239	.047	-.333	-.146	.000

Dependent variables: SWLS;  $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .144$ ; CI = Confidence interval

*H2. The high level of life satisfaction predicts a low level of stress*

Before running the statistical version, we checked the representative assumptions for linear regression. The results of the linear regression supported the hypothesis from our study, these being statistically significant,  $p < .01$ ,  $t = -3.964$  and the fit index  $r^2 = .092$ , thus showed that a higher level of life satisfaction predicts a lower level of stress reported by parents. (Table 2).

*Table 2. The results of the linear regression analysis for life satisfaction as a predictor of the level of stress*

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI	p
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			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Intercept	14.9	2.416	10.124	19.676	.000
Total Scor SWLS	-.340	.086	-.510	-.171	.000

Dependent variables: DASS -Stress ;  $R^2$ adjusted= .092; CI = Confidence interval

*H3. The high level of parental acceptance predicts a high level of depression*

The results of the linear regression supported the hypothesis from our study, these being statistically significant,  $p < .01$ ,  $t = 7.331$  and the fit index  $r^2 = .267$ , thus showed that a higher level of parental acceptance predicts a higher level of depression. (Table 3).

*Table 3. The results of the linear regression analysis for parental acceptance as a predictor of the level of depression*

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Intercept	-7.171	1.523	-10.181	-4.161	.000
Total Scor PAQ	.335	.046	.245	.426	.000

Dependent variables: DASS -D ;  $R^2$ adjusted= .267; CI = Confidence interval

*H4. The high level of parental acceptance predicts a high level of anxiety*

The results of the linear regression supported the hypothesis from our study, these being statistically significant,  $p < .01$ ,  $t = 6.127$  and the fit index  $r^2 = .201$ , thus showed that a higher level of parental acceptance predicts a higher level of anxiety. (Table 4).

*Table 4. The results of the linear regression analysis for parental acceptance as a predictor of the level of anxiety*

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% CI		<i>p</i>
			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
Intercept	-5.018	1.452	-7.889	-2.147	.001
Total Scor PAQ	.267	.044	.181	.353	.000

Dependent variables: DASS -A ;  $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .201$ ; CI = Confidence interval

#### **4. Discussion**

The present study was conducted to investigate the impact of the pandemic on families in terms of parental acceptance, life satisfaction native effects such as stress or anxiety.

Pandemic measures taken to prevent the spread of the disease in most countries create vulnerability and increased risk for destabilization in families. Classes are closing or school are closed are closed, which leads to suffering and pressure for many families who are not used to being closed for so long and for a long time. Moreover, as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, families have no support. Families with a child in need of care and guidance should now care for their child 24 hours a day, without outside guidance. In the context of the pandemic, families are under great pressure and stress (Ones, 2020).

Covid-19 is advancing rapidly in the world, and the mortality rate is increasing day by day. Families can be exposed to high levels of psychological damage. The unknown nature of the virus, as well as the lack of adequate information about transmission, reproduction can pose risks not only to people's physical health, but also to their mental health. This can lead to negative psychological effects such as stress, anxiety and even depression (Effati-Daryani, Zarei, Mohammadi, Hemmati, Yngyknd&Mirghafourvand, 2020).

Parental stress is more than just the stress experienced by parents or other caregivers; it is the aversive psychological reaction to the requirements to be a parent. Like general stress, it is felt when demands exceed resources and is experienced by all parents to varying degrees. It is experienced with negative feelings towards self and child in relation to parental requirements and is related to the functioning of adults and the child and the quality of the parent-child relationship. Proven factors that are correlated with parental stress include family resources, competence, life satisfaction, and mental health (Sharda, Sutherby, Cavanaugh, Hughes & Woodward, 2019).

Exposure to stressors can lead to cognitive, emotional and physical fatigue, which in turn can cause unwarranted pressure on the parent-child relationship. Despite the extensive evidence linking individual and family stressors, families around the world are collectively facing a new range of stressors that threaten their physical and mental health, safety, happiness, and life satisfaction due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic itself is not the only global public health challenge that threatens society, it will have long-term negative effects on families today (Brown et. Al, 2020).

In this pandemic context, we wanted to see if a parental acceptance predicts a low level of life satisfaction. The hypothesis is supported by the results being statistically significant. Psychological well-being is defined as

managing the responses to existential difficulties encountered in life. Satisfaction with life indicates an assessment of the individual's own life and provides information about quality of life. As a result, it is a concept of how positively a person evaluates the overall quality of his or her life as a whole. Fear of Covid-19 has reduced physical and environmental well-being. Fear of illness is known to be associated with anxiety, stress and depression. It is proven that the pandemic negatively affects the well-being and satisfaction of life, as it threatens security and the desire to survive, which are basic needs. In a study conducted by Ozmen, Ozkan, Ozer & Yanardag, 2021 found that there is a positive relationship between well-being and life satisfaction. The greater the well-being of people, the more they enjoy life. Studies also have shown that positivity is significantly associated with life satisfaction, self-esteem, happiness, quality of interpersonal relationships and resilience.

Therefore, while mobility restrictions and social isolation are successful in preventing the spread of Covid-19 disease, they are a serious concern for the psychological well-being of families. Blockage is a major burden for parents and increases their risk of experiencing stress and negative emotions. In a study by Spinelli et. al, 2020, it was highlighted that parents living in a disorganized home perceived the relationship with the child as a more stressful and less pleasant experience. The data suggest that the organization of routines and activities in the family are more important than the physical characteristics of the home. Even though the pandemic has given families more time to spend together, the quality of this time seems to be compromised due to the fact that parents are overwhelmed by parental duties.

The results of the study by Trzebinski, Cabanski & Czarnecka, 2020 indicate that, even in such circumstances, the high meaning of a living person, life satisfaction and basic hope act as a buffer against panic reactions to the pandemic. A better structure of time, daily activities was related to normal mental health and better well-being.

Through the second hypothesis we tried to highlight if a high level of life satisfaction predicts a low level of stress. Parental stress is not unique to the Covid-19 pandemic; parents generally say they feel more stressed and less happy. In the context of the pandemic, the stress of parents is increased by the interaction between the role of parent and other areas of life. Parents face financial pressures that increase their overall experiences of stress. Employee parents also experience tension as a result of the conflict between the role of parent and the role of employee. Increased relationship conflict and feelings caused by social isolation are associated with increased stress and decreased well-being. The poor work-life balance, economic uncertainty and reduced social support experienced due to isolation measures in the

context of the pandemic were linked to parental stress. Although in some studies mothers had a higher risk of psychological distress, both parents had depression, anxiety and stress.

Employee parents also experience tension as a result of the conflict between the role of parent and the role of employee. Increased relationship conflict and feelings caused by social isolation are associated with increased stress and decreased well-being. The poor work-life balance, economic uncertainty and reduced social support experienced due to isolation measures in the context of the pandemic were linked to parental stress. Although in some studies mothers had a higher risk of psychological distress, both parents had depression, anxiety and stress. Parents around the world have reported higher levels of stress after school closes (Freisthler, Gruenewald, Tebben, McCarthy & Wolf, 2021).

Studies that have already been published on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic suggest that the characteristics of the current situation, unpredictability, uncertainty, disease severity, misinformation and social isolation, contribute to stress. One of the most vulnerable groups in the current situation is the family, due to the increased stress felt by parents and the lower capacity for tolerance. Thus, while the current situation is generally stressful, it is important to refer separately to the group of parents, who are subjected to additional stress and who have to adapt to their new role (Ben-Ari, Ben-Yaakov, Chasson, 2021).

Effective stress management is essential to mitigate the harmful impact of Covid-19. In a study conducted by Adams, Smith, Caccavale & Bean, 2021 showed that most parents reported that raising a child became more difficult during the pandemic. The most common factors are changes in children's daily routines, worries and anxiety around Covid-19 and requirements related to children's online schooling. Parents are overwhelmed by the many responsibilities and roles they have had to take on. For some parents, prolonged periods of high stress can lead to negative effects on mental health, including depression, anxiety and a reduced quality of life.

In a study by researchers Whittle, Bray, Lin & Schwartz, 2020 concluded that the stress perceived by parents during the pandemic was associated with problems in children such as increased emotional problems, inattention, and hyperactivity. This shows that parental stress affects children's well-being. Moreover, attachment theory suggests that parental stress can reduce children's feelings of emotional connection and security, leading to feelings of insecurity.

Through other hypothesis we wanted to see if a high level of parental acceptance predicts a high level of depression and anxiety in the context of the pandemic. The hypothesis is supported by our results. Anxiety, stress and depression are widespread throughout the world during quarantine,

the social isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Stress can be defined as a physical, mental or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. In a study conducted by Shah, Mohammad, Qureshi, Abbas & Aleem, 2021, they showed that during the pandemic women experience more stress, anxiety and depression in general than men. The literature suggests that women have a higher prevalence of mood and anxiety disorders and are more likely to develop stress during the pandemic. They also showed that the state of the relationship can contribute to stress, anxiety and depression. Married people have more anxiety during quarantine.

Restrictions are particularly difficult for families, with home schooling, social distance measures and blocking situations having a profound and complex impact in the family context. These parental challenges are exacerbated by the demands of working from home, economic hardship and social constraints. It has been suggested that profound changes in daily family life caused by the pandemic may fuel parental stress and domestic tension that can have serious consequences including domestic violence, child abuse or neglect. Satisfaction with the family was related to higher individual parental stress and parental stress (Gavrila-Ardelean, 2018; Calvano, Engelke, Di Bella, Kindermann, Renneberg& Winter, 2021).

In a study by Brown, et. al, 2020, the researchers examined the risk and protective factors involved in the stress perceived by parents. The results indicate that the parents had cumulative stressors due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The most common stress factor among parents included mood swings and general stress levels.

Research has shown that the onset of the pandemic in China has led to a 74% decrease in overall emotional well-being (Yang & Ma, 2020). Rudolph et. al, 2021 shows that living with the restrictions and concerns around the current pandemic is linked not only to increased emotional suffering, but also to decreased life satisfaction. The results of the study also showed that the feeling of social disconnection during the pandemic was associated with higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms and lower levels of life satisfaction. Recent cross-sectional evidence has suggested that the facets of family resilience (eg, maintaining a positive outlook, flexibility, problem solving, social resources) have been positively associated with the emotional reactions, including satisfaction, experienced during the pandemic

Many parents have reported changes in their child's emotional state during school closures, the most common symptoms reported being difficulty concentrating, irritability, and anxiety. In a study by Marchetti et. al, 2020 over 80% of the study sample reported high levels of psychological distress and significant child-related exhaustion. There is certainly a high psychological burden of social isolation. Mothers have experienced greater psychological suffering than fathers, this requires special psychosocial



attention to women. These are explained by prolonged social isolation combined with parents' feelings of general helplessness and increased demands for childcare.

In a study made by Kallitsoglou, 2021 concluded that the experience of caring with the child's online school while mothers had to work was perceived as difficult, stressful. One of the most important challenges in the context of the pandemic was to simultaneously fulfill responsibilities. For some families this has been exacerbated by certain characteristics, such as lack of available devices, quality of the Internet, low parental involvement, and lack of a support system.

Given the importance of life satisfaction and fulfillment, the effectiveness of parenting interventions could be enhanced by simultaneously targeting mothers' life satisfaction. This could be achieved by referring mothers who report low life satisfaction to individual interventions that promote functioning and well-being. Such interventions do not necessarily have to be a formal psychotherapy; it could be a psychoeducation that is meant to help parents lead a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

The inclusion of treatment components that aim to promote vitality and meaning in one's life is essential. Individuals are asked to identify the values associated with multiple areas of life such as family, career, education, health and to choose and adopt behaviors that are consistent with those values. Exploring these values and identifying the actions taken could help to promote life satisfaction by increasing the effectiveness of the intervention (Brock et. Al, 2015). It may also be useful to implement strategies for managing parental stress during the Covid-19 pandemic. Providing family counseling can help avoid negative outcomes for families and children.

### ***5. Conclusions***

In the present study we wanted to investigate the impact of the pandemic on families and the relationships between the satisfaction of family life, acceptance of parenthood, stress anxiety and depression.

The results suggest in our study that there is a statistically significant link between parental acceptance and a high level of stress. The hypotheses were supported by the statistical analysis using linear regression in all four cases. Parents face many responsibilities in the context of the current pandemic and it has been shown that with the closure of schools and work at home, parental stress has increased significantly.

Parental acceptance predicted a low level of life satisfaction and a high level of depression and anxiety. The hypothesis was supported, because

now families stay together 24 hours a day, and parents no longer have time for themselves.

Another hypothesis we wanted to investigate is whether a high level of life satisfaction correlates with a low level of stress. This hypothesis was also supported and statistically significant.

There are sufficient concerns about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the well-being of the general population, but the pandemic is a global crisis not only in public health and economic stability, but also in the well-being of the family. It is important to note that families are directly affected by the health, social and economic consequences of the current pandemic (Prime et al., 2020).

Other researchers concluded that the pandemic has affected the satisfaction of life due to the pressure and restrictions imposed and also that especially families have faced more negative emotions such as stress, depression, than happiness.

In conclusion, the best psychological response to the pandemic would be to strengthen our psychological resilience and spread awareness, positivity, hope, empathy, and understanding those struggling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as those who suffer from the disease.

Alongside psychologists, social workers also are relevant actors who contribute to a community's effort to maintain the mental health of its members. During the pandemic, they have had continuity in the provision of both primary, secondary and tertiary intervention services, quickly adapting their work to the new situations (Trancă, 2021).

### ***6. Limitations***

A first limit of the present study is given by a relative small sample (N = 142). Also, the sample was formed, predominantly of females (89.7%). The fact that the group was one to say target, families that had at least one child the results cannot be generalized, as all study participants had at least one child. Also a limitation could be considered the fact that not all the instruments used for this study are validated on the Romanian population. Data were also generated on participants' subjective reports through self-reporting. In order to be able to collect the data, due to the fact that the form was created online, it was necessary to connect to the internet and have a mobile phone or computer.

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## PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ONILL-DEFINED MATHEMATICAL PROBLEMS

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**Abstract:** *Traditionally teaching mathematics in schools is based primarily on well-posed problems. Intuitively, there is a clear difference between them and ill-defined problems. Research in the field of problem-solving is often based on the analysis of procedures for solving incompletely posed problems (i.e. ill-defined problems) because they are expected to provide a deeper insight into mathematical abilities as well as the ability of critical and creative thinking of respondents. However, ill-defined problems are scarcely explored as a main subject of interest. This paper aims to investigate the place of those types of problems in teaching mathematics. As a context of the investigation, we consider various classifications of math problems. Three classifications of mathematical problems with a "pedagogical perspective" are elected to be analyzed using the theoretical epistemological method of comparative analysis. All three classifications consider the position of participants in problem-solving, teacher and students. As a result of the analysis, we create a comparison of the spectrums of problems, particularly paying attention to ill-defined problems in them. The discussion finishes addressing the place and purpose of using ill-defined problems in mathematics instructions.*

**Keywords:** *task classification; problem posing; problem space; (in)completely posed problems*

### INTRODUCTION

Problem-solving is at the center of learning mathematics in elementary school. Mathematical tasks are the basic content of teaching mathematics in primary and secondary school through which mathematical knowledge is adopted, exercised, systematized, applied, assessed, and evaluated. There are numerous studies on problem-solving, while a significantly smaller number of studies is devoted to researching problems themselves (Bonotto, 2007;



Polya, 1973; Stanic & Kilpatrick, 1988; Shoenfeld,1992). Knowledge of problem-solving but also of problem-posing skills acquired in mathematics classes is applied in other domains in and out of school through mathematical modeling. For example, Pollack (Pollack, 1988) illustrates the importance of mathematics for engineers stating that engineers need to know beyond oral and written techniques of calculus and critical reasoning, they need to be able to perform mathematical modeling which starts with problem posing. Kilpatrick (Kilpatrick, 1987) recognizes problem-posing and problem-solving skills as objectives of mathematics teaching. Because of the significance of those abilities, it is important to consider the range of problems and the place of ill-defined problems.

The topic of "posing mathematical problems" began out of studies focused on other research areas such as problem solving, mathematical competencies of students, assessment of mathematical knowledge and mathematical teaching and methodological training of prospective math teachers (Lavy & Shriki, 2007; Kruteskii, 1976, Silver, Mamon-Downs, Leung & Kenney, 1996; Crespo, 2003; Nesher,1980;Reusser,1988). For example, the project Cognitively Guided Instructions (CGI) systematically researched how children solve problems and as a result they came up with classification of problem types (Carpenter, 1998). Some authors have pointed out how important is the choice of problems for development of the ability to reason critically (Bandjur, 1999; Maričić, Špijunović & Lazić, 2015). Maričić and colleagues found that in their sample of third grade students, a selection of tasks helped them to develop general ability of critical reasoning but also supported development of various skills associated with problem posing: formulation of the problem, problem reformulation, problem evaluation and sensitivity to the type of problem (Maričić et al., 2015). Silver and colleagues (Silver et al., 1996) investigated how teachers pose problems by identifying classes of generated problems. On a class of open problems, in which the limiting conditions in the problem space changed, researchers registered that some teachers kept the terms of the problem and changed question, while others varied the problems by changing what is known in the problem.

Contemporary school mathematics, which is within the constructivist theory of mathematics education, encourages posing open problems and investigations which provide rich opportunities to build conceptual understanding and development of procedural fluency (von Glasersfeld, 1995). In realistic mathematics education problematization (identifying problem within explored situation) is the basis of gaining new knowledge. The new Serbian curriculum for primary and secondary education points to the need for attending to the problems in realistic context.

### ***Problem space***

Let's attend to the epistemological meaning of basic concepts related to the analysis of problem space. Problems solving in mathematics science may be described as investigation that starts from the given conditions and facts in attempt to prove the truthfulness of a statement. Problem solving is somewhat different in school. Schoenfeld cites Webster's dictionary according to which "In (school) mathematics, (it is) any requirement to be met or requirement to do something," and "The question is confusing or difficult" (Schoenfeld, 1992, p. 337).

In mathematics teaching, mathematical tasks are requirements (usually in a form of question) that are resolved using mathematical tools (procedures, procedures, logical-mathematical reasoning). Along the line, Foster uses the term mathematical task for "any question or requirement that provokes mathematical thought" (Foster, 2015, p. 4).

Which of the math problems can be called problems? Hendersons and Pingry (Hendersons and Pingry, 1953) list the following conditions for the task to be identified as a problem 1. The solver is aware of the clearly set a goal and whose achievement is desired; 2. There is an obstacle on the way to obtain the goal, and the known algorithm or usual procedures are insufficient for the removal of obstacles to obtain the goal; 3. The problem solver's deeper thinking can help him understand the problem more or less clearly, identifies various possibilities (alternative routes) and tests their feasibility. The problem is not considered in isolation from the solver. The second condition, that the problems are associated with cognitive effort is commonly identified (Yeo, 2007, Milinkovic, 2015, Reys, Lindquist, Lambdin, Smith and Suydam, 2001, Schoenfeld, 1985). Rays notes the need for creative effort and higher cognitive functions in problem solving, while Schoenfeld points out that effort is primarily intellectual (and not "technical", as is the effort to apply the skill of performing computational procedures) in the solution process. Milinković underlines the limited possibility of an objective assessment whether a task is a problem or not. She distinguishes mathematical problems from other tasks based on the level of cognitive demand, pointing out that so-called a routine arithmetic task can be problem if the method of solving is unknown. A problem on one level of schooling can become a routine task at the next level. Thus, the identification of problems is related to the prior knowledge, experience and abilities of problem solver at the time of problem solving (Milinković, 2015). This relativistic view Yeo (2007) calls a *pedagogical perspective*, as the identification of problem (versus simple task) is based on the perspective of the student and his inability to directly apply known procedures to arrive to solution.

The analysis of mathematical tasks implies consideration of conditions (known and unknown, i.e. required quantities), their relations and goals, as well as the theoretical basis, the procedure for solving and discussion of the solution. The goal of solving effort is most often to determine unknown quantities, connections and properties, but it can also be to draw conclusions and justify claims or to display quantities and relationships in construction tasks in geometry. The theoretical basis for problem solving is mathematical knowledge needed to determine the relationship between quantities and arriving at procedure (algorithm) for coming to solution. Thus the process of problem solving is a sequence of steps from known quantities to finding answer to question. Solution of a task ends with a discussion that includes interpretation and verification (Dejić and Egerić, 2003; Špijunović and Maričić, 2016).

Each problem is set in the *space of the problem*, with its formulation and structure. Milinković (Milinković, 2015) indicates that every problem can be described via its context, the known and unknown elements of the entities (quantities) and the relationship between the elements. In psychology, problem space is defined as a mental representation of a problem that contains knowledge about the initial and target state (solution) of the problem, as well as all possible intermediate states that must be passed in order to establish a connection between the beginning and target state (solution).

The context of the problem determines the boundaries of the problem's space. The context can be abstract and real. Problem consists of the context (conditions) and relations between the known and unknown values. Constructs presented in the analysis problem are the structure of the problem, method of the problem and solution. The structure of the problem consists of its formulation and representation, i.e. the way in which it is given and the way in which it is presented. The formulation specifies the elements of the problem space and their relationships in a given context. Problem can be set at different levels of abstraction in the form of pictures, diagrams, or text. The task format underlines the order of transfer from external to internal representations (Silver, et al., 2011). Presenting the problem situation with different representations encourages flexibility in the choice of representations in students. As a result they become more able to deal with the problems involving mathematical modeling (Friedlander & Tabach, 2001). Finally, the solution of the problem is an answer on the question and it is not necessarily single.

#### ***Well defined problems and ill-defined problems***

Although the terms *Ill-defined (or incomplete set problems)* and *completely set (or fully posed problems, or well defined*

*problems, or well structured problems*) are used in the methodical textbooks (Dejić and Egerić, 2003 ; Špijunović and Maricic, 2016 ) in Serbia and Springer Encyclopedia of Mathematical Education ( Lerman, 2014 ), or monographs and survey papers dealing with problem solving and problem posing ( Singer , et al. , 2015; Grouws, 1992) the meaning of these terms is not specified. Rather, the meanings of these contrasting terms is implied, intuitively established. The term *well-posed problem* appears in the Encyclopedia of Mathematical Education in the description of research on modern teaching of mathematics aimed at solving problems, including "... the focus is on presenting and practicing well familiar method for solving well- placed to problems . . . ." (Lerman, 2014, p. 644) . In the case of a *well-posed problem*, it is known what is required and a question is posed. In others, some elements are missing such as a) the question is not explicitly stated, but is expected to be intuitively recognized by the solver based on the analysis of the problem space, or b) some elements of the problem space are missing and different possibilities must be considered and in accordance with these alternatives. Some of ill-defined problems could be incorrectly formulated (e.g. when a given relation between the values is impossible in a given context). Discussion about how well problem is designed involves analysis of problem's space and possibility for finding answer with one or more correct answers. For example, in case of a problem involving solving inequality only correct answer is the one that includes all solutions. Becker and Shimada (1997) described a type of task in which there were multiple correct solutions, although that did not mean that there were multiple correct answers. For example, solving a quadratic equation can produce two correct solutions, but that is the only correct answer, because if only one solution is given when there are two solutions, then the answer is wrong. Incompletely defined problems are sometimes terminologically identified with open problems, a term that primarily refers to problems that are not explicitly clear by which procedure or method they are solved.

### **Methodology**

*The* subject of research are classifications of mathematical problems.

*The theoretical epistemological method* of comparative analysis was applied (Miljević, 2007). The process of collecting and analyzing scientific resources displayed variety of general classifications of mathematical problems and critical perspectives on the place and function of ill-defined problems in mathematical instructions. Research studies in the recent past dealt with the analysis of classes of mathematical problems from the aspect of problem design (Maker & Schiever, 1991; Maker, 1993; 2001; Milinković, 2015; Yeo, 2007). Yeo's, Foster's and Maker-Schiever's

problem classifications were selected (Yeo, 2007; Foster, 2015; Maker & Schiever, 1991). The comparison of the three identified classifications in our research is conducted with three *objectives*:

1. pedagogical analysis of position of subjects (teacher, students) in problem solving process,
2. analysis of place of ill-defined problems in the context of teaching process,
3. establishing the purpose of ill-defined problems in contemporary mathematical education.

## Results

We have created the following examples of mathematical problems we will rely upon in the analysis:

*Example 1* Calculate the circumference of an isosceles triangle whose base is  $a=5\text{cm}$  and  $b=7\text{cm}$ .

*Example 2* The sum of three consecutive numbers is 3726. Which method would you use to determine those numbers?

*Example 3* Determine the number of required columns for the fence of a rectangular field whose dimensions are  $a=50\text{m}$  ,  $b=70\text{m}$  .

*Example 4* Construct an equilateral triangle ABC whose side  $a = 5\text{cm}$ , and then triangle AVO symmetric to the triangle ABC with respect to side AV.

*Example 5* Determine the next member in the sequence 1, 2, 4, 8, \_\_\_\_.

*Example 6* Make a model of a rocket whose parts will be in the shape of a rectangle, a square and a triangle.

*Example 7* Determine the optimal price of a school snack.

*Example 8* Investigate the numbers that contain the number 6.

*Example 9* The pizzeria sells Mini, Medium and Large pizzas. Mini pizza has 6 slices,

and costs 540 dinars, Medium pizza has 8 pieces and costs 640 dinars, and Large pizza has 10 pieces and costs 770 dinars. a) If you wanted to buy the cheapest piece, which pizza slice would you choose from? b) What questions can you answer based on the data?

*Example 10.* “How can you graphically display the results of a survey “Favorite cartoon”

*Problem 11* Make a model of a rocket from a model of geometric bodies .

## Classification by Yeo

The starting point for the classification of Yeo ( Yeo , 2007 ) is in our t - national purpose on the basis that the tasks can be divided into two broad classes: 1) mathematically "rich" tasks and 2) tasks that are not mathematically rich. The group of mathematically rich tasks includes analytical and synthesis tasks that can provide opportunities for gaining new knowledge and developing mathematical knowledge related to procedural and mathematical technical knowledge such as problem solving strategies, analytical thinking, metacognition and creativity. Characteristic for the later class are procedural tasks which are useful practicing mathematical procedures. Yeo points out that often the classification of problems from school textbooks is based on the methods of solving those tasks. In the first group are "routine tasks" which include a wide range of tasks that can be called "standard textbook assignments" or "procedural problems" which are used routinely for practicing procedural skills students need to acquire (Example 1). Such tasks may be problematic for the students who do not know the procedure (e.g. missing certain steps) or do not know the standard procedure at all. The second class includes mathematical problems that aim to apply a particular method of solving problems (Example 2). In the third class are "research problems" that do not have a clear goal (Example 3). Problem solver needs to set the goal and process of problem solving is open and complex by nature. A problem that may be qualified as a belonging to "research problems" may become a second class task if a teacher takes an active role in problem solving. The problem is reduced to the application of a certain method of solving problems by teachers involvement. Yet, it can also be deepened into a real "research problem" by expanding the scope of the problem. As a special group of mathematical tasks, Yeo singles out problem-posing tasks because he believes that this type of tasks enables students to manifest knowledge and creativity. In the last class are "project problems" which can include research tasks with or without mathematical context as well as realistic problems (Example 7) .

### ***Classification by Foster***

Foster proposes a classification of problems based on the fact that different students or even the same students do not experience one task in exactly the same way at different times (Foster, 2015). This observation is the basis of the classification problems metaphorically described as "different rays" which are refracted through the concave, convex, or concave-convex lenses which can be convergent, divergent, convergent-divergent. In this case, like in Yeo's classification, identification of a problem occurs not only on the basis of the formulation of the problem but also on the role of a teacher in the problem-solving process. In a class

of *the convergent problems* are problems that have a correct answer which can be reached by a variety of methods (Example 6). In a such task, there is a unique tendency in the process of solving, and all students' reasoning is directed towards a similar approach to solving problem. *Divergent problems* are open and pupils use various approaches in the process of problem solving (Example 7). Metaphorically, as well as light rays diverge, from vertical starting positions, the position of "ray of light" represent the diversity of the starting points of different students wherein the "more extreme" problem requirements bent to a greater extent than those nearer the center (similarly the path of rays), while "less extreme" requirements deviate very little from their "natural" path (Foster, 2015). In the case of convergent-divergent problems, the question that belong to one or the other type of task change alternatively (Example 9). Foster emphasizes the role of the teacher who can lead the discussion in different directions. In addition, he notes that individually, students can choose different ways of solving problems.

#### ***Classification by Makers and Schiever***

Maker and Schiever established six types of school problems, ordered hierarchically. The classification is based on assessment how much are teacher and students familiar with a problem (Maker and Schiever 1991; Bahar Maker, 2015). This classification was developed as part of the "Discoveries" project (Maker, 1993, 2001; Maker & Schiever, 1991). They state that the structure of each mathematical problem corresponds to one of six types of problems, in the scale range from "type I" problem to "type VI". In "type I" problem both teacher and students recognize problem from the past and know how to solve it and the teacher knows at least one correct solution. Examples of this type of problems are the most common in teaching because this type of problems includes solving mathematical problems by known procedures, using a formula, algorithm or well known method (Example 1). In "Type II" problems students recognizes that class of problems, but do not know the way of solving I while the teacher knows both method of solving the problem and the solution. Problems belonging to "type II" are structurally close to "type I" problems except that the student do not know the way they could come up with a solution. Examples of such type of problem are mathematical "story problems" that require from solver to understand and apply an appropriate problem-solving method (Example 3). In the next level, "type III" problems, both the teacher and students recognize the class of a problem which can be solved with multiple alternative methods known to the teacher. A typical example of this type of problems is a task of constructing a figure with a given properties (Example 4). "Type IV" problem has for students and the teacher

recognizable structure and multiple known procedures for solving it. The problem has multiple correct answers known to teacher. Often such problems are solved by induction and have a range of correct answers. Geometric problems which can be solved by manipulation or task of writing different equations using three given numbers and arithmetic operations are examples of "type IV" problems. One such example of a task is determining the rule for patterns' growth based on the given members of the array or the task of constructing a figure with a given property (Example 5). "Type V" problem structure are known to the teacher and students but neither the teacher nor students know a method for solving it. These problems are completely structured, but the methods and solutions are open and the problem can have infinitely many solutions or none at all. Typical examples of this type of problem are Example 6, 10 and 11. In them all parameters are given, yet there is no unique solution for either of them. Finally problems "type VI" are those which are not fully structured (defined), given in a form which is for the teacher and students unknown and therefore the method of solving and solution (or solutions) are also an unknown. A typical problem of this type is the most complex; in order to find a method for solving it, often it is necessary to reformulate the problem or to find different representation from the initial one. Such problem, as a rule, have several possible solutions. These are often realistic problems arising from more or less complex life situations (Realistic Mathematics Education problems that can be described in multiple ways in the process of mathematical modeling. Examples of "type VI" problem situations are "taxi problem" (Determining an optimal price list of taxi services) or "eco problem" (Creating a mathematical model for solving pollution within the local community) (Example 7) .

If we compare the types of problems presented in the previous section, we can see that the "type I" problem is completely structured and closed, while the "type VI" problem is incompletely structured. All mathematical problems fall somewhere between those two ending points on a problem structure scale. In this typology, the intention of the author was to find a place for each task on the "continuum of tasks" from "type I" to "type a VI", although it is possible to simplify or further complicate the division. Problem "Type I" can be solved in only one way in a particular context, a solver is not allowed to know the right method or procedure to arrive at the correct solution (egg. to know the formula) .The "type I" problem has one correct answer. On the other hand, the "type VI" problem is not known to either the teacher or students and there could be an infinite number of ways to reach a solution. The solver must determine which method(s) may be better than the others and whether any of the methods is appropriate in the given context, where there is always



possibility that there is no appropriate method because there is no a single solution to the problem. The " type V " problem is so abstract that it may or may not have an infinite number of possible solutions . Solution of problem "type VI" is often subjective, prone to different interpretation based on other factors (e.g. political).

### **Discussion**

In the previous section are presented in three different classifications of mathematical problems curatively presented in Table 1. Initially, the starting point of all three classifications was problem space. All three classifications are grounded in the pedagogical perspective because the types of problems were determined and described based on the position of participants in the problem solving. In each of these classifications, the tasks are considered in relation to the mathematical contents, structure and formulation.

Substantial differences between Yeo's classification on one side and Maker-Schiever's and Foster's on the other side is that the later classifications are relativistic and the Yeo's is not. Thus, the context of instruction, primarily the pedagogical and mathematical knowledge of the participants in problem solving activity effectively change relative problem's difficulty. Pedagogical support, primarily didactical interference in problem solving, directs the process and changing the problem solving process and students 'perception of the problem. For Foster, the social component is important, but it is even more important to notice the diversity of students' positions with regard to their mathematical knowledge and metacognitive characteristics. In contrast, Yeo is focused on a problem structure and mathematical content within it. On the other hand, Maker and Schiever as well as Foster emphasize social component, the importance of the participants (knowledge and position) rather than problem formulation, structure or math content of the problem as criteria for classification. Although Yeo's classification is not relativistic he also points to critical impact of teacher in the pedagogical guidance of students that can change the nature of the problem (actually, problem solver's perception) in the problem solving process.

All three classifications describe problems that are incompletely formulated i.e. ill-defined (Table 1). It is noticeable that the problems in all classifications, those types of problems are considered to be of higher order on the scale. For example, in Yeo's classification, procedural tasks, considered of lower math value ( "scarce" value) are completely defined while on the opposite side are "synthetic tasks" that arise in the process of critical analysis of a situation and are defined along line of modeling process. Obviously, in all three classifications, incompletely set problems are those that require higher-level cognitive processes, creative thinking and deeper knowledge of mathematical content.

Completely formulated problems represent the basic corpus of math tasks that students encounter during regular math classes. Ill/defined problems are in contrast, sporadically present in various forms, particularly in out of school math programs, preparations for competitions, etc.

*Table 1 Problem continuum matrix*

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Assignment method</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>The solution</b>	<b>Problem setting</b>
<b>1. (Yeo)</b>	Tasks that are not mathematically rich (Not provocative, which are not mathematically attractive)	Procedural (routine)	Application of known procedures, techniques Application of known methods Development of new strategies		Fully formulated
	Mathematical "rich" tasks (challenging, layered)	Analytic	Explorative Projects (mathematical project, realistic project)		(Not) fully formulated
		Synthetically	Explorative  Problem posing		Incompletely formulated  Incompletely formulated
<b>2.</b>	convergent	Closed	Familiar,	Known	Fully

<b>(Foster)</b>				unique Familiar, various		n and unique		formulated (structured)	
	divergent	Open		Various		Various		Incompletely defined	
	convergent	divergent combined		Various		Unique/ Various		(Not) completely Defined	
<b>3. (Marker-Schiever, 1991)</b>		Teacher (T)	Student (S)	T	S	T	S		
I		+	+	+	+	+	-	Fully formulated	
II		+	+	+	-	+	-	Fully formulated	
III		+	+	+ / -	-	+	-	Fully formulated	
IV		+	+	+/-	-	+/-	-	Fully formulated	
V		+	+	-	-	-	-	Fully formulated	
VI		-	-	-	-	-	-	Not fully formulated	

Didactical shift toward Realistic Mathematics Education in Serbian curriculum produced theoretical support for changing teaching practice and incorporating projects and research problems in dominantly procedural corpus of tasks. Time is also in regular classes obtained space for incomplete sets problems. This should undoubtedly be reflected in the textbook literature as well. The fact is, however, that this is not the case. The basis for this assumption is the fact that even today the standards for

the quality of a mathematical textbook are such that incompletely formulated problems are considered wrong or incomplete . (Note, however, that not all task formulations are acceptable ,i.e. that there are indeed incorrectly formulated tasks or tasks with oversight, without the necessary data or with contradictory data and therefore unsolvable.)

The presented classifications differ in the place and function assigned to well defined and ill defined problems. On one side, completely posed problems are dominantly recognized as useful in learning and practicing techniques, procedures and methods. On the other, ill-defined problems have function in development of general and specific strategies, new methods, metacognition, creativity and critical thinking. Due to the different functions of these two types of problems, well-defined problems dominate in school mathematics instructions. Realistic mathematics education, promote changes and significant presence of ill defined problems in school practice.

Finally, some research questions can be identified :

1. How well are teachers prepared for dealing with such ill defined problems?
2. How much are incompletely posed problems present in the classroom practice and professional literature?
3. What are the effects of the introducing ill defined problems at different stages of school?

### **Conclusion**

We based our argument on the foundation of the theoretical contributions in domains of problem posing and problem solving. We presented, illustrated, analyzed and discussed similarities and differences among three classifications of mathematical problems proposed by Yea, Foster and Maker-Schiever. These classifications had a pedagogical perspective which emphasizes the significance of knowledge of participants in the problem solving process - teacher and students. All classification dealt with ill-defined problems and placed them on higher place on a scale as they require and promote critical thinking, flexibility of reasoning and creative approach to problem posing. It was concluded that didactical orientation toward realistic mathematics education gives theoretical support formore variability in the selection of mathematical problems in school curriculum which primarily uses resources with rich collections of well defined procedural problems rather than research and design problems.Effects of using ill-defined problems in school practice need to be verified in future research.

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## FIRST AID GUIDE FOR EARLY EDUCATION SPECIALISTS

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**Abstract:** *Early education is a topical challenge through the increased social needs of the parent community. In this context, policies for social and cultural progress, and legislative measures should support demographic and cultural development in terms of family and work. The Romanian Ministry of National Education has made efforts to support the training of staff specialized in preschool education, by adapting, perfecting, and creating a new curriculum in early education under the financial support of the project Inclusive and Qualitative Early Education (ETIC – Educație Timpurie Incluzivă și de Calitate), co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Program 2014-2020, SMIS code 128215. This project is ongoing at the national level through the concerted efforts of the Ministry of Education, universities, and county school inspectorates.*

**Keywords:** *first aid; early education; children; nurseries; kindergartens.*

### ***Introduction***

The statistical research carried out in Romania regarding the training of specialists in early education has shown that there is a need for an expanded curriculum that includes notions of pediatric first aid. The child's right to health is, along with the right to education, a fundamental right of the child (Gavrila-Ardelean, 2019). We cannot talk about the healthy physical and neuropsychic development of the child, without ensuring a healthy physical and social environment (Gavrila-Ardelean & Gavrila-Ardelean, 2016). These disciplinary attributes correlate with the learning-development standards of early childhood education, to correctly assess the specific fields



of personal security. As a specific aspect of standard health, the child must be able to participate in different activities (Gavrilă-Ardelean & Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2017). Accidents can occur in certain contexts of these activities. The educator is the first person who must intervene. The educator must hold appropriate information and practical abilities, which ensure courage and fluency in applying the first aid maneuvers.

These medical measures must be applied immediately, from the first signs of the of the child suffering and by correct techniques. The caregivers' knowledge of first-aid measures can be lifesaving for the child.

### ***Aim of study and methodology***

This study reviews the medical literature and compares it with preschool educators' knowledge of first aid in early education. Educators must learn the fundamental notions on first aid because, when applied correctly, they are lifesaving. Discussions within the focus groups of specialists in the project Inclusive and Qualitative Early Education (ETIC – *Educație Timpurie Incluzivă și de Calitate*), showed that educators do not hold enough knowledge about first aid techniques, and, for this reason, they are reluctant to apply them in practice. The study aimed to create a battery of maneuvers and first aid techniques for nurseries and kindergartens.

### ***Results***

The most common child health emergencies encountered from 1 to 3 years of age are related to the risk of suffocating or choking with food or various small items in the playground. These accidents occur by the aspiration of small objects (beads, toy components, food fragments, etc.) into the airways. They are tier 1 emergencies in which the rescuer must intervene immediately. In the case of asphyxiation, every second matters because cardiac arrest occurs within 4 minutes after the child has stopped breathing.

#### **How to check the child's state of consciousness and status?**

1. Call the child by name, gently shake him, and ask: "Can you hear me?"
2. Check breathing:
  - by observing chest movements for 5 seconds;
  - by bringing your ear/ cheek close to the child's nose;
3. Check the child's pulse for 5 seconds by compressing with two fingers the radial artery (above the thumb on the internal face of the wrist) or the carotid artery (the lateral portion of the neck, under the mandible);
4. Inspect the child's mouth to extract any foreign bodies that may block the airways.

### Fundamental first aid measures

We usually apply the Heimlich maneuver to children who are choking with food. The infant is positioned on the forearm of the rescuer, face down, with the abdomen on the adult's knees. The infant's head must be held lower than the rest of his body. The rescuer supports the child's chin with one hand (Figure 1) while using the heel of the other hand to apply five firm slaps between the child's shoulder blades (Figure 2). If the foreign body does not dislodge, the child must be turned face up on the rescuer's thighs, with the head positioned lower than the rest of the body and given five chest thrusts, by pressing on the sternum with two fingers (Figure 3).



Fig.1. Heimlich maneuver in infants    Fig.2. Heimlich maneuver    Fig.3. Step 2 of the Heimlich Maneuver

(<https://www.familia.md/i/info/Articles/addit/mini/1730.jpg>;  
<https://www.romedic.ro/uploadart/ghid/1481.jpg>)

If the child is older (2-4 years), the rescuer can apply the Heimlich maneuver by flexing the child's abdomen over the back of a chair. Another option is to grab the toddler by the legs, raise him upside down, and shake vigorously, then apply a firm slap between his shoulder blades (Figure 4).



Fig.4. Maneuver for airway de-obstruction by turning the child upside down  
[https://mamaplus.md/sites/default/files/mplus\\_migrate/5968/5589212e37ff5\\_5589212e38089.jpg](https://mamaplus.md/sites/default/files/mplus_migrate/5968/5589212e37ff5_5589212e38089.jpg)

Children over the age of 5 receive the standard Heimlich maneuver technique for children and adults. The rescuer stands behind the child and wraps his arms around the waist of the victim. The child's trunk flexes forwards. The caregiver positions the thumb side of his fist between the sternum and the navel of the child (above the belly button). Then, he covers his fist with his other hand and presses quickly and firmly, pushing upwards four times or until the foreign body is removed by coughing (Figure 5).



Fig.5. Heimlich maneuver for children (ages 1-5)

<https://www.familia.md/i/info/Articles/addit/mini/1730.jpg>; <https://mamaplus.md/>

If the rescuer can see the foreign object in the mouth or throat of the child, he must remove the fingers,

If the child is lying on the ground or unconscious, the Heimlich maneuver can be applied as follows. Place the heel of your hand on the abdomen (belly) of the child, between the belly button and the sternum. Grasp your hands together, with the elbows outstretched, then push firmly and quickly in a downward and forward movement, 4-5 times (Figure 6).

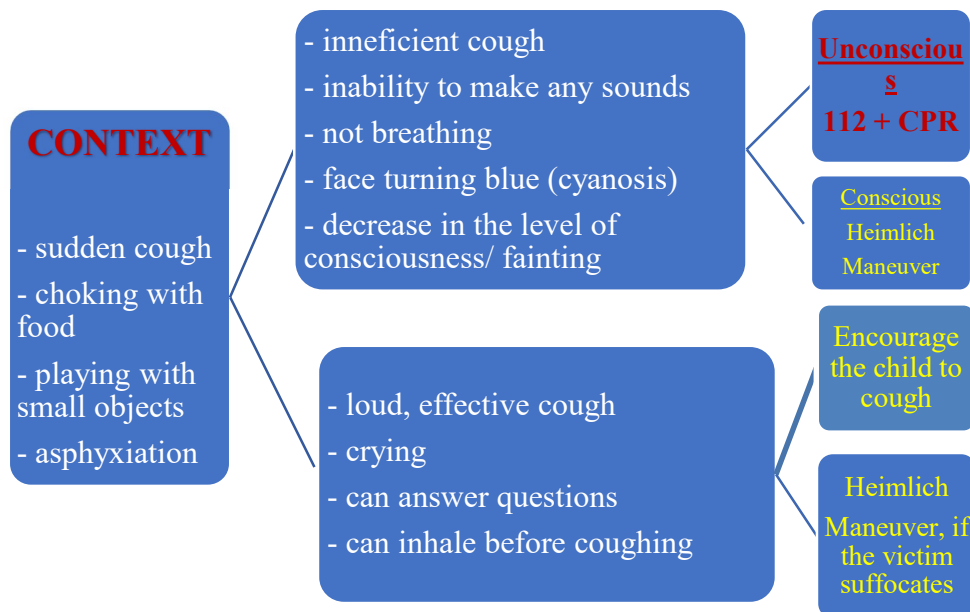


*Fig.6. Heimlich maneuver with the child in dorsal decubitus (lying down)*  
([https://assets.aboutkidshealth.ca/akhassets/choking\\_child\\_heimlich\\_laying\\_down](https://assets.aboutkidshealth.ca/akhassets/choking_child_heimlich_laying_down))

If the Heimlich maneuver fails and the child loses consciousness, the caregiver must call the emergency medical services (112, in Romania).

### **De-obstruction of upper airways in children**

The Heimlich maneuver is the primary technique for the de-obstruction of upper airways in children. The educator and the early care staff must recognize the emergency of upper airway obstruction (UAO) and act according to an algorithm of the symptoms and signs of the child. Figure 7 schematizes this algorithm.



*Fig.7. Algorithm of UAO symptoms for emergency intervention*

### **Mouth-to-mouth ventilation and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)**

If the child is unconscious, the rescuer will always call the emergency services (112, in Romania), then begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Cardiopulmonary resuscitation consists of repeating cycles of 30 sterno-thoracic manual compressions, with a frequency of 100-120 compressions per minute, followed by light insufflations (two insufflations every 30 chest compressions). If there are 2 or more rescuers, one will begin resuscitation, and the other will call the ambulance service; they will rotate places every two minutes.

If the child begins to vomit during resuscitation, the rescuer must turn him to the left side and clean his mouth. Then, the victim must be returned to the dorsal decubitus (lying down on the back) position, with the head in extension to open the airways, and the rescuer can continue the resuscitation maneuvers.

For the two rescue breaths, the rescuer tilts the child's head backward to release the airways, then he takes a deep breath and blows into the victim's mouth for one second. It is important to compress the victim's nostrils, to create a seal. Mouth-to-mouth ventilation can be performed directly or through a handkerchief that covers the victim's mouth. Infants and toddlers can receive mouth-to-nose ventilation, where the rescuer uses his mouth to cover and blow into the nostrils and mouth of the child. Mouth-to-nose ventilation is also an option for when the child's mouth is clenched.

Resuscitation maneuvers for children are the same used for adults, but gentler. Infants receive chest compressions done with only one hand, to avoid rib fractures and damage to internal organs. When it comes to older children, the rescuer can use two hands for compressions, pressing only with the heel of his hands. During chest compressions, the rescuer kneels next to the victim, outstretches his elbows, and leans above the victim's chest (Figure 5).

The resuscitation maneuvers continue until the child begins to breathe, his heart starts beating, or until the arrival of the medical crew.

### **First aid treatment for burns**

Do not remove the burned clothes off the victim's body. Do remove clothes only in chemical burns. If blisters appear, do not try to pop, or cut them. Do not apply any medicine on the burned skin. Cool down the burned area with clean water for 10-15 minutes. The rescuer must call the emergency health services.

### **First aid in case of swallowing of a toxic substance**

If the child accidentally swallows a toxic substance (medicines, poison, detergent, etc.), the adult must call the emergency service (112, in Romania). Until the rescue arrives, the adult must discover what toxic substances the child swallowed, by asking the victim or the other children in the group and/or by investigating the surroundings of the child when the incident occurred. The child will not be given milk or activated charcoal. The rescuer will not try to induce vomiting in the victim, as it would be potentially dangerous if the child has ingested caustic substances.

### **Conclusions**

Technical elements and notions of first aid go beyond the sphere of the medical specialty in terms of applicability. They are lifesaving in any situation if known and applied correctly. Time has proven that these notions need to be introduced into the training curriculum of the staff that works in nurseries and kindergartens, for good safety.

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